



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS
BABEȘ-BOLYAI



PHILOLOGIA

1/2017

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI

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YEAR
MONTH
ISSUE

Volume 62 (LXII) 2017
MARCH
1

S T U D I A
UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI
PHILOLOGIA
1

Desktop Editing Office: 51st B.P. Hasdeu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, Phone + 40 264-40.53.52

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CONFLICT UNRESOLVED: MEN'S RESPONSES TO SECOND WAVE FEMINISM IN WENDY WASSERSTEIN'S *ISN'T IT ROMANTIC* (1983) AND *THE HEIDI CHRONICLES* (1988)¹

DUYGU BESTE BAŞER²

ABSTRACT. *Conflict Unresolved: Men's Responses to Second Wave Feminism in Wendy Wasserstein's Isn't It Romantic (1983) and The Heidi Chronicles (1988).* This article focuses on Wendy Wasserstein's (1950-2006) social commentary through drama in order to draw attention to the impact of feminist and men's movements on men. Specifically, it explores the role of men in terms of their relationships with women and their responses to the Second Wave of Feminism under the influence of men's movements in the 1980s through two Wasserstein plays, *Isn't It Romantic* (1983) and *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988). The analysis concludes that men failed to understand the aspirations and demands of women. Feeling that their manhood was threatened by feminists, men attacked and attempted to control them while using the gains of female liberation to their advantage at the same time.

Keywords: *feminist theater, Wendy Wasserstein, feminism, men's movements, American women playwrights.*

REZUMAT. *Conflict nerezolvat: reacții masculine la al doilea val de feminism în Isn't It Romantic (1983) și The Heidi Chronicles (1988) de Wendy Wasserstein.* Acest articol analizează comentariul social în teatrul lui Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006) cu scopul de a atrage atenția asupra impactului mișcării feministe și a mișcării bărbaților asupra bărbaților. În fapt, se cercetează rolul bărbaților în privința relațiilor lor cu femeile și reacțiile lor la valul al doilea al feminismului sub influența mișcărilor bărbaților din anii 80 cu ajutorul a două piese de Wasserstein: *Isn't It Romantic*

¹ This article is derived from the author's MA thesis entitled *From Superiority to Equality?: Men's Voices in Wendy Wasserstein's Plays*.

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(1983) și *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988). Simțind că masculinitatea este amenințată de către feministe, bărbații contra-atacă și încearcă să redobândească controlul folosind câștigurile eliberării femeilor în propriul lor avantaj, de această dată.

Cuvinte cheie: teatrul feminist, Wendy Wasserstein, feminism, mișcările bărbaților, dramaturgia femeii americane.

As Julia T. Wood suggests, white American men have had certain rights and privileges throughout American history, especially in terms of enfranchisement, property ownership, and the social, economic, and legal systems, and therefore they have not been involved in as many organized movements as white American women (94). While men were enjoying their privileges, women were suffering from sexism and discrimination in public and private spheres, which urged them to participate in activities so that they could fight for their rights. This fight between the two sexes reached its peak after World War II when men returned from the battlefield and pushed women, who joined the workforce in the absence of men, back to kitchen (Milkman 470).

In the 1960s, the publication of Betty Friedan's renowned book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), became the foundational text for women who suffered from a "problem that has no name," which Friedan described as an indescribable depression and emptiness that a lot of well-educated, middle class housewives felt (78). The same year, *The Presidential Report on American Women* issued the inequalities at the workplace and documented the oppression of women as mothers or wives (Rosen 66-67). Women, who experienced an awakening, gathered under the motto, "personal is political" and as a result, a new women's liberation movement, the Second Wave of Feminism, began. Women demanded a new definition of marriage where the responsibilities of the two sexes are equal. They also called for the establishment of childcare centers, equal education and political participation (Rosen 78-79). These feminists accomplished a lot; however, along with the Second Wave of Feminism came the men's movements.

During the Second Wave, a lot of men supported women and fought with them for equality whereas another group of men rejected feminism and worked to reinforce and strengthen "traditional masculine roles, status, and the privileges" (Wood 95). Most men were baffled by the rules that were changing rapidly in the public sphere as a result of the liberation of women. Therefore, Men's Movement was split into different branches such as Men's Liberationists, Men's Rights Advocates, Radical Feminist Men, Social Feminist Men, Men of Color, Gay Male Liberationists, Promise Keepers, and the Mythopoetic Men's Movement, each of which focused on different aspects of what defined American manhood.

In an attempt to attract female spectators, who once was marginalized, feminist drama tends to ignore these movements. Laurin Porter suggests that a feminist drama places women to the center and “foregrounds” women’s experience. In these plays, patriarchy is defined as a controlling force shaped by men to limit women’s development (196). In this respect, Wendy Wasserstein’s³ plays, which mainly focus on the Second Wave of Feminism and its consequences, are such examples of feminist drama. Jill Dolan also claims that Wasserstein shifted the emphasis from fathers and sons to mothers and daughters in her plays (448). However, this does not mean that the men in her plays are stagnant. Although she does not discuss men’s movements explicitly, Wendy Wasserstein illustrates that just like women, men also wanted to cut loose from traditional gender roles which, as Judith Butler claims, are “shaped by political forces with strategic interests” (164). Acts or gestures, or what Butler calls the “gendered body,” are “performative” (173). Because those who fail to perform their socially constructed and assigned gender roles are punished, gender (both femininity and masculinity) is a performance that requires repetition (Butler 178). This means that how men and women perform their roles may change over time and alongside the politics of gender. Butler’s theory of gender performativity is exemplified in Wasserstein’s works, especially when they are considered chronologically. The ways in which the playwright’s men perform masculinity differ in each play, and Wasserstein connects these changes in gender performance to the social and political forces.

Although there are a considerable number of studies on the role of women in Wendy Wasserstein’s plays, only a few include the male experience. When Wasserstein dramatizes the female experience, she does not side with any group and aims to present reality objectively. Therefore, men’s confusion as well as their responses to the Second Wave of Feminism also attracted Wendy Wasserstein’s attention and she included their experiences with the new “liberated” feminists in her works even though her main focus remained women. Men play an important role in her dramas since they have always been part of women’s lives as fathers, brothers, sons, and love-interests. Wasserstein depicts these men and how they followed, and challenged, patriarchal rules. Clearly anything but one-dimensional, her male characters exhibit the changes that Michael A. Messner discusses: “Men are changing, but not in a singular manner, and not necessarily in the direction that feminist women would like. Some of these changes support feminism, some express a backlash against feminism, and others [...] avoid feminist issues all together” (2).

This article will analyze these changes in the 1980s by examining the male characters in two Wasserstein plays—*Isn’t It Romantic* (1983) and *The Heidi*

³ Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006) received the Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1989 for *The Heidi Chronicles*.

Chronicles (1988) with a focus on their identity, relationships with women, and their reaction to the Second Wave feminists. I maintain that by examining these characters, more insight can be gained into Wasserstein's thoughts on the patriarchal system and male/female relationships. Analyzing male characters is essential because they reflect the changes in men's lives in response to shifting cultural norms.

***Isn't It Romantic* (1983)**

Isn't It Romantic (1983) depicts the lives of two friends trying to find a place in society as independent women of the 1980s, all the while fighting social norms and impulses to become wives and mothers.⁴ In this self-discovery play, Janie Blumberg is the protagonist who is constantly being reminded of the necessity of marriage by her Jewish parents. Meanwhile, her best friend Harriet is constantly being encouraged by her mother to pursue a career, but struggles to balance social expectations with personal aspirations. The play revolves around the parallel stories of Janie's relationship with Marty and Harriet's relationship with a married man, Paul Stuart. Throughout the play, Marty forces Janie to give up her career plans and marry him. On the other hand, Paul insists on continuing a relationship with Harriet without any commitment. The play ends with Janie's decision to break up with Marty to follow her dreams and Harriet's marriage with Joe Stine, which disappoints Janie as she feels betrayed by her best friend.

The male characters in *Isn't It Romantic* are at the center of the play along with Janie and Harriet, and their presence contributes to the work's main theme of self-discovery. Marty Sterling wants to marry Janie; however, Janie feels uncomfortable doing so because Marty only considers her as a future wife who will serve, not a life partner who will share. Thus, Janie breaks up with him, deciding it is more important to pursue her career than marrying a man who is not supportive of her decisions. On the other hand, Paul Stuart is a businessman who uses the liberated women to escape from his duties as a husband and a father. Both Harriet and Janie, and Marty and Paul, represent the 1980s as individuals caught between old and new values.

Men Who Reject Feminism

Marty is introduced in act 1, scene 1 as Harriet and Janie are walking in Central Park. Marty and Harriet know each other from college, and Marty uses this to impress Janie. Marty always dominates conversations, mostly bragging

⁴ *Isn't It Romantic* was debuted on December 15, 1983 at Playwrights Horizons's NYC Theater. The play was directed by Gerald Gutierrez (*Isn't It Romantic* 76).

about himself. When he is introduced to Janie, he says he saw Janie and Harriet together in Cambridge all the time, and that Janie always looked frightened to death, but more attainable. Harriet, the feminist, was impossible to reach; moreover, he is “not attracted to cold people anymore” (83) anyway. These statements expose Marty’s traditional perception of women as objects to win or lose, and the notion that many men did perceive feminists as being stern, anti-male, ice queens. Also, his statements reveal that he *was* attracted to those “cold people” at some point in his life, but now Janie is more appealing to Marty with her “frightened” passive appearance.

Marty mentions his father’s business almost like bait to lure in the two women. These characters have come of age in a patriarchal society which valued men as breadwinners, positioning women as materialistic individuals in pursuit of economic stability. Thus, Marty deploys his father’s wealth and his own professional status as a doctor to impress Janie and Harriet to reinforce his male power and social authority. He remains dominant throughout their conversation and uses his money to strengthen his position.

Although both Harriet and Janie are college graduates who want to pursue a career before marriage, Janie believes that it is possible for her to be in a relationship based on mutual understanding while looking for job opportunities. She gives Marty a chance, which ends up in disappointment: “Marty, by you everything is much more simple than it has to be. You want a wife; you get a wife. You drop out of Harvard twice; they always take you back. You’re just like me. We’re too fucking sweet. I’m so sweet I never say what I want, and you’re so sweet you always get what you want” (138). However, Marty expects a traditional relationship and patronizes Janie: “Not necessarily. Why do you think I’m thirty-two and not married? All I want is a home, a family, something my father had so easily and I can’t seem to get started on” (138).

Susan Faludi states that men need women in order to prove their manhood, and that when women demand to be treated equally, they challenge male power and identity (62). Wasserstein supports Faludi’s claim through Marty. On his first date with Janie, Marty states that Harriet is not as sweet as Janie and compares her to his feminist medical school classmates: “They’re nice but they’d bite your balls off” (98). Marty’s manhood is threatened by women who challenge gender roles and social norms. On the other hand, Janie, who is a part time writer, is safe for Marty because according to him, writing is not a “real profession,” or at least real enough to challenge male authority.

Michael Kimmel conveys that Jewish men were not seen as “real men” as their religion always supported morality and literacy. In order to counterbalance this, Jewish men began supporting Zionist militarism in Israel, believing that “supporting Israeli territorial expansion was a way to rescue one’s manhood” (200-201). Initially, as the reader learns, Marty tries to erase his Jewish identity

by changing his name (from Murray Schlimovitz to Marty Sterling) and assimilating into WASP⁵ society. However, he realizes that not only is this impossible, but doing so would also betray his cultural and religious heritage and reinforce the idea that Jewish identity was somehow inferior. Marty reverses his position and instead engages in another form of identity politics: a display of ethnic masculinity. We discover he has “worked on a kibbutz” and that he is willing to open a new practice in Tel Aviv because Israel is very important to him. Thus, Marty decides to reinvent his manhood through his Jewishness, and his support of Israel is significant in the sense that conquering territory has always been a masculine act and one that feminists have connected to conquering a woman’s body, as Ynestra King conveys: “In the project of building Western industrial civilization, nature became something to be dominated, overcome, made to serve the needs of men [...] Women, who are identified with nature, have been similarly objectified and subordinated in patriarchal society” (471). This is also another reason why he chooses the Jewish Janie over the WASP Harriet.

Janie’s Jewishness, however, never satisfies Marty. He claims that Janie is not supportive of Israel, but should be, and states that “Jewish families should have at least three children” (97). This implies that Janie is not an equal partner, but rather a Jewish woman who will produce his Jewish children (according to Judaic law, religion is matrilineal). Marty is interested in using Janie’s Jewishness, and Jewish uterus, as part of a larger project to keep Jewish culture alive, and constantly lectures her about appropriate Jewish behavior. He is grooming her to be the perfect Jewish wife and mother and, in the process, is reclaiming his own Jewish masculinity, which has been emasculated and denigrated by the processes of immigration and assimilation.

One scene that reveals the social attitudes of the 1980s is act 1, scene 7 when Marty and Janie have a conversation after their arrival from dinner with Marty’s family. Janie feels guilty about spilling horseradish on Marty’s nephew, Schlomo, and Marty tries to calm her down by stating, “You worry too much. You are just like my mother. My mother says you’re shy and a little clumsy because you’re very angry with your family. But she says don’t worry, you’ll grow out of it. I told her your mother was a bit cuckoo” (109). Marty’s mother thinks Janie’s family is odd, and places the blame on Janie’s eccentric mother. It is Tasha’s fault that Janie cannot perform properly in Jewish society. However, Marty is confident that Janie will become the “ideal woman” and that she will learn how to be the perfect partner for him. To assure her, Marty gives his sister-in-law as an example: “She met my brother and now she’s a wonderful mother, and, believe me, when Schlomo is a little older, she’ll teach or she’ll work with the elderly—and she won’t conquer the world, but she’ll have a nice life” (109).

⁵ White Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

Carla J. McDonough states that men feel the need to “conquer” the female body in order to protect their manhood, which is constantly threatened by women (7). Marty attempts to conquer Janie’s world before she conquers his in order to remain dominant throughout their relationship. Starting on their first date, Marty calls Janie “Monkey” to maintain his superior position as a patriarchal man. He infantilizes and denigrates Janie by giving her a trivial and degrading nickname, forever positioning her as inferior in their relationship.

At the end of act 1 scene 4, Marty invites Janie to his parents’ house and the lights fade out as Marty embraces Janie which, in the context of the play, suggests impending sexual intercourse. When Janie asks what she can do for him, Marty says “Be sweet. I need attention. A great deal of attention” (99). Although he wants to be in charge, Marty hopes to be nurtured and “taken care of” in bed. In other words, Marty wants to be mothered and expects Janie to satisfy his needs, which, as Barbara Ehrenreich discusses is a typical expectation of men who grew up in the 1950s and 60s when the social order required men to marry and become breadwinners to support their family. To sustain this order, marriage was romanticized so that men and women believed in the “equal exchange” of work: men would offer money (economic stability), while women would offer services (cooking, cleaning, sex) as compensation (3).

Marty feels he has the right to make decisions for Janie in order to prevent her from becoming a threat to his masculinity. This is exemplified when he reveals that he has rented an apartment for them. Even though they will be cohabiting, supposedly as equal partners, Marty uses first-person “I” language throughout the conversation, reinforcing his position as “boss” and breadwinner: “I figured if I waited for you to make up your mind to move, we’d never take anything, and I need a place to live before I open my practice [...] I decided we should live in Flatbush or Brighton Beach, where people have real values” (110).

Marty is pushy and at times an aggressive bully, and does not allow Janie to speak because he feels responsible for the decisions regarding their relationship. Positioning himself as the patriarchal authority figure in the relationship, Marty plays the role assigned to him by society. Thus, he expects Janie to play her part as well. For instance, Marty assumes Janie can cook because women who were born in the 1950s grew up learning domestic chores: “Monkey, you don’t know how to cook a chicken?” (114). However, as a woman raised by an eccentric mother, Janie was not taught such traditional tasks. Marty’s patronizing attitude, when he discovers her lacking in this area, causes Janie to feel ashamed for not knowing how to cook chicken. She confesses to Harriet that she cannot tell Marty the truth since he did his part by renting an apartment for them (114). In other words, Marty convinces Janie (for a short time) that she needs to prove her femininity through domestic chores. He, in turn, performs masculinity by making

decisions for Janie. While Marty's words and deeds fit the heteronormative masculinity of the era, Janie does not meet his gendered expectations, leading to feelings of guilt and insufficiency.

Marty does not want Janie to make her career a priority, emphasizing that work should not take over a woman's life by calling it a trap (129). His body language also illustrates his controlling attitude: he rubs Janie's back and taps "as if checking her heart" (129). He assures Janie that she definitely should not aspire to a career: "Look, I have plenty of friends who marry women doctors because they think they'll have something in common. Monkey, they never see each other. Their children are brought up by strangers from the Caribbean [...] I have nothing against your working. I just want to make sure we have a life" (129–130). He underestimates Janie's profession and assumes she will sacrifice her career for their "life." For Marty, this is the natural and necessary order of things. He feels that women should place their husbands and children at the center of their lives.

Marty experiences a masculinity crisis on many levels. That is, not only does he feel the need to assert his manliness as a Jew in WASP society, but he also fears Janie, and women in general, who can usurp his power as a breadwinner. In other words, he secretly worries that he is unnecessary, dispensable, and without a purpose. He reminds Janie that he can offer attention, affection, and love (137), but as he quickly realizes, these sentiments are no longer enough for 80s women. Marty sees that the rules have changed—that the assurances that once lured women into marriage and motherhood no longer hold the same allure. Disarmed, Marty lashes out by judging, pressuring, and patronizing her: "You want to find out what it's like to take care of yourself, good luck to you. But it isn't right for me. And I'll tell you something, Janie: it isn't right for you either" (138). Marty leaves after this conversation and "moves on with his life," while Janie is left on stage alone. This signifies that men like Marty will not compromise with feminism, which they see as a threat to masculinity, since they feel intimidated by women who are not dependent on men. As McDonough claims, "one is not born a man; one *proves* himself to be one" (13), a reference to De Beauvoir's famous phrase "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (184). Marty cannot prove his masculinity in a relationship with Janie, so he simply gives up and walks away.

Men Who Benefit from Feminism

In her survey of American family history, Ehrenreich states that the agrarian family was a production unit in which all members worked together. This changed with industrialization as production shifted from homes to

factories. In due course, women became bound to the private sphere, and men were forced to enter the public sphere to work for the family's survival. As a result, women became "parasitic" and men became "earning mechanisms," with the economic stability of the family emerging as their uniting goal (4).

According to nineteenth-century socialist feminist writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the capitalist economics of marriage required men to "make and distribute the wealth of the world," with women "earn[ing] their share of it as wives." This placed husbands into "employer" positions with wives as the "employees" (111). However, by the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, a "healthy" man had become someone who delayed marriage, who did not want financially dependent women, and who did not prioritize his own desires (Ehrenreich 12). This was the impact of the "playboy culture" which began in 1953 with the first issue of *Playboy* magazine. Ehrenreich also states that the articles in *Playboy* encouraged men to stay single in order to avoid traditional, oppressive gender roles as the head of the family, and to enjoy their freedom. They were also encouraged to enjoy sex without emotional and financial involvement (Ehrenreich 47-49).

In the light of this information, the other important male character in the play is Paul Stuart, a married man over forty with whom Harriet has an affair. While Marty represents single men who expect to marry the right woman, Paul seeks freedom in sexual affairs to escape the burden of his responsibilities as a husband, father, and provider. Whereas Marty is far more traditional, Paul represents this "liberated" *Playboy* generation. He is looking for new possibilities in midlife and to escape from socially constructed gender roles: "Harriet, do you know that forty percent of the people at McKinsey are having interoffice affairs?" (101). With this statement, Paul declares that having extramarital relationships is the new norm among men, so he suggests having an interoffice affair with Harriet is not a big deal, as long as it is kept secret and does not ruin his comfortable family life. Paul exploits Harriet's liberation by using her for unattached sex: "You are excited. Don't be embarrassed, Beauty. I'll be wonderful for you, Harriet. You'll try to change me, you'll realize you can't and, furthermore, I'm not worth it, so you'll marry some nice investment banker and make your mother happy" (101). In other words, Paul offers excitement and adventure, but does not offer security and commitment.

McDonough claims that during this era, masculinity itself became the new "problem that has no name." Like the 1950s housewives described by Friedan, these men were also dissatisfied despite their advantageous position in society. Such men suddenly felt "limited, confused, and victimized by gender expectations," rather than empowered (9). McDonough also states that feminism was thought to be the cause of this masculinity crisis, as men felt threatened by women and feared "they [were] not living up to an idea of manliness" (11).

Kimmel also compares the problems of 1970s/80s men to those of 1950s/60s women. He states that the mid-1970s saw the emergence of the Men's Liberation Movement, which sought to address a very simple, but crucial, question: "If men were supposed to be so powerful and oppressive, how come so many men were still living lives of quiet desperation?" (202). Kimmel also conveys that men's liberationists challenged gender roles by refusing to use sex as a tool to perform manliness and masculinity (204–205).

Paul represents these male liberationists and in order to liberate, he exploits feminists, such as Harriet, as a way to escape his marriage and the burdens of society. Paul constantly reminds Harriet that they have a liberated relationship based on mutual benefit to ensure that she does not cause any problems, or expect anything more than no-strings-attached sex. When Harriet complains that he degradingly calls everyone "Beauty" and questions if Cathy, Paul's wife, actually exists, Paul reverts to his sexist comfort zone, telling Harriet not to expect too much from him, and suggesting that she is a demanding woman. He also implies that she is becoming "hysterical" because she is afraid of her biological clock as she is unmarried and childless at thirty. In the same way that Marty degrades Janie, Paul patronizes Harriet, educating her on what she really wants in a condescending, paternalistic manner: "Baby, I'm older than you. I've been through this with a lot of women. You want a man who sees you as a potential mother, but also is someone who isn't threatened by your success and is deeply interested in it. And this man should be thought of 'intelligent' by your friends. But when you need him, he should drop whatever it is he's doing and be supportive" (112). Paul differs from men like Marty because he seems to be supportive of women's goals, but ultimately is only out to protect his own interests.

Paul's misogyny surfaces throughout his dialogue with Harriet. He looks down on women who are liberated, claiming that investing time, money, employment, and educational resources in them is a waste since all "career girls" change their minds when they hit thirty (101). He underestimates feminists and trivializes women who pursue careers by labeling them "career girls." Moreover, for Paul, women like Harriet are to have affairs with, not to marry, and he admits that he was raised in a different society: "The girls I date now—the ones like you, the MBAs from Harvard—they want me to be the wife. They want me to be the support system. Well, I can't do that. Harriet, I just wasn't told that's the way it was supposed to be" (113). Paul selects from a wide range of tropes, ranging from traditional to liberated, depending on their convenience. However, they all have the ultimate purpose of reinforcing his selfish decisions. For him, women are sex objects to be used and discarded as soon as they start asking the wrong questions, demand true equality, or threaten his social standing. Like Marty, Paul is obsessed with wielding power over women, and any woman with true career aspirations is

a humiliation. After Paul disappoints Harriet during their dinner with Janie and Marty, Harriet suggests ending the relationship, and Paul replies by asking if she has her period (128). He undervalues Harriet's discontent and does not take her decisions seriously, blaming her disappointment on hysteria caused by menstruation. Wasserstein uses this final insult to signal to Harriet that this degrading relationship is over.

***The Heidi Chronicles* (1988)**

Wasserstein takes a closer look at the Second Wave of Feminism and the Baby Boom generation in *The Heidi Chronicles*.^{6,7} In this Pulitzer Prize-winning work, she chronicles the rise and fall of Second Wave Feminism, between the 1960s and the 1980s, from Heidi's perspective as "someone who was there." *The Heidi Chronicles* begins in 1988 with Heidi's lecture on the role of women in art at Columbia University, where she is a professor of art history. Wasserstein then flashes back to a high school dance in 1965 when Heidi meets Peter, who will be her lifelong friend. In 1968, she meets Scoop who, together with Peter, plays an essential role in Heidi's life. Heidi becomes a feminist in college, joins consciousness-raising groups, and takes part in protests. By the 1980s, most of her feminist friends have left the movement as a result of the "me era" and the backlash against feminism. However, Heidi remains loyal to feminism and feels alone on this path. An unmarried woman, she adopts a baby at the end of the play, which was criticized by feminists as reifying traditional gender roles and promoting conformity when all else "failed."

Peter always supports Heidi and cares for her; however, he loses his interest in time and focuses on his own life more, ignoring what Heidi does or how she feels. On the other hand, Scoop is always assertive, arrogant and tries to impress Heidi with his wit. Heidi knows she cannot have a romantic relationship with Scoop, but does not keep him away from her life. Scoop marries another woman, knowing that marrying Heidi is not possible as she is a self-sufficient feminist who would not be the wife that he wants.

Feminism and Gay Liberation

Wasserstein not only addresses feminist issues in her plays, but also connects them to other transformational movements in American society. The

⁶ *The Heidi Chronicles*, directed by Daniel Sullivan, was first produced by Playwrights Horizons (off Broadway) in 1988, after its workshop production by Seattle Repertory Theatre. The play was produced on Broadway in 1989 (*The Heidi Chronicles* 4).

⁷ *The Heidi Chronicles* reopened on Broadway in 2015. However, it only lasted about three months. Elisabeth Moss, known for her role as Peggy Olson in *Mad Men*, starred as Heidi and was nominated for a Tony Award for her performance.

Gay Liberation Movement is one of those milestones because it urged change in deep-rooted traditions, especially those pertaining to sex, gender, and sexuality. Like feminists involved in the Women's Liberation Movement, gay men began forming consciousness-raising groups, where they shared their personal experiences and traced the roots of their oppression, which were the same roots that oppressed women: a heterosexist patriarchal system (Adam 77–78). In the 1980s, the Gay Liberation Movement expanded to include issues such as AIDS. Barry D. Adam states that the gay community formed support groups to help find treatments, research funding, and a cure (156). Wasserstein comments on this issue through Peter, who reflects the emotional state of LGBTQ people during the AIDS crisis.

In *The Heidi Chronicles*, Wasserstein examines the concerns of women and gay men in tandem, introducing Heidi and Peter, the chief representatives of each group in the play, at the high school dance in act 1 scene 1. This scene takes place in 1965 when homosexuality was not open to discussion; thus, Peter does not directly state that he is gay. Act 1 scene 2 takes place in 1974 when the Gay Liberation Movement had already started. Peter openly declares his homosexuality, coming out of the closet to Heidi at a feminist art protest: “Heidi, I’m gay, okay? I sleep with Stanley Zinc, M.D. And *my* liberation, *my* pursuit of happiness, and the pursuit of happiness of other men like me is just as politically and socially valid as hanging a couple of God-damned paintings [...] I am demanding your equal time and consideration” (29). Here, Peter equates his liberation with women’s liberation and he calls for (heterosexual) feminists to engage in a second great awakening; that is, to acknowledge the plight of LGBTQ individuals who were being excluded by mainstream feminism. He reminds women that they should not think of all men as the “enemy” because gay men, for example, suffer from heterosexism and the dictates of the patriarchal society just as much as they do.

Nevertheless, not all the feminists in the play share Peter’s enthusiasm and dreams of solidarity. When Debbie does not even shake hands with Peter and asks him to leave, Heidi supports Peter and states “But I thought that our point was that this is *our* cultural institution. ‘Our’ meaning everybody’s. Men and women” (29). At this point, Heidi and Peter unite under the banner of “humanism” because they believe that everybody has the right to fulfill her/his potential (Bigsby 348). In short, he compels Heidi to begin thinking about the intersections, and limits, of friendship, feminism, and solidarity—a dilemma she will encounter, once again, towards the end of the play when she suddenly feels abandoned by her feminist sisters.

A later scene, which takes place at a pediatric ward in 1987, also illustrates how Peter has changed due to the impact of AIDS: “I’d say about once

a month now I gather in some church, meeting house or concert hall with handsome men all my own age [...] we listen for half an hour to testimonials, memories, amusing anecdotes about a son, a friend, a lover, also handsome, also usually my own age, whom none of us will see again. After the first, the fifth, or the fifteenth of these gatherings, a sadness like yours seems a luxury" (66). Peter thinks Heidi's discontent pales in comparison to his, and reinforces this using first-person pronouns such as "I," "my," and "we," thereby excluding Heidi. This shows that Peter, who was supportive of Heidi, now prioritizes his own problems now more than ever.

Balakian also affirms that "although gay and feminist characters are such good friends, they do not seem to empathize with the discrimination that each faces" (*Reading the Plays* 92). In that sense, Peter resembles men like activist Warren Farrell, who authored *The Liberated Men* (1974) and organized consciousness-raising groups where he encouraged men to "listen to women rather than dominate," question the politics of marriage, and ponder the relationship between machismo and violence (Faludi 302). However, as Faludi states, Farrell became less enthusiastic when feminism lost its social influence in the 80s, and decided to dedicate his life to fighting for men's rights, organizing workshops to educate women about "men's grievances against them" (303). Like Farrell, Peter feels marginalized by feminists who are not interested in his cause since they are obsessed with their own. He loses his interest in female liberation, and in the end, focuses solely on gay men's problems.

The Male Backlash against Feminism

The other important male character in *The Heidi Chronicles* is Scoop. Like Paul from *Isn't It Romantic*, he uses feminist women as sexual objects and derives pleasure from manipulating, demeaning, and exerting power over them, especially personally and politically. In fact, as a self-professed leftist, he pretends to be sympathetic to feminist causes in order to attract and bed women, even though he is actually a hypermasculine conservative bully. Ehrenreich confirms that when feminists were fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), men were taking advantage of it and were eliding responsibility by using feminist claims like "pregnancy is a woman's choice" to enjoy free, uninhibited sex (147).

Scoop is introduced in act 1, scene 2 at yet another dance, in 1968. As he converses with Heidi, Scoop is confident, patronizing her by claiming that she has "an inferiority complex" (13). Despite being irritating, Scoop manages to impress Heidi with his bravado, arrogance, and machismo. Heidi comments on his self-assurance by questioning mothers "who teach their sons what they never bother to tell their daughters" (15). Women of her generation were taught to be passive, whereas men like Scoop were raised to be assertive and

confident individuals who believed they could get whatever they wanted. Thus, it is not surprising when Scoop casually asks Heidi to go to bed with him—without any hesitation or fear of rejection— and she eventually complies. On the surface, he supports well-educated women, like Heidi, who he believes should not waste their lives making sandwiches: “She shouldn’t. And for that matter, neither should a badly educated woman. Heidella, I’m on your side” (17). Scoop pretends to be a feminist to impress Heidi. Yet, he also devalues feminism to the point where he trivializes the movement as going “‘hog wild,’ demanding equal pay, equal rights, [and] equal orgasms” (17).

As E. Anthony Rotundo states, men reach the top of social and professional life by competing with women, and other men, and often feigning cooperation or “teamwork” (286). In *The Heidi Chronicles*, Scoop competes/cooperates with feminists in order to secure his position in society. He changes Heidi’s name to the diminutive, childish, Heidella, which is the first step in seizing her life. Moreover, when Heidi declines his initial offer of sex, claiming she can take care of herself, Scoop replies: “You’ve already got the lingo down kiddo. Pretty soon, you’ll be burning bras” (17). This presents Scoop’s tendency to “support,” yet ridicule, women’s liberation, acknowledging its power while simultaneously depicting its supporters as crazy fanatics. Although he is aware of the truth, Scoop prefers to devalue feminism and mock feminists. He also humiliates Heidi by using nicknames like “kiddo” or “Heidella.” Like Paul, Scoop underestimates women, especially feminists, trivializing Heidi’s desire to become an art historian as “really suburban” (Balakian, *Reading the Plays* 84).

Michael Kaufman claims that to gain power, which men associate with masculinity, they must engage in a number of activities: “We’ve got to perform and stay in control. We’ve got to conquer, be on top of things, and call the shots. We’ve got to tough it out, provide, and achieve. Meanwhile we learn to beat back our feelings, hide our emotions, and suppress our needs” (148). Accordingly, Scoop never intends to marry Heidi because her feminism and intellect intimidate him: “Let’s say we married and I asked you to devote the, say, next ten years of your life to me. To making me a home and a family and a life so secure that I could with some confidence go out into the world each day and attempt to get an ‘A.’ You’d say ‘No.’ You’d say ‘Why can’t we be partners? Why can’t we both go out into the world and get an ‘A?’” And you’d be absolutely valid and correct” (38). Scoop is afraid of Heidi because he would be competing with her if they married. If he marries Heidi, he will lose his power.

Clearly, Scoop is influenced by the backlash against feminism, which proclaimed women’s liberation as the new American curse (Faludi xvii). Scoop conveys that Heidi is assertive, successful, and not as needy as she should be, and that her independence is not an attribute, but rather a detriment that will

eventually lead to the breakdown of their relationship. Thus, he suppresses his feelings for her and marries Lisa, a woman who is inferior, whom he can control, and who will allow him to go out and get an A. According to Scoop, Lisa is not an "A+" like Heidi, but as he expresses, "I don't want to come home to an "A+." "A-" maybe, but not "A+" (38). Being an "A+" challenges Scoop's intellectual authority and manhood as the head of the family. Wishing to secure his position as the superior breadwinner, Scoop joins the conservative backlash against women.

Scoop continues to take advantage of feminists even after he marries, like Paul in *Isn't It Romantic*. Despite his marriage, Scoop has an affair with a colleague who Balakian characterizes as a "phony feminist" (*Reading the Plays* 94), and who may be the perfect match for Scoop's phony liberalism. Scoop "is, as he admits, or perhaps boasts, arrogant, difficult and smart. He has the confidence [Heidi] lacks" (Bigsby 347), and he never lets Heidi, the professor with numerous graduate degrees, forget it.

Conclusion

Isn't It Romantic addresses the problems that arose from feminism with a great deal of candor and honesty. Society was not ready for change, and men were the first to react. Marty and Paul illustrate how men felt when the values of society and feminism were juxtaposed. Bigsby confirms that *Isn't It Romantic* is not only about women, for "the men are no less baffled by the world in which they find themselves" (343).

The Heidi Chronicles illustrates that the ideologies and concerns of American society are constantly changing, yet Scoop is able to survive by integrating himself into the mainstream, conservative world of the 1980s. He understands the complexities of feminism and takes advantage of them to secure his place in this competitive world. On the other hand, Peter represents the interaction of the two causes—the gay and feminist movements—which preceded the "me" era of the 1980s. However, he loses his interest in feminism as a result of the AIDS crisis. His tone changes from optimism to pessimism by the end of the play, reflecting the mood of gays who were struggling to survive in a heterosexist society. Bigsby sees this shift as indicative of the changes within American society, which "lost its structure and purpose" in the 1980s (353).

Both plays address issues like the complexity of male/female relationships, Jewishness, and sexism (Balakian, *Wendy Wasserstein* 218). The male characters in these plays all support and reject the strict rules of American patriarchy, depending on the situation. The plays show that men, who were not ready for a change in the 1980s, felt their manhood was in danger; thus, they failed to keep up with the demands of women in their lives while using their liberation to their advantage.

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THE VOICES OF GENDER RECONSTRUCTING HISTORY IN DORIS LESSING'S *THE CLEFT*

ELISABETA SIMONA CATANĂ¹

ABSTRACT. *The Voices of Gender Reconstructing History in Doris Lessing's The Cleft.* This essay analyses Doris Lessing's vision upon history as a postmodernist story written from a masculine and from a feminine perspective according to the narrators' specific gender. It shows that the voices of gender lay the groundwork for subjective, gender-biased discourses on the history of gender relations, on the evolution of the male-female relationships in time. The capacity of gender to influence the protagonists' vision upon history as well as the development of their cognitive and linguistic abilities will be focused on in this essay.

Keywords: *gender, voices, the feminine principle, the masculine principle, history, story, language competency, sexuality, vision.*

REZUMAT. *Reconstruirea istoriei prin vocea genului în romanul Mitra de Doris Lessing.* Eseul analizează viziunea scriitoarei Doris Lessing asupra istoriei ca poveste postmodernistă scrisă dintr-o perspectivă masculină și dintr-o perspectivă feminină în funcție de genul specific al naratorilor. Eseul arată că vocile genului naratorilor pun bazele discursurilor lor subiective și părtinitoare despre istoria evoluției relațiilor dintre genuri, dintre bărbați și femei în timp. Capacitatea unui gen de a influența viziunea protagoniștilor asupra istoriei și dezvoltarea abilităților lingvistice și cognitive ale acestora va fi scoasă în evidență în acest eseu.

Cuvinte cheie: *gen, voci, principiul feminin, principiul masculin, istorie, poveste, competență lingvistică, sexualitate, viziune.*

Introduction

Explaining the importance of acknowledging the essence of our world and of our history as being defined by male and female voices and focusing on the evolution of the relations between males and females in time, Doris

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Lessing's *The Cleft* (2007) approaches an imaginary history of the development of human race, human feelings and mentality from a feminine and from a masculine perspective. This essay shows that the alternating accounts in Doris Lessing's novel, Maire's account and the Roman historian's account, evince gender-biased discourses wherein history is presented from a biased perspective influenced by the narrator's gender. Reconstructing a dim and distant past, the two stories enlarge upon a series of events which may have caused the present evolution of the male-female relationships. The feminine voice of Maire and the masculine voice of the Roman historian, who keeps his name anonymous, account for the different interpretations of history in time. In a postmodernist fashion, history is presented as a story told from a certain perspective – the feminine or the masculine perspective – which is gender-biased. Gender influences one's vision and interpretation of history, of the past and the present. The voices of gender account for the differences of mentality and perspective in reconstructing ancient history in Doris Lessing's novel.

As a symbol, the title of the novel, *The Cleft*, stands for the crossroads of life and history. It is the females' cleft which allows human life to be given birth to. It is the females' cleft which allows the coming out of new generations with new stories and history. In Doris Lessing's novel, *the Cleft*, which "rises out of the Killing Rock" (Lessing 12), allows red flowers to grow and life to exist. It is also the pit of a volcano which swallows human life following the humans' careless acts. It symbolizes the human sacrifice in history, the crossroads of life and death. According to Maire, the narrator of her story, this sacrifice is necessary for the females' normal life: "But we know that if we don't cut the red flowers (...) if we don't do that, we will not have our flow" (Lessing 9). The females in the novel are called the Clefts. As the spokesperson of the Clefts, Maire explains the importance of the Cleft to them:

The Cleft is that rock there, which isn't the entrance to a cave, it is blind, and it is the most important thing in our lives. It has always been so. We are The Cleft. The Cleft is us, and we have always made sure it is kept free of saplings that might grow into trees, free of bushes (Lessing 10).

The Cleft allows nature and divinity to cultivate the seed of life and to maintain the flow of human existence. The same as the females' cleft allows them to make the continuation of life possible by giving birth to children, the cleft in heavens allows the begetter of life or the spirit of God to turn up in order to protect the abandoned baby boys' lives. In Doris Lessing's novel, the spirit of divinity is represented by the eagle which protects the boys' lives. Thus, every time a Cleft gives birth to a boy, which they call "Monster" (Lessing 23) and which they condemn to death by abandoning him on the Killing Rock, an eagle

turns up in order to save him, fighting for his life and taking him to a valley where the male community could live and develop.

The importance of the cleft is appreciated differently by the male and the female protagonists. To the females, the cleft is a sacred place and a symbol of the feminine principle. To the males, it is a burden which lies heavily upon their minds as it used to be their killing place in an ancient past they can hardly remember. It is the males who finally destroy the Cleft in the mountain setting the stage for an Age of New History and Stories.

The Voices of Gender Reconstructing Ancient History

As long as a unique omniscient perspective upon history and the past does not exist, the two narrators, Maire and the anonymous Roman historian, make many references to the existence and the content of the females' historical records and of the males' historical records whose versions of history sometimes differ and sometimes coincide. History is recreated by the females and the males' vision upon the past, upon the order of things in the Universe, upon the evolution of life and human relations in time. It is marked by many questions and inexact details about the precise time when the events presented took place. Both the Roman historian's account and Maire's account are replete with questions and personal interpretations. Legends, myths, songs and the alleged historical documents investigated by the Roman historian are reinterpreted from a feminine and from a masculine perspective. The voices of gender reconstruct history and the past.

Maire's account presents the females as the first human beings on Earth, endowed with a self-sufficient gender and the power to become pregnant and give birth without any previous sexual intercourse with a male. According to this account, the feminine principle gave birth to the masculine principle, viewed as inferior and as the abject *Other*. Maire's story goes back to an ancient history when women were associated with sea creatures, having a world apart and giving birth to children without having ever known any man or without having ever had any relationship with any man. They used to abandon their baby boys on the Killing Rock without feeling any remorse. Maire's story enlarges upon the image of an ancient powerful woman too satisfied with her human condition and too close to Mother Nature that nothing could determine her to try to broaden her cognitive and life experience by tasting the apple of knowledge associated with understanding the different world beyond the women's shore. The "old shes" (Lessing 10), who, according to the historian's account, used to call themselves "people" (Lessing 65), without including the males into this category, lived on a prehistoric shore, having the sea as their habitat and the moon as their shelter. The feminine principle used to be the unique principle ruling the world. It was the primordial principle beyond the

body and the visible world. This idea is analysed by Judith Butler (1993) in *Bodies that Matter. On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* where she tries to define the essence of the feminine:

The problem is not that the feminine is made to stand for matter or for universality; rather, the feminine is cast outside the form/matter and universal/particular binarisms. She will be neither the one nor the other, but the permanent and unchangeable condition of both – what can be construed as a nonthematizable materiality. She will be entered, and will give forth a further instance of what enters her, but she will never resemble either the formative principle or that which it creates (Butler 1993:42).

In Doris Lessing's novel, the old females used to reject the masculine principle or the boys who were associated with the abject *Other*, the peripheral, the ugly *Other*. They never experienced any maternal feelings or human feelings for the *Other* represented by their own baby boys. Their conservative nature marked their destiny until one of their kind decided to leave their shore, to cross the mountain to see what is new beyond it. The first Cleft to have reached the boys' valley was raped to death. The second Cleft to have arrived in the boys' valley was Maire who came to know and understand the boys' different gender and sexuality.

Maire's discourse focuses on women's gifts and qualities as compared to men's qualities and gifts viewed as poor and inferior. Her account speaks about her own experience, presenting history from her feminine perspective. She turns into a postmodernist narrator and heroine whose feminine voice and experience make history a mere story. At this point, we should quote Linda Hutcheon (2002) who has thoroughly analysed the postmodern means of representing history in literary texts, including one's subjective personal experiences reflected in writing history:

Besides the postmodern self-consciousness here about the paradoxes and problems of historical representation (and self-representation), there is also a very feminist awareness of the value of experience and the importance of its representation in the form of 'life-writing' – however difficult or even falsifying that process might turn out to be (Hutcheon 2002: 162).

Maire's discourse plays down men's abilities and gifts in a straightforward manner. Telling the story of the merciful female Cleft who decided to cross the mountain in order to feed the newly-born boys, Maire proudly comments that "there is always milk in our breasts. Our breasts are useful. Not like yours" (Lessing 19). She evinces the physical differences between males and females in order to highlight their gifts, advantages and usefulness, leaving open question marks for our further interpretation: "That was when the

idea first happened to us that the Monsters' tubes were for making eggs, and if so why and what for?" (Lessing 20). Maire admits that there are various accounts regarding the evolution of the relations between women and men in time, insisting on the dichotomy *he # she, I # we*. The direct representation of these first relations in snapshots of bare sexuality, turn pornography into an artistic means of depicting the male-female relationships: "Some of the young ones went over the hill and when the Monsters saw them, they grabbed them and put their tubes into them, and that is how we became Hes and Shes, and learned to say I as well as we – but after that there are several stories, not one" (Lessing 20). She questions the truth of the stories accounting for the evolution of the female-male relationships: "There are many stories and who knows which one is true? And some time after that, we, the Clefts lost the power to give birth without them, the Monsters – without you" (Lessing 20-21). The first sexual relationships between males and females have laid the groundwork for acknowledging gender and sexuality differences as well as for accepting the feminine and the masculine principle as interdependent for life to go on.

The Roman historian, who associates himself with a "Monster" (Lessing 23), makes comments on Maire's story, having a biased male discourse and looking down on women's character, qualities and vision. He makes a distinction between the females' "official story" (Lessing 23) and his own "official story" (Lessing 23-26), focusing on the differences of approaching historical truth. He evinces the women's biased vision transmitted from generation to generation and the omission of bits of historical truth in the females' accounts so that they could tell only the part of the story that gives them an advantage. Admitting that we just read stories wherein history is reconstructed either from the females or from the males' perspective, Doris Lessing's novel proves its condition of "metafiction" as defined by Patricia Waugh (1984). The anonymous Roman historian shows that the parts of the stories incriminating women's past actions have been intentionally omitted from the females' accounts but have been included in the males' tales and offered to the future generations for interpretation. Historical truth is to be discovered by considering both the females and the males' stories and perspective and by putting them together in order to create the big picture of the past. The male narrator remarks that his account is based on facts and appreciates the females' manner of presenting history: "The method used by the females, the careful repetition, word by word, and then the handing down to the next generation, every word compared and checked, by a method of parallel Lines of Memories, is a very efficient preserver of history" (Lessing 26). In his view, truth lies hidden in a prison. It is not only revealed by the females and the males in their accounts but also by drawings on ceramics: "You would be surprised at the mass of material in our – I jokingly called them prisons. Yes, this, I am afraid, is the joke used by us official warders of the forbidden truth" (Lessing 26).

Having a discourse marked by male prejudices preserved in history from generation to generation, the anonymous Roman historian views the *shes* as inferior to men: “We are the senior, they our creation” (Lessing 25-26). He rejects the idea that the females appeared the first in history and associates the males with the “eagle people” (Lessing 27) and “the rulers” (Lessing 28). According to his account, “males are always put first, in our practice. They are first in our society, despite the influence of certain great ladies of the noble Houses” (Lessing 28). He presents the women as not endowed with curiosity and interest in their past history. In his view, ancient women were naïve as they took myths and legends for granted without questioning their ideas and truth: “Their minds were not set for questions, even a mild interest. They believed – but it was not a belief they would defend or contest – that a Fish brought them from the Moon. When was that? Long, slow, puzzled stares. They were hatched from the moon’s eggs” (Lessing 31). The fact that the Clefts “lived in an eternal present” (Lessing 31) evinces the women’s conservative character, their unity with Mother Nature and the sea which have never changed ever since the beginning of times. In their ancient past, women seemed to be living in a dream shattered by the Monsters’ birth and survival beyond *their shore*: “It was not the first Monster that shocked them out of their dream” (Lessing 32); “Shock after shock was felt by this community of dreaming creatures and it was their helpless panic that caused their cruelty” (Lessing 33). The male narrator hints at the hatred of the males against the females which might have been caused by the females’ old habit of abandoning the baby boys on the Killing Rock and by their cruelty towards these baby boys: “We knew we hated the Clefts though we did not remember anything of our earliest days, of being put out on the Killing Rock, or being carried over the mountain by the eagles” (Lessing 29). As the narrator shows, the males dislike the females’ different anatomy. If the females view the males as “monsters”, the males are not attracted by the opposite gender at all: “Those large pale things rolling in the waves, with their disgusting clefts, which we saw for the first time, and as we looked, from the cleft of one of those slow lolling creatures emerged a bloody small-sized thing. We saw it was a tiny Cleft” (Lessing 29).

The historian’s account just presents his own vision and interpretation of the past based on the sources he has investigated: “Yes, yes, previous attempts at solving the mystery have offered solutions more like myths than probabilities. How did the community of males begin?” (Lessing 34-35). To understand the past better, he makes associations between Romulus and Remus’s story and the story of the baby boys abandoned by the Clefts on the Killing Rock, saved by the eagles and fed by the does in the forest. Retelling what the preserved ancient “chronicles” (Lessing 40) and songs revealed about the boys rejected by the Clefts and saved by the eagles, the anonymous historian keeps asking questions about certain missing details related to the events he presents. His comments on the “chronicles” (Lessing 40) make a new story which gives rise to other questions as

our food for thought: "Soon there was a community of young males, we do not know how many. The chroniclers did not go in for exactitude" (Lessing 40).

Depicting the boys' sexual drives, desires and the sexual intercourses in a straightforward manner, the Roman narrator's gifted hand turns pornography into an artistic representation of the male-female sexual relationships. The story of the young Cleft who decided to leave her shore to discover the land beyond it, the land of the *Monsters*, presents the progress of the females' mentality regarding their relations with the opposite sex and gender. The young Cleft analyses the boys' anatomy, lifestyle and surroundings and, as compared to her fellow female relatives, she shows her interest in developing human civilized relations with the boys, acknowledging the gender differences.

She was staring at their fronts, where the protuberances were. They did not seem horrible now (Lessing 52).

Driven as she was, she put out a hand to touch his protuberance, the terrifying thing (...) at once it rose up into her hand and she felt it throb and pulse. What had driven her here was an imperative, and in a moment she and this alien were together, and his tube was inside her and behaved as its name suggested" (Lessing 52-53).

Not only do the protagonists become conscious of their differences following their heterosexual relationships, but also the concepts of the masculine and the feminine sex and gender take on their specific meanings in their minds. This idea is enlarged upon by Judith Butler (1990) in *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* where she defines the concepts of gender, sex and desire:

Gender can denote a unity of experience, of sex, gender, and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender – where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self – and desire – where desire is heterosexual and therefore differentiates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires. The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality (Butler 1990: 30-31).

Discovering the different *other* helps the females to understand the essence of the world which comprises the feminine and the masculine principle. The females' curiosity leads to their knowledge and understanding of their own human condition marked by gender differences. This moment of illumination can be associated with the Big Bang phenomenon as it marks the power of gender differences to create a new world with a new history: "Without males, or Monsters, no need ever to think that they were Clefts; without the opposite, no need to claim what they were. When the first baby Monster was born, Male and Female was born too, because before that were simply, the people" (Lessing 78).

Gender pride and gender consciousness give rise to specific reactions. The dialogue between the boy and the Cleft girl curious about their different anatomy shows that both of them are sexually and gender proud. The boy's theatrical gestures boasting about his physical qualities, anatomy and sexuality indicate the males' gender pride, their feeling of superiority over the females. Through the voice of children, who are said to always speak the truth, the dialogue parodies the males' pride and prejudices. We witness a well-directed play which turns the male character into a superior being and the female character into a tragic heroine:

'Because I am a boy', announces the child, and what he is saying dictates a whole series of postures. He thrusts out his pelvis, and makes some jerky movements which he seems to associate with some game. He holds the tip of his penis down and releases it in a springing gesture. All the time he frowns belligerently, not at his sister, but probably at some imaginary male antagonist (Lessing 53).

The little girl, seeing all these achievements, none of which are possible to her, frowns, looks down at her centre and says, 'But I am nicer than you' (...) 'My pee-thing is better than your pee-thing' (Lessing 54).

This play is echoed by the dialogue between the two children of the anonymous historian. The new dialogue between his two children mirrors the dialogue between the children of the past, which is presented as based on historical documents. The same as the above-mentioned dialogue between the Cleft girl and the boy, Lydia and Titus's dialogue about their different anatomy reveals the boy's pride in terms of his sexuality and gender and the girl's feelings hurt by the boy's boastful, proud and superior attitude. Her hurt feelings and reactions turn her into a tragic heroine:

She was intrigued, shocked, envious, repelled – she was gripped by strong contradictory emotions. (...) At this Titus pushed forward his equipment, and began wagging his penis up and down, looking at her with lordly air. 'It's mine, it's mine', he chanted and said, 'And what have you got? You haven't got anything (Lessing 60-61).

'I think it's ugly, you are horrible', she states, comes nearer to him, and says, 'I want it' (Lessing 61).

To further insist on the image of woman as a tragic heroine, the Roman narrator tells us the story of Horsa and Maronna, whose different vision and approaches of life, different types of reactions and arguments hint at the clichés regarding the gender differences in terms of mentality, communication and behaviour. Horsa is the imposing male leader who makes decisions by himself and who is too proud to openly accept Maronna's criticism and advice. He is the Roman "coloniser" (Lessing 216) whose historical mission of conquering new territories is

more important than his brothers and children's sacrifice and lost lives. Maronna represents the devoted and caring mother who keeps scolding Horsa for his careless attitude towards the children he takes on his secret missions across the sea. Her reactions betray her inner pain and tragedy: "Maronna was weeping with anger and frustration and humiliation, and she was tired: it was a good long way from the women's shore to this one" (Lessing 189). As her efforts to convince Horsa of the importance of her advice and arguments have not been successful, she becomes a tragic heroine who mourns her dead children and her human condition. Nevertheless, she finally forgives Horsa, her own son who understands his mistakes and sins and gives in to her love and mercy:

He was trembling, he was limp with the grief he now genuinely did feel, because her agony of grief was telling him what an enormity he had committed. And she saw this, understood it. She saw, and really took in that pitiful leg, the shrivelled, twisted leg (Lessing 257).

The greater the capitulation to the female, the greater there will be the recoil (Lessing 258).

Forgiving her son, Maronna takes her condition of mother for granted. She accepts the start of a new life marked by the destruction of the Cleft by Horsa's boys. The all-encompassing and self-sufficient feminine principle represented by the Cleft loses its power and gives in to the masculine principle. Swallowing her pride and taking the destruction of the Cleft for granted, the female gives in to historical change initiated by the males. Maronna overcomes her tragedy by her strong capacity to empathize with her son and with the world she feels she has to take care of. The female's strong sense of duty for the world urges her to overcome her own tragedy. Her voice represents the caring and loving mother's voice that survives history, raising the males' consciousness on life issues. Maronna, the tragic heroine, who can be associated with a Greek heroine on the stage of Doris Lessing's novel, remains superior to men, acting as a model to be followed by them. In line with this idea, in the essay, *Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama*, F. I. Zeitlin (2002) argues that the "theater uses the feminine for the purposes of imagining a fuller model for the masculine self" (in McClure 2002: 122).

The Impact of Gender and Sexuality on Language Competency

Evincing the strong relationship between the progress of humankind's knowledge, mentality, social relations and the progress of their language in time, Doris Lessing's novel, *The Cleft*, offers a particular vision on the way sexuality and gender have marked the evolution of the males and the females' linguistic competency in time. Language is viewed as the attribute of progressive females

interested in broadening their cultural horizon, in improving their knowledge experiences. Language comes easy to the females whose voices speak for an ancient Mother Nature-influenced spirituality and knowledge. As the males' voices are seen as influenced by their sexuality, by their sexual needs and impulses, their language is less evolved, being associated with the stage of childish communication. Their sexuality dominates their mode of thinking, of acting and of communicating:

The males – with their restless, ever-responding squirts, which were sometimes large, sometimes limp, but mostly stiff with need, so that it was unpleasant for them to bump into a bush or tall grass – did not know that their hungry wanting, their need, was the voice of their own Squirts down there, but felt as if it were their whole selves that wanted and needed (Lessing 88).

Only the two young Clefts, Maire and Astre, who decided on leaving *their shore* in order to improve their knowledge experiences, could speak an evolved language. Understanding the *other* world beyond *their shore*, acknowledging the anatomical differences between their bodies and the males' bodies, they get the power of discourse to express the essence of the world. Their bodies and mind are no longer passive but active and can generate an articulate discourse. According to Judith Butler (1990), “any theory of the cultural constructed body, however, ought to question ‘the body’ as a construct of suspect generality when it is figured as passive and prior to discourse” (Butler 1990: 176). Therefore, the feminine and the masculine principles dominated the world and defined human bodies before any discourse could express this fact. We can say that discourse appears and develops when the subject, be that male or female, acknowledges the essence of the world as feminine and masculine, understanding the complexity and the role of his/her anatomical body, the importance of gender differences. The two females' mind could process a new linguistic reality following their acknowledgement of the feminine and the masculine principles which are the essence of the world and which contribute to the evolution of life and of Logos (The Word). The females are the initiators of linguistic progress whose importance the males become aware of: “The Clefts' speech was clearer and better. They tried to remember words used by Maire, and how she put them together. But they didn't know enough, they knew so little” (Lessing 69). Women have the gift of speaking which they share with the males in an interactive way so that reciprocal learning could round up their education:

We have accounts of the visit of the two girls, Maire and Astre, from the male records – ours – and from the Clefts' histories. They do not disagree, and both insist that what the boys wanted now were lessons how to speak. Listening to the Clefts, they had learned of their clumsiness. Both sides were learning fast from the other, particularly as the more they learned, the more they knew how much there was for them to know (Lessing 74).

Not only do the two young Clefts become aware of their evolved language and of their gift of speaking in an articulate, accurate way but they also experience feelings they have never had before and broaden their perspective on life, on the *other* associated with the males. Seeing how her own baby boy is fed by the doe in the forest and understanding his need for a mother, Astre experiences the feeling of pity for all the children abandoned by the Clefts, acknowledging her maternal responsibility for the future of the coming generations. According to the Roman historian, Astre's strong and deep feelings are evoked in his account following his own analysis and interpretation of reality: "This historian is allowing Astre tears, though none was ever recorded in any document we have" (Lessing 71). Therefore, history becomes a story told by a historian-narrator who admits that his vision and his own interpretation of the past have marked his story.

In Doris Lessing's novel, gender and sexuality are presented as playing an important role in the progress of the world and history as well as in the progress of language competency. It is the females' gender which promotes the development of language for an accurate communication of the latest states of affairs, states of mind, feelings, historical progress, knowledge progress. Maire and Astre's story evinces the importance of improving one's knowledge experiences for developing one's linguistic competency. The two female characters are associated with the "founders of families, clans, tribes" (Lessing 102), "the first mothers of our race, carrying in their wombs the babes who were both Cleft and Other" (Lessing 102), the promoters of moral values, the speakers of an evolved language which is their attribute. They teach this evolved language to the boys who admit the females' linguistic superiority. On the spur of an instinctive, primitive sexuality, the boys' language cannot evolve unless they overcome their barbarian state of existence, their primitive sexual impulses. As they notice the linguistic differences between them and the females, being eager to learn a more evolved language, the males can broaden their cultural and linguistic horizon only in their social relations with the females: "They all practised among themselves the language spoken by Maire and Astre. They were proud to be leaving behind infantile babble" (Lessing 89). Due to its attributes of making the birth of life possible and of driving the evolution of Logos (The Word), the females' gender contributes to the males' progress in terms of linguistic competency. As the world is male and female essence, the feminine and the masculine principle complement each other, causing knowledge and language to develop.

Conclusion

Accounting for the pre-eminence of the feminine gender at the beginning of the world, Doris Lessing's postmodernist novel, *The Cleft*, shows that history, which is nothing but a story, is reconstructed according to the different vision,

approach and mentality pertaining to the feminine and the masculine storytellers. The voices of gender reconstruct history and the past and put forth subjective, gender-biased discourses. Maire's account and the Roman historian's account, which approach the same subject of the evolution of the relations between the males and the females in time, demonstrate the idea that history is subject to our own interpretation. One's gender influences one's approach to history and the past. As the masculine and the feminine gender complement each other, we have to put both perspectives together in order to analyse and understand the past and history based on our cultural and gender experiences which we cannot escape.

Not only is history reconstructed and reinterpreted by the females' voices represented by Maire and by the males' voices represented by the Roman historian, but so is gender. In Maire's account, the feminine gender is viewed as superior to the masculine gender in terms of cognitive and linguistic capacities. Accepting and understanding the masculine principle, the feminine gender brings about progress in mentality, in language, in history. Developing a growing consciousness of the needs of the world, of gender differences whose joint efforts cause the world to make progress, the females accept the importance of the masculine principle, forgiving the males' sins and coping with the destruction of the Cleft. The feminine protagonists facilitate cooperation with the masculine protagonists for the world's benefit and harmony. In Doris Lessing's novel, the feminine principle is associated with intelligence and open-mindedness, accepting the masculine principle for the harmonious progress of humankind, history and Logos (The Word). Viewed as superior to the masculine gender, the feminine gender is subject to stories and various interpretations the same as history and the past.

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MAD MEN: LOOKING BACK IN WONDER

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ABSTRACT. *Mad Men: Looking Back in Wonder.* This study focuses on the literary roots of the popular television series *Mad Men*, namely Sloan Wilson's 1955 novel *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and Richard Yates 1961 debut novel *Revolutionary Road*, and on the genuine dialogue in which they engage at the level of character portrayal and argument. Their intertextual triangle offers an illustrative example of cultural recycling and re-contextualizing of 1960's domestic and professional dilemmas for a twenty-first century medium and public. The success and longevity of *Mad Men* are raised upon the constant appeal of this tumultuous decade for contemporary audiences and capitalize on the universality of the issues it foregrounded.

Keywords: *cultural dialogue, intertextuality, the 1960s, domestic culture, gender roles, melodrama, tragedy.*

REZUMAT. *Mad Men: cu privirea peste umăr.* Acest studiu analizează rădăcinile literare ale popularului serial de televiziune *Mad Men*, și anume romanul lui Sloan Wilson *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1955) și cel de debut al lui Richard Yates, *Revolutionary Road* (1961), și dialogul lor la nivelul portretizării personajelor și al argumentului general. Acest triunghi intertextual oferă un exemplu de reciclare culturală și de recontextualizare a dilemelor profesionale și domestice ale anilor '60, pentru un public și un medium de reprezentare din secolul al XXI-lea. Succesul și longevitatea serialului se bazează pe fascinația pe care o exercită această furtunoasă decadă asupra audienței contemporane și valorifică universalitatea problematicilor avansate.

Cuvinte-cheie: *dialog cultural, intertextualitate, anii '60, cultură domestică, roluri de gen, melodramă, tragedie.*

Like most clichés, the term 'American Dream' has come to denote almost everything and nothing at the same time and, occasionally, to connote

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diametrically opposed notions. Historical, social and cultural forces have molded what was once thought of as the United States national ethos into various avatars which, nevertheless, maintain a certain degree of resemblance with the original matrix, whose defining characteristic is the idea of liberty and individual agency.

Home ownership and life in the suburbia have been considered the dream of every American in the post-World War II era. The television series *Mad Men* rehearses this topic extensively and revises it for a 21st-century audience. This study analyzes the popular television drama as a re-reading of previous literary works on the emerging corporate culture of the 1960's, such as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *Revolutionary Road*, with an emphasis on how the series reflects the iconic portrayal of domestic relations and gender roles.

The 2008 film adaptation of the 1962 novel *Revolutionary Road* and the popular *Mad Men* TV series speak eloquently for the relevance of the 1960's and the cultural constructs associated with this decade for contemporary audiences. This paper sets out to delineate the cultural legacy of fictional literary couples such as the Raths and the Wheelers for the Drapers and aims at disentangling the woman's voice from the seemingly harmonic domestic duets of 1960's American suburbia and their echoes in today's popular imagination.

Mad Men, the contemporary bellwether in popular portrayals of an almost mythical era, induces all sorts of cultural déjà vu-s. The show's rich inter-textual dimension unfolds in several directions. For me, the first and most striking allusion the series sustains is the dialogue it engages in with literary predecessors, two classic American novels and their screen adaptations: *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *Revolutionary Road*. This fictional triangle constitutes the best example of what David Fishelov refers to as "dialogic fiction." I prefer his term, 'dialogic,' to Julia Kristeva's more generic concept, 'intertextual,' because the former is more descriptive and because it allows for a better, more generous understanding of a work's canonicity, based on the idea that "the way for a book to build its reputation as a great book is by inspiring many and diverse types of literary, artistic, and critical dialogues." (Fishelov 340) This theoretical viewpoint is detached from both the integral subjectivity of the aesthetic school and the built-in relativism of the different schools of Marxism, yet it reconciles the two major critical traditions which explain canon formation, by stressing the importance of the inspiring source-text, namely its inherent, aesthetic merits, and by placing great emphasis on the historical and social circumstances in which a work is produced, received, criticized and, generally, engaged with. (Fishelov 348-349)

As in real life, dialogues between and among books may take the form of "genuine" or "pseudo" conversations, depending on the nature of their exchange. (Fishelov 336) When the responding text refracts the original text in a creative way, the result is a genuine dialogue. The purpose of my paper is to determine the way in

which *Mad Men* engages its literary precursors at the level of its portrayal of middle-class domesticity and whether or not their exchange is an imaginative one.

My interpretive bet does not rest on grounds of authorial intent, I am not interested in the influence the creators of *Mad Men* have or have not acknowledged with regards to such literary and film landmarks as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *Revolutionary Road*. Instead, my analysis follows the narrative threads and character development in the two novels and respective features and builds on Umberto Eco's model of reception and his trust that the ultimate and most reliable basis for comprehension and interpretation lies at the intersection of the text's and the reader's intention. (Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* 3) That creative crossroads is rife with multiple readings, which, individually, can do justice to an interpretive possibility, and, collectively form the interpretive aura or potential for interpretation of a given text. (Eco, *The Role of the Reader. Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* 58-59)

The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit (1955) starts off to probe the troubles of a young couple in suburban Connecticut in the mid-1950s and ends on an anticlimactic note, by diagnosing their crisis as a case of universal malaise, a passing fit that couples everywhere experience only to come out of it stronger and more aware of themselves and of the challenges marriage entails. Tom and Betsy Rath have been married for seven years, have three children and live in a house they have both grown to dislike and neglect tacitly. Tom works at the Schanenhauser Foundation and Betsy is a housewife. He doesn't particularly like the job his grandmother secured him and she complains that their income doesn't cover their growing family needs and that their marriage isn't "fun" anymore. When the opportunity for a better job arises, Betsy urges her husband to seize it. Meanwhile, she embarks on a real estate adventure once Tom's grandmother dies and they inherit her mansion and surrounding land. Tom's new position at the United Broadcasting Corporation pays better, but comes with a looming threat attached: his worst fear of becoming yet another "gray flannel suit" is gnawing at him with every day he spends with the president, Mr. Hopkins, working on speeches and proposals for a national mental health project in which he has no interest. Things get complicated when a chance meeting with a war buddy reveals to him the existence of a son from a brief, yet intense affair he had with an Italian young woman, when he was stationed in Rome during the war. Tom's already shaken marriage suffers a blow, but survives due to his honesty and Betsy's understanding, while his professional life improves, too, due to his boss' acceptance that his first and foremost commitment lies with his family. Finally, the lawsuit Tom's grandmother's butler brought upon the Rathes proves the former to be a charlatan and opens the way for Betsy's entrepreneurial spirit. All's well that ends well. In other words, problem diagnosed, palliative administered, case closed, audience happy.

Revolutionary Road (1961) reopens the case shortly after *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* was turned into a movie, in 1956. In contrast to its predecessor, it showcases the wife in the lead role as coagulator of energies and provider of solutions to her own problems and the couple's marital deadlock. Whereas in Wilson's novel the woman's escape from a Levittown community, where she finds everybody and everything to be "dull," is into an upper middle class suburb, in Yates' domestic drama, the wife plans a major relocation for her family, from suburban Connecticut to Paris, assumes the breadwinner's role as potential secretary in NATO's French headquarters and grants her husband the luxury of discovering a grand purpose for himself. Only that her plan is predicated on the bovaric assumption that their presence in the Revolutionary Road residential development represents a condescending concession they were making to their times and a temporary detour on their way to a different, i.e. special existence.

The book was short-listed for the National Book Award in 1962, but lost to *The Moviegoer* and it was not until 2008 that a screen adaptation was finally made possible. The film met with relatively positive reviews, which speaks for the importance of its topic as well as for its capacity to translate and externalize a rather unconventional narrative style. The acute perceived feeling of being trapped in a predetermined social pattern with no possibility of ever being able to escape is what sparks the Wheelers' wish to trade their comfortable suburbanite existence for a bohemian life in Paris. April's enthusiasm is catching and the couple lives in total bliss for a while, until the hard reality of a new unwanted pregnancy and Frank's hesitations interrupt it violently. April dies trying to perform her own abortion, Frank, a shattered man, moves to the city and dedicates his life to the upbringing of his two children, while a new couple moves into 115 Revolutionary Road. The Wheelers' alternative dream seems to have succumbed to the all-American suburbanite ideal, except that this conclusion is invalidated by the silent dramas the other unhappy inhabitants of the same community are experiencing with false dignity. Taking the thematic thrusts of its easily recognizable literary precedent a step forward, *Revolutionary Road* adds a tragic dimension to the melodramatic reconciliation-as-resistance which the predecessors' protagonists put up against the conformity of middle-class American way of life.

April invests her husband with qualities he has never possessed because it gives her the illusion that she has traded an artistic career for an equally exceptional destiny. She fails, ironically enough, when it comes to acting out the escapist script she has dreamed up. She crumbles under the act she has to keep putting up although she detests the role in which she has been cast by society and by her initial conformist choices. *Revolutionary Road* opens with the amateur performance of Robert Sherwood's 1935 play *The Petrified Forest*, which turns into a fiasco. April, who has the leading part, takes things personally, as a reminder of her failure as a professional actress. The play within the novel narrative strategy constitutes, in my opinion, an embedded interpretive

suggestion for an informed audience. The story in *Revolutionary Road* begins to unfold in 1955, the same year when the live televised version *The Petrified Forest* was released. Inevitably, this structural detail casts a long shadow over April's development as a character. April identifies with Gabrielle, the protagonist in Sherwood's play, to such an extent that her whole plan to escape to Paris echoes that character's destiny and could be interpreted as April's effort to make ontological amends for her interpretive excessive pathos on the premiere night. Gabrielle's ticket from a Great Depression décor set in an Arizona small town to Paris is Alan Squire's life insurance. When gangster Duke Mantee takes them and a couple of other people hostages, Alan, a disillusioned British artist turned alcoholic drifter, who empathizes with Gabrielle's wish to go to France and study fine arts, makes the young woman the beneficiary of his life insurance and urges the gangster to kill him, so that her dream could finally come true. Alan dies in Gabrielle's arms, content that his death made hers worth living. In a classic case of bovaric transference, April assumes Gabrielle's destiny. When her plan to move to Paris is canceled by an unwanted pregnancy and Frank's hesitation, she, too, finds her way out at the cost of someone's life: her own. Her suicide represents a silent admittance of her helplessness and the ultimate proof that she called the shots right until the end and wrote herself into a pre-existing script.

The basic structural difference between the *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *Revolutionary Road* lies at the level of narrative structure and character development. While Wilson's novel is raised on a melodramatic pattern, Yates' novel is informed by tragedy as a *forma mentis*.

Melodrama favors „whole“ individuals. Their high self-esteem and assertiveness ensures them a leader's position from the beginning. The obstacles and trials they are presented with only reinforce their optimism and decisive actions. Their goals will be achieved through a constantly exercised strong will. This is Tom Rather's and, to a certain extent, Don Draper's case. By comparison, tragic heroes alienate themselves from the community because of the inner dilemmas they experience. Their conflicting desires and interests turn them into vulnerable human beings who cannot cope with challenging, extreme situations to which they eventually succumb. In other words, “in tragedy the conflict is within man; in melodrama it is between men, or between men and things.” (Heilman 79) This is April's and, apparently, Frank's case.

The generic couple in *Mad Men* tends to replicate Sloan Wilson's scenario. When material comfort and the illusion of a perfect marriage cannot fill Betty's inner void and she stumbles over Don's secret lives, her reflex is not to pursue a career for herself, which her husband had clearly denied her, but to seek and find refuge in the arms of an influential man. Betty is a slight replica to Betsy, her only awakening is to Don's inability to fit her idealistic husband mold and to put another man on the same pedestal. Don, on the other hand, has more in common with April than with either Tom or Frank. He works in the advertising business, he is one of

the commuters wearing gray flannel suits, but he conforms from a position of power. Not only is he a master creator and seller of images, in a time when American dreams were morphing into illusions, but he also manages to pass his own illusory identity as reality to a considerable number of people and for a considerably long period of time. When his wife finds out that his real name is Dick Whitman and that he has taken up someone else's name to escape a haunting childhood and build a whole new life and a traumatizing war experience, she leaves him. When Bert Cooper, his boss and senior partner at Cooper-Sterling, is tipped off about Don's shady past, he doesn't seem to care: Don is too talented as creative director to dispense with him simply because he is not who he says he is. After all, this is his job, he deals in images, his own included, as it turns out. Living the life he has designed for himself is Don's top-notch pitch and he pursues this goal ruthlessly, at the cost of driving his younger step brother to kill himself. In this, he is reminiscent of April's determination to carve out a whole new life for herself and her family. He loses his family, nevertheless, but not himself.

With respect to the portrayal of the suburbanite couple, *Mad Men* relegates the wife to the position of silent witness to her own everyday life, confronting "the problem that has no name" day in day out, and foregrounds the man as lead actor in an atypical melodrama.

The melodramatic ending may take three forms which determine the type of gratification the audience experiences: most frequently, the hero wins and saves the world; alternatively, the conflict may be tied and the only resolution at hand resides in the continuation of the struggle until one force prevails over the other; finally and atypically, the villain may be the winner. Irrespective of the outcome, the public enjoys "the pleasure of experiencing wholeness—not the troublesome, uneasy wholeness that exists when all of one's divergent motives remain within the field of consciousness, nor the rare integration of powers that may be earned by long discipline, but rather the sensation of wholeness that is created when one responds with a single impulse or potential which functions as if it were his whole personality." (Heilman 82-84) The prospect of a clear-cut tone, be it positive, negative or undecided, is what guarantees the popularity of melodramatic scenarios. The audience can only react in a predictable manner and experience safe emotions, the sum of which can best be described as a "monopathy" or "the singleness of feeling that gives one the sense of wholeness." (Heilman 85)

Undeniably, the monopathic response is triggered automatically by happy endings. Contrary to one's expectations, the other two alternatives afford and engender monopathy as well because a stalemate has the potential of ongoing struggle against all odds, which is nothing but a replica to real life situations, and the prevalence of evil induces pity for the hero and, through identification, self-pity. The common denominator of the three types of melodramatic endings is the

unity of emotional response. In other words, “the approval of victory easily expands into the delights of self-congratulation, and sadness for the defeated glides gently into the melancholy pleasures of self-pity.” (Heilman 87)

The ending of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* shows the Rathes reconciled with each other and the world around and set up for a “happily ever after” type of conclusion. The monopathic gratification which readers are expected to experience is even dramatized before their eyes, as if there were any doubt as to what thoughts and feelings the story left them with. Judge Bernstein, who has just informed Tom that the suit against him has been dropped, watches Tom meet Betsy, break the good news to her and drive her off to Vermont, i.e. into the sun. Betsy’s smile is catching; Bernstein smiles, too, from a distance and upon the couple’s newly rediscovered commitment. Society has embraced and absorbed them once again and they, in turn, have pledged allegiance again to each other and to a socially sanctioned way of life, admittedly in their own way. And so is the audience expected to do.

Revolutionary Road on the other hand, ends in silence. As in the case of most classical and Shakespearean tragedy, those who survive are bound to tell the story of those who died. The cleansing function of storytelling is dramatized in Yates’ novel as well. Two of the secondary characters, both women, cannot help but remind their family over and over again of the Wheelers’ unfortunate destiny, in what becomes a gratuitous, reassuring refrain about them being alive and well. Both Milly and Mrs. Givings lose their audience, i.e. their husbands’ attention, simply because theirs was a suburban development that “had not been designed to accommodate a tragedy.” (Yates 442) Howard Givings’ discrete reaction to turn off his hearing aid and surround himself in “a thunderous sea of silence” represents the objective correlative of the community’s deafness to the true and tragic dimension of April’s final gesture and a metanarrative comment on the contemporary readers’ own possible response to the novel.

Despite its apparent simplicity, the melodramatic mode has won over the tragic one in contemporary popular culture because “we see most of the serious conflicts and crises of our everyday lives in melodramatic rather than tragic terms.” (Smith 10) We choose to package our experiences as melodramas rather than tragedies because we relate to heroes through not only sympathy, but, possibly more important, through empathy. We are intimidated by tragic heroes, because of their disconnectedness from our day-to-day lives. The scenarios they act out echo scriptural commandments, i.e. they teach us how not to deal with the world. The tragic catharsis is intellectual or artistic, if one can afford it, at best. Hence the viewer is condemned to a disciple’s position in perpetuity.

By contrast, melodrama teaches affirmative lessons, delivers unquestionable messages through complete individuals; it encourages viewers to

identify with the characters and to invest personally in their morally defined struggles. Whereas tragedy reduces the audience to a pretext and a mere formal necessity, melodrama empowers the audience by making it a partner in staging a credible real life situation. We relate to melodramatic protagonists, but are in awe of tragic heroes.

Mad Men represents an atypical melodrama, because, while the male protagonist has the depth of a tragic hero, he remains at one with himself, unshaken by hostile events, and because the conflict between Don and Betty Draper ends in a realistic draw. Even though *Mad Men* does not recycle Wilson's overly optimistic narrative solution, nor does it embrace Yates' extremely dark conclusion, it meets both precursors somewhere in the middle: it tailors the gray flannel suit to address the expectations of a twenty-first century audience and places viewers on the road to rediscovering the 1950s turn into the 1960s: quite a revolutionary endeavor.

To conclude, *Mad Men* engages in a meaningful dialogue with both *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* and *Revolutionary Road* and the result is a fresh and multi-faceted reevaluation of the 1960s for a twenty-first century audience.

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GOOD FEDERATION, CONFEDERATION, BAD FEDERATION: WHY THE AMERICAN CONTROVERSY ON THE FEDERAL UNION SHOULD BE A LESSON FOR THE EUROPEAN UNION

GABRIEL C. GHERASIM¹

ABSTRACT. *Good Federation, Confederation, Bad Federation: Why the American Controversy on the Federal Union Should Be a Lesson for the European Union.*

The aim of this paper is that of revisiting the competing doctrines of federalism in the United States, as they are exemplarily prescriptive about the means and finality of the correspondent process of European integration. Considering the three main glosses on the federal idea in the United States as the Anti-federalist idea, the Confederative experiment and the Federalist focus on strong and centralized government, the present paper will substantively argue for the (in)consistencies of these models and acknowledge the limits of American federal experiences in the uncertain context of the European controversies on the topic.

Keywords: *federalism, confederation, US Constitution, federalists, anti-federalists, states, centralized government, devolution.*

REZUMAT. *Federalismul bun, confederația, federalismul rău: de ce controversele americane privind uniunea federală ar trebui să constituie o lecție pentru Uniunea Europeană.* Scopul acestui articol este de a recapitula doctrinele conflictuale ale federalismului american, întrucât ele sunt în mod exemplar prescriptive în privința mijloacelor și scopului procesului integrării europene. Având în vedere cele trei mari accente ale ideii federale în Statele Unite, respectiv, ideea antifederală, modelul experimental confederativ și abordarea federalismului privind ideea unui guvernământ puternic și centralizat, prezentul articol va argumenta pentru (in)consistențele acestor modele și va da seama de limitele experiențelor federale americane în contextul incert al controverselor europene în domeniu.

Cuvinte cheie: *federalism, confederație, Constituția americană, federaliști, antifederaliști, state, guvernământ centralizat, devoluție.*

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Introduction

At first sight, the issue of federalism is not controversial and, at any rate, should not give rise to misunderstandings. Within the widespread conceptions on the idea of federalism, the common world political configuration is, to a large extent, made up of federal institutions and governments. In 1996, one could count ten large federal nations, encompassing about half of the planet's inhabitable land and almost 40 per cent of its population.² These rough statistics shows us that, throughout modernity, the concept of federal state/nation has acquired a deep political meaning that enabled the emergence of federal political systems. Nevertheless, the issues of federalism are far from being completely solved, even though, both normatively and prescriptively, there are strong ideological assumptions in favour of accepting the federal project. The normative framework of federalism was formulated in early modernity by Johannes Althusius, who published *Politica Methodice Digesta, Atque Exemplis Sacris et Profanis Illustrata* in 1614, while the prescriptive foundations of federalism were established at the end of the 18th century within the dispute between federalists and anti-federalists on the issue of the United States Constitution's ratification. According to numerous scholars and political scientists, federalism was probably the greatest achievement of the American political culture, which should be validated in terms of "the art of government".³ But, as I have announced in the title of my paper, we are still confronting the following dilemma: are there controversies, misconceptions and shortcomings of the federalist ideology and federal institutions? If the answer is yes – and I provisionally assert this – then, what we are looking for is a set of answers to improve federalism. This is the reason why I formulate – also provisionally – a distinction between "good" and "bad" federalism without being dogmatically committed to one form of federalism to the detriment of the other; on the other hand, confederations, although political systems distinct from federations, can be assessed in turn as being "good" or "bad", as the case may be. Consequently, my approach identifies nuances, both positive and negative, in the case of various federalist conceptions. My analysis is a synthetic approach to federalism that attempts to unmask and criticise what I have termed "bad federalism" and to call for melioristic solutions, within the framework of the United States' historical options for federalism.

Out of the four possible attitudes that can lead to the emergence of a federal political system in general, two of them are illustrative of what a "good

² Lowi, Theodore: "Eurofederalism: What Can European Union Learn from United States?", in Anand Menon and Martin Schain (eds.), *Comparative Federalism: The European Union and the United States in Comparative Perspective*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 95.

³ Lipson, Leslie: *The Democratic Civilisation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1964, p. 143.

federation” should be like; these attitudes are consensualism and cooperation. The other two are explanatory for what “bad federation” means; these attitudes are conflictual and anarchic. Even if, etymologically speaking, the meaning of federalism should logically exclude bad institutions and bad practices (i.e., the Latin word *foedus* means “voluntary association among equals”)⁴; there are both outright and collateral political practices that can damage the healthy functioning of federalism. But, if we are to preserve federalism according to the original etymology of the notion, there are at least two positive implications of federalism: contractualism and equal participation of constituent members. Many scholars have argued that the federal regimes worldwide favoured the expansion of political participation, while the issue of contractualism is still problematic. Probably most enlightening about this last observation is the fact that some prominent member states rejected the project of the European Union constitution in 2005. The Lisbon Treaty was ratified as a surrogate, but will it endure?

After World War II, federalism was envisaged as the proper solution to managing the diversity of societies, cultures and regional economic interests worldwide; prior to 1945, federalism had been highly criticised as a form of weak government, unable to cope in the future with the major challenges expected in the 21st century.⁵ The European Union first grew out of one-dimensional institutions (such as the European Coal and Steel Community or Euratom), but progressively adopted federal mechanisms and strategies in the process of decision-making policies. By that time, the United States had already tested the federal system for almost two centuries. There are still major differences between the United States and the European Union federalisms and the main difference between them is formal: while the United States is a nation-state, working within the framework of a constitution, the European Union is a voluntary alliance of states governed by treaties (and this is probably the fundamental unsolved issue of European federalism). However, functionally, both of them exercise power according to the principle of “dispersal of power”.⁶

Before proceeding to an analysis of the American experience of federalism as a possible lesson for the European Union, I add two brief observations that reveal the complexity of the problem: i) first, there is no unanimous agreement upon the normative definition of federalism; still, according to most scholars, there are three basic characteristics of federalism to be incorporated into a satisfactory definition, namely guaranteed separation of

⁴ Gerston, Larry N.: *American Federalism. A Concise Introduction*, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2007, p. 5.

⁵ Laski, Harold: “The Obsolescence of Federalism”, in *New Republic*, 3/1939, pp. 367-369.

⁶ Sbragia, Alberta: “The United States and the European Union: Comparing Two *Sui Generis* Systems”, in Menon and Schain (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

powers, decentralisation and coordination;⁷ ii) there are also different designs of federal institutions consistent with two main types of federalisms: executive federalism (e.g., Germany or Austria), in which the federal government provides incentives to local institutions for cooperation and coordination of policies, and dual federalism (e.g., Canada, the United States), in which powers are distributed and separated.⁸

The road to “bad federation”: from the Articles of Confederation to coercive federalism

Detractors of American federalism established that the historical evolution of American federalism could be divided into three main stages: the dual federalism of the Founding Fathers, the cooperative federalism that commenced in the 1930s, and the coercive federalism that started in the 1960s.⁹ The dual model, resulting from the debates over the ratification of the constitution, established federalism as a permanent tension between the component states and the federal union. According to the cooperative design of federalism, the relation between the federal government and the states was conceived in terms of mutual exchanges, while the model of coercive federalism put the states in strict terms of submission. This last model is essentially what I term “the path towards bad federation” and this description postulates the fact that there was a progressive and constant move – with minor exceptions – towards centralisation, especially through the federal use of some tricks, for instance, the federal tax credits and the congressional pre-emption provision.¹⁰ Of course, this brief characterisation may seem a crude over-simplification, but my point is that this devolution is the very mark of “bad federation”.

Scholars dealing with the issue of European Union federalism also seize the failure of federalism; if one recent distinction between territorial federalism and multinational federalism is to be preserved,¹¹ then the immediate explanation for the general failure of federalism is probably connected to the political inability to cope with multinational federalism and with the

⁷ Wachendorfer-Schmidt, Ute: “Introduction”, in Ute Wachendorfer-Schmidt (ed.), *Federalism and Political Performance*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 5-6.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 7.

⁹ Kincaid, John: “Three Faces of Contemporary American Federalism”, in Iwan M. Morgan and Philip J. Davies (eds.), *The Federal Nation. Perspectives on American Federalism*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp. 63-81.

¹⁰ Zimmerman, Joseph F.: *Contemporary American Federalism. The Growth of National Power*, 2nd edition, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008, pp. 187-188.

¹¹ Kymlicka, Will: “Is Federalism a Viable Alternative to Secession?”, in Percy B. Lehning (ed.), *Theories of Secession*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 127.

implementation of decentralised policies and preservation of ethnic nationalism. In Europe, some relevant examples of such a failure would be the Soviet Union, the Czech Republic, or the former republic of Yugoslavia, which are by now forms of “defunct federalisms”.¹² In brief, this pessimistic view of the future of federalism is applicable not only in the case of the United States, but also with regard to the European Union. The growing tendencies of federal centralisation are best exemplified by the regulatory mechanism of decisions that the European Union institutions adopted, but decisionism is sometimes incongruent with its own assumptions in the European case; the fact that the issues of redistribution, common defence, and macroeconomic stabilisation are still major deficiencies in the functioning of the European Union means that its federal institutions are dysfunctional.¹³ The decision-making processes in the European Union are possibly the most controversial topic even if there are many voices arguing that regulatory analysis in technical terms is needed for the coherent implementation of decisions. Some scholars go so far as to consider regulatory analysis and decision-making efficiency as the new form of rationality in politics.¹⁴

Beyond the linear model of conceiving the historical evolution of American federalism, there is the possibility of characterising the functioning of federal institutions in terms of ups and downs or alternating “bad practices” and “good practices”. An overall analysis applied to the major decisions of the Supreme Court from the beginning of the 19th century until the present day reveals such an alternation: i) between 1803 and 1835, the Supreme Court tended to favour federal government provisions to the detriment of states and individuals; ii) between 1836 and 1937, due to president Andrew Jackson’s opportunity to nominate seven new members to the Supreme Court, the decisions of this institution leaned towards the prerogatives of the states to the detriment of the federal government; iii) in the period 1937-1986, the practice inaugurated by president Roosevelt’s New Deal policies (i.e., welfare state centralisation) received support from the Supreme Court; iv) after 1986, the Supreme Court was predominantly favourable to state rights in matters concerning commerce, civil rights or environment.¹⁵

The original federal project in the United States began on a promising note; the Founding Fathers, driven by diverse reasons and motives, started to

¹² Kavalski, Emilian and Zolkos, Magdalena: “Approaching the Phenomenon of Federal Failure”, in Emilian Kavalski and Magdalena Zolkos (eds.), *Defunct Federalisms. Critical Perspectives on Federal Failure*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2008, p. 1.

¹³ Kelemen, Daniel R.: *The Rules of Federalism. Institutions and Regulatory Policies in the EU and Beyond*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 160.

¹⁴ McGarity, Thomas O.: *Reinventing Rationality. The Role of Regulatory Analysis in the Federal Bureaucracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 304.

¹⁵ Gerston: *op. cit.*, pp. 28, 53-61.

think about the opportunity of designing some federal arrangements in order to replace the ineffective Articles of Confederation, which, during the decade 1777-1787, failed to coordinate public policies beyond the local and state levels. Scholars who explain the birth of federalism in the United States (in political terms) argue that there were two main practical reasons that generated the need to discuss the project of the federal government during the second constitutional convention in Philadelphia from 1787: the refusal of the confederate states to pay a federal tax necessary for the good functioning of the Union and the existence of harsh competition among states because of the introduction of protective tariffs.¹⁶ Other theorists insist that strong economic interests influenced the process of constitutional ratification: western landowners, merchants and delegates who owned private or public securities defended the idea of a constitutional federation, while slave-owners and debtors opposed it for obvious reasons.¹⁷ A compromise had to be achieved between federalists and anti-federalists on two main issues: the principle of representation and the principle of the distribution of power.¹⁸ During the debates among the delegates, it became clear that the only compromising solution was federalism as voluntary association based on the principle of representative government and on the functional principle of the extended republic.¹⁹ In other words, two designs competed for the future destiny of federalism in America: one view insisted on a form of centralised federalism,²⁰ and the other amended this radical view by conceiving the union as a republic with a “federal center”.²¹ The defenders of strong centralised government responded to the pressures of the anti-federalists with their resilience to consider any compromise necessary to the ratification of the federal constitution; *Federalist 39* clearly stated that the new constitutional arrangements were formally republican rather than federal based on the idea that the constitutional provisions would address individual matters rather than states’ businesses.²²

On the two confronting sides were Hamilton and Jefferson. Generally, the Federalist papers received worse criticism than they deserved; but the truth is

¹⁶ Rakove, Jack N.: *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution*, New York: Vintage Books, 1997, pp. 26-30.

¹⁷ McGuire, Robert A. and Ohsfeldt, Robert L.: “Public Choice Analysis and the Ratification of the Constitution”, in Bernard Grofman and Donald Wittman (eds.), *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism*, New York: Agathon Press, 1989, pp. 175-204.

¹⁸ Gerston: *op. cit.*, pp. 27-30.

¹⁹ Hamilton, Alexander; Madison, James and Jay, John: *The Federalist Papers*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Lawrence Goldman, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 48-55.

²⁰ Riker, William H.: *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*, Boston: Little Brown, 1964.

²¹ Filippov, Mikhail; Ordeshook, Peter C. and Shvetsova, Olga: *Designing Federalism. A Theory of Self-sustaining Federal Institutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 113.

²² Peacock, Anthony A.: *How To Read the Federalist Papers*, Washington: The Heritage Foundation, 2010, p. 70.

that the series of eighty-five essays designed for the foundations of the new federal union were rather persuasive strategies to enforce what in those times seemed a stringent necessity. I do not think that the Founding Fathers thought about centralising the government by any means. Hamilton himself did not seem to share the view according to which the federal design would generate conflicts between the central government and local governments. Instead, Hamilton thought about the federal idea in consensualist terms: the federal project should be a rational contract according to the trust of the citizens in the future of a federal republic.²³ What Hamilton had in mind was the solving of the fiscal issues: writing on the principle of divided sovereignty, he juxtaposed the centralisation strategy because he was aware of the perils and inefficiencies of the states' administration of fiscality.²⁴ But I do not think that Hamilton's perspective on the design of the federal union was as radical as Edmund Randolph's resolution that was aimed at a *de facto* elimination of the states' rights during the Philadelphia Convention of 1787.²⁵ It is probably more accurate to grasp Hamilton and the federalists' project of American federalism as deriving from Leibniz's already classic distinction between state sovereignty and central supremacy. Specifically, *Federalist 27* described the new political arrangements on the basis of a principled distinction between the supremacy of the federal law and the sovereign exercise of public power at the member states level.²⁶ Of course, the principle of federal supremacy was the Achilles heel of American federalism because of the harsh criticism targeted against it in the course of American history. I will exemplify this statement by saying that consistent literature in political theory in the 20th century has attacked the idea of federal supremacy as unsustainable from the redistributive justice perspective.

The federalists sometimes had to use weak arguments because of time constraints; on the other hand, after the success of the constitutional campaign at the end of 1787, there were many times in which the union had to be maintained through bad compromises. The practice of admitting new states to the union in pairs (one slave and one free) during the first half of the 19th century was a case in point; this bad practice had the obvious consequence of generating imbalances and ruptures between the states. According to some scholars, until the Civil War, the basic shortcomings of American federalism were: the principle of federal supremacy, the doctrine of nullification in the states and the constitutional right to secede.²⁷

²³ Hamilton, Madison and Jay: *op. cit.*, pp. 113-117.

²⁴ Rodden, Jonathan A.: *Hamilton's Paradox. The Promise and Peril of Fiscal Federalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 269-270.

²⁵ Zimmerman: *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁶ Hamilton, Madison and Jay: *op. cit.*, pp. 131-134.

²⁷ Filippov, Ordeshook and Shvetsova: *op. cit.*, p. 55.

Considering both the advantages and the disadvantages of the federal arrangements, it is probable that the option for assessing the federalists' agenda as "bad" federative thinking is oversimplifying the case. First, if the pillar of the federal project was constitutionalism, and if the constitutional debate was consistent with public choices, then it is rather a misplaced understanding of what "bad federalism" stands for; second, if we are to accept the possibility of "bad federalism", then we have to expand the meanings and implications of the centralisation of power in the federal government beyond the original project of the Founding Fathers.

The "good alternative": Anti-federalists and the idea of limited powers

The theoretical bases of the anti-federalist thought descended from Locke's political philosophy, which was commented and annotated by Thomas Jefferson. Essentially, John Locke grounded the idea of states' pre-eminence over federal union on the ideas of natural rights and private property; Locke's basic assumption is that political liberty is dependent upon economic liberty. Greatly influenced by Locke, Thomas Jefferson derived political liberty from the political economy of John Locke.²⁸ This tradition of thought decisively influenced the anti-federalists' early aspirations and later constituted the framework of the economic and political liberalism in America that left the federalist concept of centralised power outside its mainstream theoretical construction. The anti-federalists were at first reluctant to accept the guiding principles of government proposed by federalists; before and during the second constitutional convention in Philadelphia, they were rather confused about the optimal solutions for the independent states. They feared further conflicts and dissensions among states that resulted from competing commercial interests which is why the anti-federalist delegates in Philadelphia envisaged a working solution with a kind of mixed form of government shared by one national government and state governments, a solution they called the "new federalism".²⁹ But from the very beginning they thought that the idea of limited powers was the pre-requisite for any acceptable central government. In their view, the Articles of Confederation, which they continued to defend, were the very expression of such mixed form of government and not simply a league of isolated states, as the federalists contended. Additionally, they were suspicious that there was a hidden agenda of

²⁸ See Cunningham Jr., Noble E.: *The Life of Thomas Jefferson*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1987 and Boorstin, Daniel J.: *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, New York: Henry Holt, 1948.

²⁹ Storing, Herbert J.: *What the Anti-Federalists Were For. The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution*, Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981, pp. 32-33.

the federalists to impose centralisation as the proper governmental conduct in politics; they were also aware of the fact that Benjamin Franklin's previously proposed Albany plan of 1754 was substantially rejected because the colonies sensed the peril of centralisation of power at that time.³⁰ Their suspicious attitude endured even after the constitutional compromise of 1787 was achieved: in the period between October 1787 and April 1788, they published a series of replies to the *Federalist Papers* in the *New York Journal*, pressing for the adoption of some amendments to the fundamental constitutional text, known as the Bill of Rights.³¹ For most anti-federalists, such as Patrick Henry and Melancton Smith, the defence of individual liberties and rights as truly republican virtues came first, while the federal union was a secondary compromising necessity in the service of common defence against external enemies.³² Moreover, they insisted that the guiding principle of the new federal state would be mutual respect of its constituents. Mutual dependence of the states on the federal government was rather an unavoidable necessity and that was the reason why the anti-federalists were very cautious about granting power to a federal government. Prudence was the cornerstone of their behaviour during and after the constitutional convention.

By and large, the two principles which the anti-federalists strongly defended were responsibility to the people and limited powers.³³ These two basic criteria directed the functioning of federalism in the United States to the path of progressive democratisation, first by using the federal constitutional provisions in the states for the elimination of local abuses, and second by "openness, transparency, and accountability in policy-making and implementation".³⁴ Commentators of federal constitutionalism in America observed that the dispute between federalists and anti-federalists on the ratification of the constitution paved the way for the ideological controversies between liberals and egalitarians;³⁵ but it is doubtful whether the original controversy rested on theoretical and ideological considerations. The Founding Fathers aimed at constructing the new constitutional arrangements for practical reasons, and this is why the constitutional text is a general mechanism for configuring powers and establishing limitations against the authority of the federal government. However, the original text of the Constitution hinted at the national government and contained little about state powers.³⁶

³⁰ Gerston: *op. cit.*, p. 20.

³¹ Zimmerman: *op. cit.*, p. 25.

³² Storing: *op. cit.*, p. 24.

³³ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

³⁴ Kelemen: *op. cit.*, p. 222.

³⁵ Gerston: *op. cit.*, p. 31.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 40.

The individual rights and the rights of the states were to be dealt with in some amendments to the Constitution. As far as this paper is concerned, I should say that the tenth amendment is probably the most important, because it stipulates that any prerogative not explicitly granted to the federal government falls in the responsibility of the states or of the citizens. Arguably, this was the most frequently used objection to federalism during the course of American history. Not only did the anti-federalists fear the granting of too much power to the federal government, but more significantly, they had reservations about the positive effects of the representation principle. The anti-federalists considered that one of the logical consequences of the principle of separation of powers would be the non-delegation principle.³⁷ Beyond establishing criteria for the separation of powers and checks and balances, the anti-federalists took a firm stand in order to combat the centralisation of power by thinking about appropriate election mechanisms of the electors and about decentralising the organisation of political parties down to the local levels.³⁸

Asking the question what is to be learned from the American experience of federalism, Theodore Lowi argues that the inspiring principle that drove the American federalism is “dual citizenship”.³⁹ Beyond the simplistic understanding of this principle, its interpretations vary. For instance, dualism can be properly understood by considering the two-fold meaning of the notion of regulation; based on the assumption that, in French, the term is related to both *régle* (i.e., rule) and *réglémentation* (i.e., the practice of imposing rules), federalism itself should be understood dualistically as both the “patronage state” and, respectively, “the regulatory state”.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, the anti-federalists would have been opposed to both instances of the above-mentioned federal state. Instead, contemporary federalism is largely consistent with the anti-federalist perspective on the attributions, powers and institutions of a *sui generis* federation: independence and territorial politics are functional approaches of federalism in the anti-federalist sense.⁴¹ So, the pressing question is: Is “good federalism” the best possible political regime today? Attempting to answer such a tricky question should start with the premise that the nationalist unitary state is obsolete; while the historical practices associated with the doctrine of the unitary state were based on the concept of political centralisation, “good federalism” insists upon a critique of centralisation and the consolidation of theories of regionalism and

³⁷ Majone, Giandomenico: “Federation, Confederation and Mixed Government: A EU-US Comparison”, in Menon and Schain (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 131-134.

³⁸ Filippov, Ordeshook and Shvetsova: *op. cit.*, pp. 233-236.

³⁹ Lowi: *op. cit.*, p. 94.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 98.

⁴¹ Dosenrode, Søren: “The European Federation”, in Søren Dosenrode (ed.), *Approaching the European Federation?*, Burlington: Ashgate, 2007, p. 7.

governance.⁴² If we were to speak today about good practices of federalism, this would mean dismantling monolithic powers, resolving particular crises, asymmetries, and incoherent decision-making processes.

On the compromising genius of republican federalism in the United States

If Hamilton became the most vocal supporter of the centralised government idea to be incorporated into an extended form of republican federalism and Jefferson was the mentor of the anti-federalist conception on state and individual liberties, then James Madison was probably the embodiment of the compromising genius who understood that a final solution was not possible without pleasing both sides. For Madison, political behaviour was an applied science of political design; his views on the institutions of federal government were not deductive and theoretical, but rather empirical and circumstantial.⁴³ If one can speak about the theoretical foundations of moderate federalism in Madison, then its sources could be found in Montesquieu. The modern French philosopher thought of federalism as a central authority, necessary for the preservation of collective security and the eradication of corruption; but the counterpart of central authority should be the independence of the judiciary for defending individual rights.⁴⁴ So, both the modern theory and the American design of federal government had the form of a necessary compromise for the peaceful existence of citizens. American constitutionalism did not result from a compromise based on a principled attachment to rigid values, but - according to some recent interpretations - out of the management of strategies in the political procedure of ratification. For instance, game theory perspectives on federalism argued that despite the greater number of anti-federalists, the federalist side won the battle for the ratification of the constitution because of the strategies they used in order to achieve a compromise. Game theorists reject the simplistic approach, according to which there was a polarisation between the two sides, and argue that there were five possible compromising strategies between the extremist unconditional ratification and, respectively, rejection.⁴⁵

Accordingly, the compromising genius should be understood in terms of the compromising strategies: even if two practical issues divided federalists from

⁴² Lähteenmäki-Smith, Kaisa: "The Regions in the New Europe", in Dosenrode, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-164.

⁴³ Cain, Bruce E. and Jones, W. T.: "Madison's Theory of Representation", in Bernard Grofman and Donald Wittman (eds.), *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism*, New York: Agathon Press, 1989, pp. 11-30.

⁴⁴ Richter, Melvin: *The Political Theory of Montesquieu*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

⁴⁵ Fink, Evelyn C. and Riker, William H.: "The Strategy of Ratification", in Grofman and Wittman (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

anti-federalists, the deadlock emerged as an attempt to extinguish the most pressing political and economic interests. The delegates at the Philadelphia convention did not necessarily share one agenda or another; rather, they were interested in solving pressing outcomes if the constitution would have been adopted. One pressing issue was political (i.e., the conflict between big states and small states) and the other economic (i.e., the issue of slavery). Two opposing plans resulted from controversies among the delegates, namely the Virginia plan and the New Jersey plan, the former being the expression of the federalist option, while the latter was the embodiment of the anti-federalist position. Politically, the anti-federalists feared that the distribution of powers within the federal states would be an advantage for big states, which would be better represented especially in Congress. Economically, the anti-federalists aimed to exempt slaves from taxation, but counted them for representation purposes. On the other hand, federalists insisted on a strong national government politically and for the taxation of slaves economically. The Connecticut Compromise finally found a middle way out, under the guiding principles of separation of powers and checks and balances.

Today, it is certain that both compromises suggested by Madison underlie what could be deemed as contractualist-type federalism. Various theorists appreciate differently their degree of influence on the federal institutions: Richard Hofstadter noted that the key concept of the federalist design in the United States was the principle of checks and balances,⁴⁶ while Robert Nagel observed that the very possibility of achieving the compromise was the enforcement of the separation of powers principle.⁴⁷ In simple terms, the principle of checks and balances expressed the founders' desire to control the central government and to make the accountability of politicians to the people effective, while separation of powers was about establishing limitations to the federal government's powers.

The final result of the Madisonian compromise appeared as a kind of a mixed government formula starting from the rational premise that for any mechanism of power, for effectiveness at the federal level, a counterpart mechanism should have been employed in order to restore the equilibrium of political forces. For instance, when the Founding Fathers conceived the American political system in the present-day configuration, they thought of juxtaposing the executive appointment mechanism to the selection procedures of representatives, fearing a possible tyranny of the masses. All the components of the American political system illustrate the concerns of the delegates at the Constitutional

⁴⁶ Hofstadter, Richard: *The American Political Tradition*, New York: Vintage Books, 1948, pp. 7-10.

⁴⁷ Nagel, Robert F.: *The Implosion of American Federalism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 16.

Convention to build the new federal republic according to the blueprint of divided sovereignty as, for instance, *Federalist 32* and *62* illustrate. What resulted from the original design of federalism in the United States incorporated the basic principles of a modern federation: statehood, self-determination of entities, members' sovereignty, governmental system, division of powers, legitimacy and participation, and distribution of resources.⁴⁸

American politics and the unfortunate experience of confederation

Paradoxically enough, the confederate design in the United States failed twice in American history. First, during the decade 1777-1787, under the Articles of Confederation, the American colonies attempted to become more powerful; because of both the international context and the controversies among the states, the Articles of Confederation finally failed. Second, during the Civil War (1861-1865), when eleven Southern slave states seceded from the federal union and formed the Confederate States of America; this last experience of American confederalism could not endure, mainly because the states of the new confederation opposed the overall progress of the United States. In both cases, the American confederations were not formally recognised, in the first case because the state-colonies were not independent, and in the second because the confederation emerged as a belligerent state of affairs. Additionally, according to Zimmerman, the first American confederation was New England, which resulted as a confederacy of four colonies: Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut and New Haven. The purpose of building a confederate alliance, as early as 1643, was the common defence against the natives.⁴⁹

Of the two above-mentioned experiences of American confederations, for present purposes, it is significant to discuss the pre-constitutional American confederation under the Articles of Confederation. The principle that guided the formulation of the Articles in 1777 was the governmental autonomy of the states; the small Northeastern colonies believed that voluntary association of states under the provisions of the Articles of Confederation would save their sovereignty in the face of both the British domination and the virtual oppression of centralised government. This form of political organisation was characterised by Lipset as a "loose federal union".⁵⁰ In the decade that preceded the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, federal arrangements were practically non-existent because there was no confederate executive, no judiciary, no power to raise standing armies or to sign treaties since the procedure of unanimity was

⁴⁸ Dosenrode: *art. cit.*, pp. 19-24 and "The European Federation", in Dosenrode, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-210.

⁴⁹ Zimmerman: *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Lipset, Seymour M.: *The First New Nation*, New York: Basic Books, 1963, p. 30.

required for any decisions; under these circumstances, the role of the national state was purely ceremonial in the Articles of Confederation.⁵¹

The confederate ideology did not completely vanish after the creation of the federal state: close reading of the American doctrines of nationalism in the first half of the 19th century (especially in John C. Calhoun and John Quincy Adams) illuminates the remains of the old confederate mind-set that were associated, at that time, with the progressive democratisation of public life in the states and with the isolationist propaganda of Southern democratic nationalists. Unfortunately, the legacy of what I would call the “proto-confederate” thought in America took not only the path of isolationism and political independence of the states, but also the form of the divisionist spirit that culminated with the secessionism of the Civil War period. Moreover, in the 20th century, the confederate conception on the political preserved the secessionist spirit, leading to a new direction that was assumed as the neo-confederate critique of American federalism. The neo-confederate ideology was shaped by the Southern white culture as fundamentally anti-immigrationist, homophobic and anti-democratic.⁵² The manifesto of the new confederation, published by the *Washington Post* in 1995, called for an independent confederation of Southern states in which states’ rights, local control, the removal of federation funding and the preservation of the Christian tradition should be the guiding rules of the new political order.⁵³ Of course, one cannot blame the Articles of Confederation for future misappropriations, distortions and political atavism; but, on the other hand, considering the unfortunate legacy of the confederate idea in the United States, one could deem the confederate provisions as both ambiguous and inconsistent with the present-day conception on the matter. If this is the case, a confederation – following the present approach – would be no more and no less than a bad alternative to federalism.

I do not imply that, under any given circumstances, confederation cannot be a viable alternative to certain shortcomings of federalism. Let us think, for instance, of how problematic federalism is when vertically understood: the vertical assumptions of the federalist mind-set emerge from the existence of an implicit top-down hierarchy considering first the nation-state, then the sovereign states and finally local powers. The vertical organisation of the federal state can generate premises for political disjunction, because of divergent views of the component units on one and the same issue; this situation would evolve into

⁵¹ Gerston: *op. cit.*, pp. 24-25.

⁵² Hague, Euan; Sebesta, Edward H. and Beirich, Heidi: “Introduction: The Neo-Confederacy and the New Dixie Manifesto”, in Euan Hague, Edward H. Sebesta and Heidi Beirich (eds.), *Neo-Confederacy. A Critical Introduction*, Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2008, pp. 1-19.

⁵³ Hill, Michael and Fleming, Thomas: “New Dixie Manifesto”, in *Washington Post*, October 29, 1995.

confederate practices and institutions. The most common distinction between federations and confederations resides in the different formal arrangements: while confederations are usually defined as associations of independent states designed to last for a long time, in which the power is exercised by the state units,⁵⁴ or as associations of states in which the general government is subordinated to regional governments,⁵⁵ federations are formally more consistent because they are maintained through a constitution (instead of treaties of voluntary association). The functioning of federalism in the United States throughout history made the confederate ideas preferable solutions for some certain inconsistencies; for instance, the practice of dissociating the two *foci* of power created the premises for the ideological split of the federal union between the liberalism of federal government policies and the concentration of conservative tendencies in the states. The confederate idea did not lose credibility, but some ambiguities derived from the confederate endorsement of the mixed government principle; furthermore, there is present criticism of the confederate design applied to the understanding of the representation principle. Some critics argue that confederations are prone to favour the interests of the component units to the detriment of the representation of individual rights and liberties in the states.⁵⁶ Considering all the above-mentioned observations, the present-day conceptions upon the shortcomings of the confederate model should be an incentive for introspection about the best future of the European Union. In my view, the association of states that form the present-day configuration of the EU is consistent with the original project of confederation in the United States. However, the Lisbon Treaty of 2009 was likely aimed at consolidating the connections and formal arrangements among the states within the framework of the European Union. Provided the Treaty manages to overcome strong nationalistic and regional impulses in most of the constituent states, it will finally succeed in becoming the best instrument for coordinating various policies of the European Union. The near future will bear witness to how all these goals will be turned to account.

Conclusions: “good” or “better”, “bad” or “worse”

I find it very difficult to answer the following two questions: i) based on a synthetic view on the experiences of both American and European federalisms, is it possible to sketch a normative concept of federalism? And ii), if the answer is yes, could this normative theory be the instrument of analysis for political practices and institutions commonly associated with federalism?

⁵⁴ Dosenrode: “The European Federation”, *art. cit.*, p. 9.

⁵⁵ Wheare, Kenneth C.: *Federal Government*, 4th edition, London: Oxford University Press, 1980.

⁵⁶ Majone: *art. cit.*, p. 121.

Of course, if affirmative answers to both these questions were possible, the controversies on federalism would be rather minor. But I think that such approaches to the topic of federalism are sheer impossibilities. If this is the case, then we should proceed conversely: starting from acknowledging the limits of federalism, we have the possibility of finding out the criteria that can contribute to melioristic approaches to federalism. This is, I think, the best possible way of formulating certain answers to confront the complexities of federalism.

Provisionally, I identify three basic controversial issues regarding federalism: centralisation and decisionism, historical devolution, and future challenges. Centralisation and decisionism reveal dogmatism, devolution reveals incongruence, and unresponsiveness to future challenges is the mark of incompleteness. The crisis of federalism – if there is such a crisis – might also be understood as the result of a plurality of representations and interpretations associated with its occurrences and effectiveness.

Centralisation and decisionism are political practices emerging from dogmatic views upon the pre-eminence of the federal government in all public areas. Most critics of federalism counterbalanced decisionism and centralisation of power by calling for extended political participation and, respectively, decentralisation and regionalism. One can justify his/her options for decentralisation on the grounds of irrational taxation, major differences among political cultures and ethnic societies, or the inopportunity of excluding constituent members from the decision-making processes, at least in emergency situations. If the distinction between vertical and horizontal federalisms can be rendered relevant, then decisionism and centralization are landmarks of the vertical model and the lesson of the American founding experience of federalism should be taught as how anti-federalists attempted – and substantially succeeded – to impose their perspective of horizontal federalism. Current criticism of federalism in the United States has taken a mainly anti-federalist stand by asking for constitutional powers on behalf of the states, or by denouncing some essential omissions of the original conception of the Constitution (e.g., public-private partnerships and constitutional provisions about the connections between the private sectors and federal government). Of course, they indirectly stand for new amendments to the Constitution. Moreover, the critique of vertical federalism (i.e., centralist and decisionist) is ubiquitous: some systematic analyses on the structure of governments and policy-making mechanisms reveal a basic distinction between the cooperative-type federalism in Europe and the dual-type federalism in North America (US and Canada), explaining the differences as dependent on autonomous political cultures and the size of the federations.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Dosenrode: “The European Federation”, *art. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

As far as “devolutionism” is concerned, Timothy Conlan characterised the process of devolution as progressive developments in the direction of decentralising the political practices of the federal state,⁵⁸ by arguing that devolution refers to progressive but degenerating policies at the federal level to the point of comprehensive centralisation and authoritarian paternalism. So, devolution is the critical phase of what I termed “bad federation”, or the processes of development from “bad” to “worse”. Other scholars, without necessarily assessing federalism, historicised the (d)evolution of American federalism from the dual form of federalism (after the ratification of the Constitution), through cooperative federalism (the end of the 19th century – 1930s), to centralised federalism (from the New Deal policies of the 1930s onwards).⁵⁹

Finally, the reconstruction of the federalist tenets should be the consequence of temporal inadequacies to future challenges: resource management, technological innovations and globalisation are sound examples.⁶⁰ The neo-institutionalist trend in the reconstruction of federalism is considered a narrow-sided perspective because of its fixation on the constitutional/institutional explanatory model and unresponsiveness to future changes. New institutionalism advanced some criteria in order to assess the outcomes generated by federal institutions, as follows: efficiency and transaction costs, stability (i.e., a state of equilibrium), coordination (mutual complementarity of institutions and individuals), distribution of power (the impact of institutional arrangements upon the exercise of power), and representation.⁶¹

There is no such a thing as “infallible good”, “good” as an inherent embedded quality, or “good” as an objective assessment of something; as such, in order to avoid the “bad” reception of this study on the meanings of federalism, it is arguable that, if we are to take, for instance, the Federalist Papers and the founding project of American federalism as a moderate attempt to assume only the “federal center” (and not the federal centralisation as the basic tool for avoiding incongruence and state conflicts) then the federalist project would become a “good federation”. If we are to take the anti-federalist project as a means to preserve unjust economic interests and Southern privileges, then our deference for the anti-federalist opposition would collapse into labelling it as “bad federation”. In a restrictive sense, “good federation” is achieved by eliminating what proved to be obstructive in various historical contexts of federal

⁵⁸ Conlan, Timothy: *From New Federalism to Devolution*, Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1998.

⁵⁹ Erk, Jan: *Explaining Federalism. State, Society and Congruence in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany and Switzerland*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 89.

⁶⁰ Gerston: *op. cit.*, pp. 164-168.

⁶¹ Grofman, Bernard: “*The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism: An Overview*”, in Grofman and Wittman (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 1-4.

conceptions and institutions; on the other hand, what is “good” today may be obsolete and inadequate tomorrow, while a certain “bad” state of things can be the starting point for improvements and corrections. That is our best hope – the fact that “a more perfect” federalism, as Americans put it, is possible one way or another.

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FROM “DOVER BEACH” TO “JAKARTA”. A RE-EXAMINATION OF THE ARNOLDIAN CHOICE THROUGH AN INTERTEXTUAL EXERCISE

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ABSTRACT. *From “Dover Beach” to “Jakarta”. A Re-Examination of the Arnoldian Choice through an Intertextual Exercise.* By juxtaposing Matthew Arnold’s emblematic poem to texts by Anthony Hecht and Alice Munro, this paper aims at providing a review of some fundamental traits of the Victorian thinker’s “philosophy of pessimism” (“choice”, “renouncement”, “self-effacement”), questioning, at the same time, the social and sexual stereotypes that both unite and differentiate the respective pieces.

Keywords: *Arnold, Hecht, Munro, choice, renouncement, pessimism, Dover Beach.*

REZUMAT. *De la „Dover Beach” la „Jakarta”. O reexaminare a opțiunii arnoldiene printr-un exercițiu de intertextualitate.* Prin alăturarea poemului emblematic al lui Matthew Arnold unor texte de Anthony Hecht și Alice Munro, studiul de față își propune să ofere o reapreciere a câtorva trăsături fundamentale ale „filozofiei pesimismului” ce caracterizează viziunea gânditorului victorian („opțiune”, „renunțare”, „suprimarea eului”), interogând, în același timp, stereotipurile sociale și sexuale care unesc și totodată despart operele în cauză.

Cuvinte cheie: *Arnold, Hecht, Munro, opțiune, renunțare, pesimism, Plaja de la Dover.*

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live alone.
The islands feel the encompassing flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

—Matthew Arnold, *To Marguerite*:
Continued

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1. Rationale

“Dover Beach” (1867) is considered by readers and scholars alike as the most memorable of Matthew Arnold’s poems. Often described as a concise but intense philosophical work or an elegy on the present revolving around such age-old themes as “loss”, “absence”, “transience” or “change”, it is one of the texts that paves the way to literary modernism, both in terms of form and choice of stylistic devices (blank verse, enjambment, high incidence of alliterative sequences, synaesthesia, etc.) and vision (the sense of collapse and imminent ending, the experience of a fragmenting world, history seen as a cycle or the precarious position of the individual in an indifferent and generally oppressive universe). Emblematic for its influential status are the many later texts that paid tribute to it in various ways, by using it as a source of inspiration, quoting or paraphrasing some of its lines, or by parody and pastiche. Indeed, through the intertextual network it has given rise to since its publication, “Dover Beach” has created a tradition of its own.²

In this paper, I will refer to a small part of this tradition, by examining two such intertextual connections. Starting from Arnold’s claim expressed in *A Study of Poetry*, namely, that “poetry is a criticism of life” (*Essays in Criticism* 3), aiming in the long run at replacing religion and philosophy, I propose a re-examination of this poetic text by contrasting it with two twentieth century works: Anthony Hecht’s “The Dover Bitch” (1967), respectively, Alice Munro’s short story “Jakarta” (1998).

Limited by the constraints of an academic article, my investigation will necessarily take into account only a small set of the questions normally addressed by the comparatist approach. In particular, I am interested in the principal points of convergence / divergence, the degree and significance of the intersections, and the source of the pessimistic outlook in each case (if any). Equally important for my purpose will be to look at the type of “criticism of life” reflected in each (for instance, whether it is possible to identify a more profound target, which goes beyond the norms of each period—be it Victorian conservatism, twentieth century non-conformism or old and new gender stereotypes), as well as the consequences of the choices made by their protagonists.

Since both Arnold’s poem and Hecht’s piece will be quoted extensively later on, a general presentation of them is unnecessary. However, given its length and lesser availability, before the analytical exercise, I find it important to summarise the topical points of Munro’s short story.

Published in the volume *The Love of a Good Woman*, “Jakarta” recounts the story of two couples, Kath and Kent, respectively, Sonje and Cottar. Typical of Munro, the central theme is the emotional development of the heroine (Kath) and

² Among the more memorable literary examples, we mention: W. B. Yeats’s “The Nineteenth Century and After”, Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451*, Joseph Heller’s *Catch 22*, Ewan MacEwan’s *Saturday*. Arnold’s poem is also referenced in musicals (*Cabaret*), pop songs (“Dover Beach” by The Bangles or “Armor and Sword” by Rush), or movies (the comedy-drama *The Anniversary Party*).

her achieving independence, with the necessary change entailed by it regarding her understanding of womanhood. Though there is no indication that the author used the Victorian text as a deliberate departure point for her story, the two texts can be connected on several levels. A first hint at Arnold's poem appears in the opening scene, focused upon the two women, Kath and Sonje, sitting on a beach and observing some young mothers, whom they call, deridingly, the "Monicas". The protagonists behold these married women at once with fascination and fear, considering them potential reflections of their own depersonalised future selves. The narrative covers a period of approximately forty years, which gives Munro the occasion to focus on a number of seminal moments in her characters' lives. These, the reader is made to understand, serve as revelatory acts, unveiling hidden, yet essential truths about others and themselves. As the story concludes, we are informed of the dissolution of both marriages. The initial character-pairs are also reversed, and the final scene, an encounter between Sonje and Kent (the latter, now, remarried), closes the circle. The subject of their conversation—in actuality, two independent monologues—revolves around the idea of "absence", illustrated by the remainder of the original set: Cottar, who has meanwhile mysteriously gone missing (admittedly) in Jakarta, and Kath, now an independent woman and the catalyst that fuels Kent's contemplation of missed opportunities.

Besides the above-mentioned early allusion, "Jakarta" includes two intertextual moments. The first of them takes place as an argument between Kath and Sonje regarding the fate of the female character March of D. H. Lawrence's novella, "The Fox". Through it, Munro allows Kath to pass judgement on the gender-stereotypes surrounding her own existence and at the same time face her own repressed thoughts:

And that is how her female nature must live within his male nature. Then she will be happy and he will be strong and content. Then they will have achieved a true marriage.

Kath says that she thinks this is stupid. She begins to make her case. "He's talking about sex, right?"

"Not just," says Sonje. "About their whole life."

"Yes, but sex. Sex leads to getting pregnant. I mean in the normal course of events. So March has a baby. She probably has more than one. And she has to look after them. How can you do that if your mind is waving around under the surface of the sea?"

...

Kath knows that something has gone wrong. Something is wrong with her own argument. Why is she so angry and excited? And why did she shift over to talking about babies, about children? Because she has a baby and Sonje doesn't? Did she say that about Lawrence and Frieda because she suspects that it is partly the same story with Cottar and Sonje?

When you make the argument on the basis of the children, about the woman having to look after the children, you're in the clear. You can't be blamed. But when Kath does that she is covering up. She can't stand that part about the reeds and the water, she feels bloated and suffocated with incoherent protest. So it is herself she is thinking of, not of any children. She herself is the very woman that Lawrence is railing about. And she can't reveal that straight out because it might make Sonje suspect-it might make Kath herself suspect-an impoverishment in Kath's life.³

The second such instance is a reference to a segment from Arnold's poem, occurring at another watershed instance in the character's progress. During a chance encounter between Kath and a male guest at a beach party, the two engage in a short recitation of some of the more symbolic lines from "Dover Beach":

Kath was down by the water, talking to the man whose wife and mistress she had seen in Sonje's kitchen earlier. His wife was swimming now, a little apart from the shriekers and splashers. In another life, the man said, he had been a minister. "The sea of faith was once too at the full," he said humorously. "And round earth's shore, lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled' —I was married to a completely different woman then."

He sighed, and Kath thought he was searching for the rest of the verse.

"But now I only hear," she said, "its melancholy long withdrawing roar, down the vast edges drear and naked shingles of the world." Then she stopped, because it seemed too much to go on with "Oh love let us be true—"

The significance of both of these intertextual overlaps will be considered in more detail in the section of this paper dedicated to discussing Munro's short story, with more emphasis given to the second, as it is of greater importance for the investigated subject.

In what follows, I will devote my attention to "Dover Beach". My interest is not in providing a meticulous textual analysis, but in explaining the reasons behind the solution proposed at the end of this poem. This part will also serve as the basis for the comparative discussion to follow afterwards.

2. The "melancholy long withdrawing roar": some thoughts on Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach"

A parallel reading of "Dover Beach" and other Arnoldian poetic works, including such anthological titles as "To Marguerite: Continued" (see the excerpt serving as the epigraph) or the earlier piece "Self-Dependence", can give us reliable insights regarding the main parameters of his philosophical and ethical

³ For the primary sources quoted in this paper the digital (Kindle) editions of the texts have been used. Hence, hereafter, such quotations will not be identified by physical page numbers. For more precise references, readers can consult any printed edition of the respective titles.

vision. In all three, the speakers are confronted with a hostile universe constantly working against individual happiness through both inner and outer forces. The source of discontent is threefold. The first culprit is the self and its petty struggle towards finding a place in a world guided by conventions and expectations: "Weary, and sick of asking of myself/What I am, and what I ought to be" ("Self-Dependence"). The second cause is the insurmountable divide between a golden past and a decayed present, whereby the "corruption" of the race is replicated on a personal level: "For surely once, they feel, we were/Parts of a single continent" vs. "Who order'd, that their longing's fire/Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?" ("To Marguerite..."). Lastly, it is the result of the loss of faith in face of scientific and mechanistic "progress", which leaves in its wake a chaotic, joyless and indifferent space—"the naked shingles of the world" denounced in "Dover Beach". Corruptibility, Arnold believes, is central to nature, society and the individual. Hence, our obligation to search for the "best self", through self-improvement and culture (*Culture and Anarchy*, passim), but also through moderation and the unabated advance on the path to self-discovery.

At face value, it may appear paradoxical that while Arnold acknowledges the need for common action (e.g., through institutional and educational reform), the loss of one's bearings entails for him a general tendency to turn inward, as the closing scene of "Dover Beach" illustrates, where love and domestic values are seen as the only solution to the "turbid ebb and flow/Of human misery [...]":

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

However, Arnold's case merely illustrates the general confrontational dimension of the Victorian age, observable, for instance in such dichotomies as devotion to work and unleashing of creative energies vs. a generalised feeling of insecurity regarding the value of one's actions, technological advance vs. utopian revisionism, or faith in economic power and imperial rule vs. religious and intellectual doubting. Within this dualistic framework, Arnold's proposed solution, *renouncement*, may seem inefficient and overly idealistic, but it is entirely logical. Rather than tackling the destructive forces head on (which would only add to the overarching confusion), we should strive to maintain the equilibrium of opposites, through compromise. This can be achieved by resisting

the fleeting worldly temptations and adopting the stance of the intellectual classicist, that of disinterested contemplation⁴.

Furthermore, with Arnold, such a highly ascetic attitude should not be understood as complete isolation. After all, his poetry abounds in moments where the subject is painfully aware of the presence of the other and in the complementary drive. To the evil of “ensllement” decried in “To Marguerite...”, he opposes the sustained preoccupation for becoming part of a pre-established, morally upright system, seen as a prerequisite for cultivating one’s “higher self”. As Meglio explains in reference to Arnold’s view on the virtue of religion, integrating oneself into a system is essential “for the attainment of a multi-faceted ‘perfection’ in society”, since “[b]y functioning within the terms of this well-defined and understood system, one would have the freedom to safely explore the more complicated aspects of humanity”. In a similar manner, Caufield notes that the effacement of the self, or impersonality of “renouncement” can ensure “social salvation through self-denial”.

Starting from these observations, I will now look more closely at two important questions related to the poem’s central concerns: faith, and the position of the individual self. First, Meglio’s remark calls for clarification, for it would be wrong to assume solely on its basis that the poet’s lament, occasioned by the “melancholy, long, withdrawing roar” of the “sea of faith”, is in reference to the religious crisis pervading the Victorian age (or, equally, that his insistence on being “true to each other” in the poem’s final scene is reducible to the Christian belief in the sacred marital vow). Like his fellow Victorian, George Eliot, Arnold turned agnostic in adolescence, having been displeased with doctrine and dogmatism. Consequent on this, he would become one of the most fervent critics of the traditional church. For Arnold, the value of religion resides in being an example of morality, of righteousness, and faith is useful only inasmuch as it is governed by reason. Similarly, Arnold explains in *Literature and Dogma*, God is “the eternal not-ourselves that makes for righteousness” (39). This intimate connection between faith and reason is also supported by the poem’s sequencing, since this key line appears after Arnold’s invocation of the figure of the Greek thinker, Sophocles:

Sophocles long ago
 Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
 Of human misery; we

⁴ This can also be seen in his “touchstone” method of criticism and his views on poetry. As Douglas Bush explains in reference to the poet’s 1853 Preface to *Empedocles on Etna*:

Arnold condemned both Romantic subjectivity and current demands that poets turn from “the exhausted past” to modern life; he pleaded for great actions, characters, and passions, for man’s elementary, universal feelings, as the timeless material of poetry. And to Romantic diffuseness and excess of imagery he opposed severe, coherent economy of form and style. (86)

Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.
The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

"The sea of faith" is the binary correlative not only of "the turbid ebb and flow/Of human misery" but also of the misleading calm of the coastal scenery contemplated at the beginning of the poem. Understood as one's unfaltering adherence to an ordering system of values, "faith" is the offspring of "thought", a rational illumination available to the individual in moments of turmoil or transition and the pillar that can still uphold the crumbling edifice.

Arnold's insistence on equilibrium and temperance is also evident in the final image of the "ignorant armies", inspired from Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian war. Here, the darkness of the night, responsible for the massacre of foe and friend alike, points to the disastrous effects of losing one's bearings. In addition, the use of the participle form "darkling" denotes a dynamic, processual perspective, suggesting that the real cause of the unfolding tragedy is not excessive ambition or blindness of the leaders, but the surprise factor of a sudden change.

Within this scheme, the poet's solution is commensurate with the challenge underway. Thus, while the professed symbolic withdrawal from the losing battle may echo the image of the fleeing armies, Arnold's strategy of "renouncement" does not lead to renunciation. Instead, it is a form of constructive disengagement, targeting a future re-engagement through the creation of a stronger bond which will work on a smaller scale. For the Arnoldian couple, being "true" implies the endorsement of a contract based on trust, respect and the willingness to let go of the self, to compromise. Unlike in the "Marguerite" poem, in "Dover Beach" the obstacles are surmounted, as the "island" is repopulated by an entity greater than the individual, resulting from the union of the two partners. In contrast to the underlying pessimism regarding the fate of the race, for the individual subject there still remains a glimmer of hope, and the overall feeling of the poem is that of uneasiness, rather than despair.

Despite the unpretentious elegance of Arnold's solution, which some might see as a late nineteenth century revival of the Garden of Eden myth (*sans* the religious element, evidently), it would be overly simplistic to interpret "Dover Beach" as yet another love story. While the previous observations verify and reinforce the moral and ethical creeds of the age, even as they were turning increasingly unsatisfactory, this piece distances itself from the Victorian

referential frame at least in one major respect, namely, its refusal to reflect the period's general bias regarding gender roles. Based on its genealogy (it was occasioned by Arnold's honeymoon stay at Dover in 1851), we may be inclined to consider the speaker an alter-ego of the poet, or at least a male voice, when in fact, as Eugene R. August has aptly pointed out, there is no textual indication that this voice is in any way gendered:

... the poem's text contains no evidence whatsoever to indicate whether Arnold's speaker is male or female, much less patriarchal or matriarchal. At one point, the speaker addresses the beloved as "love," but that is a gender-neutral term that could easily be used by a male or a female speaker. Any attempt to determine the sex of the speaker will necessarily involve gross stereotyping. (35)

Similarly, the critic goes on, we cannot convincingly argue that the speaker is Arnold himself (unless, of course, we choose to indulge in the most elementary analytical error of assuming that the speaker in any literary work *must* necessarily be a fictional projection of its author). Therefore, it is more appropriate to interpret the poem "as an expression of a human feeling *shared* by women and men alike" (August 37, emphasis added). This un-gendered perspective, as we will see later, is one of the main differences between Arnold's poem and the other two texts.

Based on the above, I will now formulate a number of preliminary conclusions which will serve as reference points when discussing the texts by Hecht and Munro.

First, as Umunc explains in connection with question of "cultural polysemy", of what various scholars have described as four major types of intertext—political, social, cultural and gender—only the first three are clearly retraceable in this text. As a "criticism of life", "Dover Beach" necessarily reviews, as through an intertextual relationship, the political, societal and cultural issues which the poet considers responsible for the decay of values, but (as pointed out above) it makes no concrete reference to gender (nor is it reliant on it when passing a critical judgement).

From this, another observation follows: though universally acceptable, Arnold's solution is context-dependent, being the product not only of its own culture and age, but of a broader ideatic background too. In fact, according to Caufield, "Dover Beach" can be read as a "lugubrious litany of absence" that is indebted to a long-standing tradition:

... Arnold's particular strain of pessimism seems to fall within the standard range of "technologies of the self," from the self-effacement of Christian asceticism, to the ego-extirpation of Buddhist metaphysics, to the self-disciplinary rigors of Stoicism.

Lastly, Arnold's stance is not entirely devoid of ambivalence, since he both subscribes and rejects "renouncement" as a solution: one's "ordinary self" should eventually be replaced by the "higher self", but the latter can only be attained by

engaging in a contract with a fellow human being—that is, through a (*re-*) *affirmation* of humankind, rather than a withdrawal from the world.

3. "Duck-rabbits" and cosmic last resorts: Anthony Hecht, "The Dover Bitch"

Written precisely one hundred years after the publication of Arnold's text, "The Dover Bitch", subtitled "A Criticism of Life: for Andrews Wanning", may appear to the untrained eye as a mere exercise in poetic craftsmanship. Already an established name by the time of the publication of *The Hard Hours* (the poem's parent volume), Anthony Hecht, like many of his famous literary predecessors, puts his art to test through a piece which both borrows and, as the title and subtitle suggest, is intent on ridiculing some of Arnold's verbal and imagistic formulas. However, beyond the typical postmodern ironic-parodic nod, upon closer examination we can see how a substantively more complex network of intertextual relationships starts to emerge, already from the opening lines. In fact, the very first of these overlaps strengthens, rather than dismisses Arnold's strategy of distancing from the contemplated subject and theme.

So there stood Matthew Arnold and this girl
With the cliffs of England crumbling away behind them,
And he said to her, 'Try to be true to me,
And I'll do the same for you, for things are bad
All over, etc., etc.'

Like Arnold, Hecht begins his poem by setting up a spatial divide between subject and object. In fact, in these lines the contemplating subject is doubly removed from the object: on a closer plane (indicated by the word "there") we find Matthew Arnold and his girl, while the English coastal backdrop is "crumbling away" at a farther point in space. However, the anaphoric connector "so" and the demonstrative "this" of the poem's opener clearly testify to the opposing, "magnetic" drive, informing us of the poet's true intention. Thus, in conjunction with the earlier hint ("a criticism of life"), these lines suggest that not only the individual Arnoldian text, but the entire poetic vision of the Victorian forefather will serve as a *co-text*, rather than just a context for Hecht's piece, making the two connect on a higher, allegorical plane.

In light of these observations, the reader might be tempted to interpret the rest of the poem primarily as a pastiche. Yet, the profoundness of Hecht's art consists precisely in the unflinching observance of a meticulously laid-out plan meant to embezzle his audience. The sarcastic paraphrase of Arnold's ideal of the Edenic couple, indicated by the male figure's more tentative tone ("*try* to be... and I'll do the same...", as opposed to the original's "*let* us be...") as well as the ambiguity of the adverb "there" (also hinting at a possible moral distancing

between observer and observed) cast again a veil of doubt on the author's purpose with this text. The strategy behind Hecht's argument is soon revealed: he will point in the direction of the most logical conclusion regarding the morality of his protagonists and the moral of his text, only to contradict it a moment later.

As things stand at this stage, the reversal of the Victorian scenario should be clear and final. The speaker takes a partisan position relative to the girl—not just any girl, but “*this* girl”. He devotes the bulk of his attention to her, relegating the male participant to a nameless “he”:

Well now, I knew this girl. It's true she had read
 Sophocles in a fairly good translation
 And caught that bitter allusion to the sea,
 But all the time he was talking she had in mind
 The notion of what his whiskers would feel like
 On the back of her neck.

By making her the centrepiece of attention, Hecht tricks us into siding, at least for a while, with the heroine. Compared to the poem's Arnold-figure, she excels in vitality and sensuality and, as such, could not be further removed from the ideal of womanhood of the “angel of the house” which lies at the basis of the lover in “Dover Beach” (or, rather, “angels of the house”, to remain consistent with the earlier observations concerning the gender-ambiguity of the speaker in the Victorian text). Indeed, a closer relative to Hecht's girl would be Hardy's “new woman”—a strong-willed, passionate and instinctual individual, governed by the forces of nature and biology and less by the meanderings of intellect. It is not surprising therefore that the high pomp and seriousness of Arnold's discourse and the proposed ascetic way are incompatible with the drives and needs of this modern child:

She told me later on
 That after a while she got to looking out
 At the lights across the channel, and really felt sad,
 Thinking of all the wine and enormous beds
 And blandishments in French and the perfumes.
 And then she got really angry.

Given the absence of an adequate response to the demands of the situation (the sexual impulse being evident from the reference to the feeling of his whiskers “on the back of her neck”) we may be inclined to give her our full sympathy. The enticing promise of the “lights across the channel”, the “enormous beds” or the “blandishments in French and the perfumes” can't be matched by the lessons of dead philosophers or the “allusions” (a word-play on “illusions”) of literature. If poetry is “criticism of life”, the opposite must be true as well: life, as our contemporary experience proves, can be an equally compelling “criticism of poetry”.

... To have been brought
 All the way down from London, and then be addressed
 As a sort of mournful cosmic last resort
 Is really tough on a girl, and she was pretty.
 Anyway, she watched him pace the room
 And finger his watch-chain and seem to sweat a bit,
 And then she said one or two unprintable things.

Hecht's insistence on the girl's furious reaction to being seen as physically irrelevant and her demotion to the position of mere receptacle of someone else's angst can also clarify the poet's aesthetic stance. Rather than an ironic sequel to the Victorian text, it is a dialogical counterpart through which the twentieth century artist examines a possible response to the speaker's proposal at the end of Arnold's piece. Or, in a different formulation, tipping the scales in favour of the feminine side and the manifestly gendered rewriting of the original perspective reflect a position more clearly inspired by the modernist preoccupation for re-cohering the fragments and filling the gaps than by the postmodern penchant for ambiguity and multiple semantic layering.

Yet, despite the concrete imagery and dramatic pacing of this text, we should not lose sight of its verbal substrate (the unforgiving label assigned in the poem's title remains our beacon in this sense). Over the following lines, another counterpoint is made: we learn that with the passage of time the girl has turned into a staple of ordinariness and a mere object of sexual gratification. We may speculate as to what would have happened if her own choice at the end of the hotel scene had been different, but not for long. Hecht's appeal to lenience in the poem's finale ("But you mustn't judge her by that") is soon contradicted by the references to sexual promiscuity as well as by the ironic closer, wherein her genie (the contrapuntal equivalent of the earlier "genius") is necessarily recaptured in the bottle:

She's really all right. I still see her once in a while
 And she always treats me right. We have a drink
 And I give her a good time, and perhaps it's a year
 Before I see her again, but there she is,
 Running to fat, but dependable as they come.
 And sometimes I bring her a bottle of *Nuit d'Amour*.⁵

This last change of perspective leads us to conclude that the vision informing Hecht's poem is, after all, not so different from Arnold's own. In fact, the more recent commentators of this text suggest that the true target of Hecht's critique is the immorality / amorality of the present, not the possibly

⁵ It is difficult to identify with precision what Hecht had in mind with this name. Among the more feasible choices are a vintage perfume by Jean Dussés of Paris or a Swiss wine produced at the Cave Valcombe winery. It is also possible, however, that Hecht simply made up a French brand-name that could best serve his ironic intention.

anachronistic set of values championed by the Victorian thinker. Schmidt argues that the poet does not take the side of the speaker and therefore the poem should not be regarded solely as a parody of the Arnoldian text:

... whereas Matthew Arnold's speaker may be a bit pretentious and too earnest by twentieth-century standards, he approaches the world with conscience and moral seriousness. The Hecht speaker has no moral concerns at all and, far from taking the world too earnestly, lives without any ethical considerations other than the desire to get whatever pleasure he can.

Instead, the target of criticism should be sought in "the developing American slacker 'cool' outlook of the twentieth century, much like what Matthew Arnold refers to [...] as 'charlatanism'" (Schmidt). In other words, we are witness here to the natural (albeit extreme) extension of Arnold's "renouncement"—the author's withdrawal into a realm beyond morality and his subsequent adoption of a stoic stance, dictated not by the fearful *prospect* that this brave new world may have "neither joy, nor love, nor light", but by the *knowledge*⁶ that things are inevitably so. As Pontynen has noted, the path pursued by the "Dover Bitch" reflects an "existential coarseness" that cannot warrant any amount of sympathy (342). Love may not suffice in itself, but its replacement by something much less noble—hedonism—most certainly removes one from the Arnoldian "higher self". Against such a background, Pontynen explains, the artist's only response is to trivialise tragedy through a comical response, "[b]ut it is a dark comedy of which the joke is still on us" (342).

In summation, we can say that Hecht's poem confronts the readers with two possible "criticisms of life", presenting itself to the readers as an example of what Gerhard Joseph calls a "duck-rabbit" or "Janus-faced" text which lends itself to multiple, complementary interpretations. It is simultaneously a satire of modern relationships and a critique of Victorian romance and melodrama (Joseph 9), as both sex and love prove unsatisfactory in the long run. It is a complex piece based on the point-counterpoint technique, requiring from the audience a continuous reading and counter-reading of text and co-text. This interplay, Joseph argues, also illustrates the transition from determinacy to indeterminacy, essential for the progress of modern thought:

the movement from an apparently "univocal" "Dover Beach" to an apparently "equivocal" "Dover Bitch" may be read as an allegory of the shift in our [...] hermeneutic narrative – of a turn from what we have fashioned as "Victorian

⁶ Such a position is even more understandable in light of Hecht's personal experience: as an American infantry man, he participated in combat missions in Germany and Czechoslovakia, also helping in the liberation of the Flossenburg concentration camp, where he gathered evidence from French prisoners. The accounts about the harsh conditions and the suffering endured by these people had left an indelible mark on the poet.

determinacy" to what binarily follows it in our literary historical plot, "Modernist and Post-Modernist indeterminacy." (Joseph 10)

4. Absent thee from felicity a while—a long while: Alice Munro, "Jakarta"

If in the case of the previously discussed title the intertextual approach is not only justified but obligatory, given the obvious formal and thematic kinship with the model, in the case of Munro's short story, the interpretive-analytical effort is more demanding. In a first phase, readers must understand the points at which the texts intersect.

For a start, adding to our earlier observations, we can say that for Hecht's poem "Dover Beach" serves as a "source proximate", an example of what Miola describes as "Type 4" intertextuality.⁷ By contrast, with "Jakarta", the relationship involves a more sophisticated dynamic of intertextual connections. For one thing, as a *quotation* ("Type 3" intertextuality) Arnold's poem frames and gives direction to Munro's narrative, contributing to character delineation in a key moment of the story. More importantly though, at a deeper level, it also serves as a *paralogue*⁸ ("Type 7" intertextuality), indicative of a shared worldview and thus capable of serving as a key to deciphering the otherwise inconspicuous moral valences of Munro's work.

Indeed, together with other stories in *The Love of a Good Woman*, "Jakarta" displays thematic similarities with both of the previously discussed pieces. As noted by Sandy English, "transition" and "transformation" represent a constant authorial interest in this volume: "The stories communicate a sense of considerable amounts of time passing, of the changes that happen to an individual or a family over decades, and the lag of consciousness in catching up with these changes."

However, in contrast with both poets, Munro avoids generalisations about human nature or our fate as a species, transferring the source of Arnoldian pessimism to an immediate concrete plane. "Uneasiness", the critic explains, acquires a "more historically located sense" (English). Despite being mainly concerned with the protagonists' life-changing choices, Munro ties her narrative to a specific social and cultural context, the period of intellectual turmoil and suspicion succeeding World War 2, as indicated, for instance, by the recurring

⁷ In reference to this type of intertextuality, the author observes that: "[t]he source functions as the book-on-the-desk; the author honors, reshapes, steals, ransacks, and plunders. The dynamics include copying, paraphrase, compression, conflation, expansion, omission, innovation, transference, and contradiction" (19).

⁸ Miola underlines the increased complexity of the paralogue in comparison to other types of intertextuality: "Paralogues are texts that illuminate the intellectual, social, theological, or political meanings in other texts. Unlike texts or even traditions, paralogues move horizontally and analogically in discourses rather than in vertical lineation through the author's mind or intention" (23).

insistence on the “communist” connections of Cottar and Sonje (we may argue in this sense that the former’s mysterious disappearance at the end of the story is also the consequence of his ideological allegiance). In addition, the critic goes on, “personal revolt” and “domestic life”, the main issues addressed in Munro’s volume, are inextricably linked with the question of choice:

It is natural and perhaps inevitable that one reacts to the discomfort, pain and even spiritual oppression within the family, but, in Munro’s world, one also runs the risk of making disastrous mistakes by leaving or disrupting domestic life. (English)

Based on these, we may argue that “Jakarta” is in a sense the antinomical counterpart of both previously discussed texts. Firstly, through the characters of Kath and Cottar (as opposed to Kent and Sonje), Munro suggests that “turning outward” and embracing the world and the others is the only solution that can eventually diminish human misery. As Sandy English further argues, Munro’s characters are marked by the burden of lost opportunities, but it is those who do not accept the existential limitations (such as those imposed by marriage, family life or friendship, we may add) are the ones who “stand the chance of regretting less”. Secondly, through Kath, Munro constructs a complex character embodying contradictory drives, who simultaneously incriminates and vindicates both Arnold’s idealised lover (expected by partner and society to be capable of being prim and faithful) and Hecht’s oversexualised girl (who ends up being objectified in the wake of her own choices).

Already from the opening scenes of the story we can see the peculiar stand of Munro’s heroine regarding the social and gender conventions of her times. Thus, even before becoming a mother herself, she interprets motherhood as a form of “absence”, an act that prevents the individual from fully exploring the potentialities of womanhood. Similarly, she looks at adult life as a series of examinations to pass (marriage, first and second babies, etc.) in an inevitable progression that makes one arrive at “wherever it was you were going”. Nonetheless, if relative to the “Monicas”, Kath appears non-conventional and progressive, as the story unfolds we are made to understand that her rebelliousness is merely a mask she chose to wear against the temptations she is not prepared to face. Relevant in this sense is her reaction during the key scene of the party taking place on the beach, when flirting with a complete stranger fills her with the more mundane counterpart of the Arnoldian “confused alarms of struggle and flight”:

... The sex Kath had with Kent was eager and strenuous, but at the same time reticent. They had not seduced each other but more or less stumbled into intimacy, or what they believed to be intimacy, and stayed there. If there is only to be the one partner in your life nothing has to be made special – it already is so. They had looked at each other naked, but at those times they

had not except by chance looked into each other's eyes.

That was what Kath was doing now, all the time, with her unknown partner. They advanced and retreated and circled and dodged, putting on a show for each other, and looking into each other's eyes. Their eyes declared that this show was nothing, nothing compared to the raw tussle they could manage when they chose. . . .

Kath tries to push her own boundaries by *imagining* a scenario which completes her own fantasy regarding marital bliss. But while at this stage fabulation is still more important than action, as her story continues she will gradually immerse herself in the realm of the concrete—a realm that she knows she must create on her own. Unlike the other two authors, Munro endows her character with a voice and turns her into an artificer, much like Joyce's Stephen Daedalus, and so her story slowly reveals its greater ambition—that of being an *allegory of creative process*.

Consequently, the next rite of passage will involve verbalising her fantasies to herself. After one of her conversations with Kent she comes to realise that she is no stranger to the idea of sexual promiscuity in principle. What she abhors, we are left to understand, is the lack of choice and consensual decision:

. . . Kent said, "You mean young guys would go to bed with that old woman? She's got to be fifty."

Kath said, "Cottar's thirty-eight."

"Even so," said Kent. "It's disgusting."

But Kath found the idea of those stipulated and obligatory copulations exciting as well as disgusting. To pass yourself around obediently and blamelessly, to whoever came up on the list—it was like temple prostitution. Lust served as your duty. It gave her a deep obscene thrill, to think of that.

. . .

For all the tempting thoughts that came into her mind, Kath believed that she could only, ever, sleep with Kent. Sex was like something they had invented between them. Trying it with somebody else would mean a change of circuits—all of her life would blow up in her face. Yet she could not say she loved Kent agonizingly.

Despite her initial submissiveness, Kath gradually challenges societal norms and expectations, and, above all, the established views regarding gender roles. As her story reaches its natural conclusion, we see her standing in a position diametrically opposed to that championed by the Victorian speaker, but at the same time also different from that of Hecht's feminine figure. We learn of her eventual divorce from Kent, which attests to her willingness and capacity to pursue a chosen path, contradicting her own youthful belief in the

virtue of an enduring bond with a lifetime mate. This impression is further strengthened if we examine her disposition relative to the heroine in Lawrence's story (Munro's inclusion of this second intertext being now fully justified). As the final scene of "The Fox" shows, for Lawrence's girl the passage into womanhood implies the relinquishment of her individuality and absorbance into the domineering male self. By contrast, Munro fully empowers Kath by placing her in the realm of fiction. Like Cottar, who now serves as her male counterpart, she becomes a *presence through absence*. In the closing scenes we see her exerting a curious, shadowy influence on her former husband:

But when you knew somebody was alive, when you could drive to the very door, you let the opportunity pass. What wouldn't be worth it? To see her a stranger that he couldn't believe he'd ever been married to, or to see that she could never be a stranger yet was unaccountably removed?

It is precisely this final distancing and independence that grants her privilege over Hecht's character too, for whom maturity implies a loss of the self as the persona slowly replaces the person. In other words, if for Munro's heroine experience and the ensuing sexual diversity bring liberation from physical, spiritual and even social dependence, for Hecht's girl they become a form of bondage of the sort that caused Kath's revulsion in the earlier quote: she is a "bitch" not because of promiscuousness, but because she has become a "vulgar", *irrelevant* individual, who can be bought and pleased with a bottle of *Nuit d'Amour*.

Ironically, once the roles have changed, it is through Kent that Kath's choice is given a qualitative judgement. We see this in the closing scenes, where, while pondering over the ordinariness of human existence, he comes to equate "domesticity" with "predictability":

His old friend's wife, who was over seventy, wanted to show him pictures of herself and some other old woman dressed up as Klondike dance-hall girls, for a musical show they had put on. And his grown-up children were caught up in their own lives. That was only natural and not a surprise to him. The surprise was that these lives, the lives his sons and daughter were living, seemed closed in now, somewhat predictable. Even the changes in them that he could foresee or was told were coming—Noelle was on the verge of leaving her second husband—were not very interesting.

Kent's final musing complements Kath's choice, completing the anti-Arnoldian circle. There is no assuagement, only despair, in the comfort and security of the hearth:

"Your wife's been gone a long time," she said. "It's absurd, but young people seem unimportant to me. As if they could vanish off the earth and it wouldn't really matter."

"Just the opposite," Kent said. "That's us you're talking about. That's us."
Because of the pill his thoughts stretch out long and gauzy and lit up like vapor trails. He travels a thought that has to do with staying here, with listening to Sonje talk about Jakarta while the wind blows sand off the dunes. A thought that has to do with not having to go on, to go home.

In the end, like the Shakespearean companion, Kent and Sonje are refused happiness, becoming instead the raconteurs of the struggles and choices of others.

5. Concluding remarks

Given the complexity of the discussed texts and the numerous planes on which they intersect, it is impossible to provide an exhaustive treatment of my subject. Nevertheless, at the end of this interpretive exercise, I can formulate some summative remarks that will serve as conclusions.

On a thematic level, we observe that all of them are focused on the idea of change / transformation, as well as the passage of time and its impact upon the individual. In terms of imagery, each gives centrality to the beach (or its spatial proxies, the sea and seashore) as the locus of intersections, evocative of turmoil and transition.

With Arnold, the cautious pessimist, the beach is placed at a safe distance, while his speaker is left to contemplate it from the precarious security of the room, conscious of its dangers. For the Victorian poet, it represents the space of temptations that must be resisted, since the siren songs it carries are those of a world devoid of "joy", "love" and "light". In Hecht's poem, the protective space remains, but for the girl who chooses to look outside it becomes a prison. However, her fate eventually verifies Arnold's concerns: the "lights across the channel" will inevitably dim one's inner light. In Munro's case, the beach symbolises the narrow borderline between the present and the future, which must be crossed by the heroine for self-fulfilment to be complete. It is upon the dock that Kath is tempted and tested, and where she catches glimpses of the things she has repressed through allegiance to domestic values. Her "renouncement" works in a direction opposite to Arnold's: she trades safety for freedom, even though she knows this will undoubtedly lead to solitude.

In the final analysis, we see that both Hecht and Munro formulate a conclusion that Arnold was incapable of accepting, proving themselves as genuine exponents of the pessimistic strain of thought. "Let us be true to each other" may be a noble ideal, especially when fuelled by youthful exuberance, but life—these authors remind us—frequently defeats individual will, as the tempting voices are too loud, or too true to ignore. The choices are never final, but their consequences are often irrevocable.

Through its rich semantic potential, “Dover Beach” remains a quintessential Arnoldian text, proof not only of its creator’s artistic genius and depth of vision or an inexorable potential for critical explorations, but also a piece of documentary value—one of the more compelling testimonials to the fact that our Victorian forerunners have left us not only the fruits and flaws of an industrial revolution, but also many of their hopes, doubts and fears.

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EMILY GERARD: FROM SCOTLAND TO TRANSNATIONAL IDENTITY

MIHAELA MUDURE¹, SARKA LHOTSKA, LENKA TREUTNEROVA

ABSTRACT. *Emily Gerard: From Scotland to Transnational Identity.* This essay focuses on the transnational connections of Emily Gerard (1845-1905), a very interesting Scottish woman writer who lived most of her life in Austria-Hungary. Comparisons are made with Mary (Maria) Grant-Rossetti (another Scottish expatriate writer) and Emilia Lungu-Puhallo (a Romanian female writer). Gerard's most famous work, *The Land beyond the Forest*, as well as two of Gerard's novels located in Poland, are analyzed predominantly from the point of view of the author's transnational identifications. Our approach is meant to find the specific ways in which (post-) colonialism affects Gerard's female gaze.

Keywords: *Scotland, Poland, Transylvania, identity, transnational, Emily Gerard, Emilia Lungu-Puhallo, Mary Grant-Rossetti, journey, ethnicity.*

REZUMAT. *Emily Gerard: din Scoția, spre identitate transnațională.* Acest eseu se concentrează asupra legăturilor transnaționale ale lui Emily Gerard (1845-1905), o foarte interesantă scriitoare scoțiană care a trăit mare parte a vieții sale în Austro-Ungaria. Se fac comparații cu Mary (Maria) Grant-Rosetti (o altă scriitoare scoțiană expatriată) și Emilia Lungu-Puhallo (o scriitoare româncă). Se analizează, din punctul de vedere al identificărilor auctoriale transnaționale, cea mai cunoscută lucrare a lui Gerard, *The Land beyond the Forest*, precum și două romane ale lui Gerard plasate în Polonia. Perspectiva noastră e menită a găsi modalitățile specifice prin care (post-) colonialismul influențează privirea feminină a lui Gerard.

Cuvintele cheie: *Scoția, Polonia, Transylvania, identitate, transnațional, Emily Gerard, Emilia Lungu-Puhallo, Mary Grant-Rossetti, călătorie, etnicitate.*

¹ The authors' contributions to this article are as follows: Sarka Lhotska analyzed *A Secret Mission*, Lenka Treutnerova wrote about *The Heron's Tower*, the remainder of the essay is by Mihaela Mudure. An earlier version of dr. Mudure's contribution was published in *Transnational Identities of Women Writers in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*. Ed. Ramona Mihăilă. New York: Addleton Academic Publishers, 2013, pp. 210-221. This project would not have been possible without the generous support of Technical University in Liberec, Czech Republic through a research grant. Mihaela Mudure, contact address: <mmudure@yahoo.com>; Sarka Lhotska, contact address: <sarka.lhotska@gmail.com>; Lenka Treutnerova, contact address <lenka.treutnerova@seznam.cz>.

Emily Gerard (1849-1905), a minor Victorian female writer, also known under the name of Madame de Laszowska, was born at Chesters, Jedburgh in a family that had contacts and relations with the Scottish nobility. A very important event in the family's life was the conversion of Emily Gerard's mother to Catholicism. Twice marginalized, as Scots in a country dominated by the English and as Catholics in a country that was intransigently Presbyterian, the Gerards became European expatriats.

From 1863 to 1866 Emily Gerard lived with her family in Venice. Then she spent three years at a monastery in the Tyrol. In 1869 she got married to Chevalier Miecislav de Laszowski, a Polish aristocrat and officer in the Austrian-Hungarian army. We do not know how the two young people met. But their condition connected them. Both were Catholics. And both of them came from countries submitted to the imperial expansion of neighbouring hegemonic powers. Scotland was already in the imperial orbit of England since 1707. In 1795 Poland had been divided for the third time by Prussia, Russia, and Austria. We do not know for sure from which area of Poland Chevalier Miecislav de Laszowski was. But it is plausible that he was from the Russian part of Poland. Consequently, he chose to serve in the Austrian army in order to hasten the defeat of Poland's enemies².

The couple experienced the mobile life of a military family. They moved from one garrison to another, unpacking and packing again, upon the Austrian Emperor's command. By the time when they made friends in one place, they had to move again. The Laszowskis were always on the move. They lived in Galicia and then moved to Transylvania where Chevalier de Laszowski was appointed to the command of the cavalry brigade. In the latter province the couple lived in Braşov and Sibiu, important Transylvanian towns.

In 1888, Emily Gerard published a travelogue inspired by her Transylvanian stay: *The Land beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures and Fancies from Transylvania*. This writing made Bram Stoker settle the plot of *Dracula* in Transylvania. Initially, Stoker had placed the novel in Styria but his notes show that reading Gerard's travelogue he came to the conclusion that Transylvania was a better scenery for his demonic character. A marginal himself, also born in a country victimized by empires and hegemonic ambitions, Stoker wanted to export his inhibitions to the Other extreme of Europe, often seen as a *hic sunt leones* place. In 1885, Chevalier de Laszowski retired from active service and the couple made Vienna their permanent residence till the end of their lives.

Emily Gerard began her literary career with collaborative novels, i.e. fictions written together with her sister Dorothea who had married Julius Longard de Longardo, also an officer in the Austrian-Hungarian army, in 1886.

² In this case, Russia.

The partnership of the two sisters resulted in four novels: *Reata* (1880), *Beggar My Neighbour* (1882), *The Waters of Hercules* (1885) and *A Sensitive Plant* (1891).

The Gerard sisters lived both in Scotland and on the continent and took pleasure in situating their writings all over Europe. Transnationalism gave them a context that framed a story following well-known narrative patterns (the romance, the political thriller, etc.). This transnationalism follows the geographical perambulations of their husbands. For instance, Poland is a favourite background for Emily Gerard's novels. The writer identifies with her husband's patriotic feelings. In Gerard's novels, Poland's sufferings at the end of the nineteenth century are sublimated as a substitute for her Scottish feelings in relation to the domineering tendencies of England. Both in the case of Scotland and Poland (because of the eighteenth century impositions), hurt national feelings led to a (post-)colonial situation in the nineteenth century, namely dependence on a power centre (London, Vienna) that is admired (for its efficiency and power) and hated at the same time.

From the point of view of Gerard's transnational evolution probably the most interesting novel is *Beggar My Neighbour* whose title is a card game which presupposes the possibility to use any tricks until the opponent is completely destroyed. The two sisters identify with Chevalier de Laszowski's feelings for his Polish homeland. Subliminally, this is seen in a kind of sisterhood of countries historically victimized by the hegemonic power of the time. Scotland and Poland are both in this sisterhood which could also include other Eastern or Central European homelands. The main character of this novel is Kazimir Bielinski, who definitely reminds us of Emily's husband, a Polish officer obliged to serve in foreign armies. "Madame Bielinska, having at length realized that there were no immediate hopes of a new Polish kingdom, discovered that her eldest son³, instead of learning to be a Polish hero, was simply serving the Emperor of Austria, like any other officer" (10). Kazimir will be taken in by his own brother, Lucien, who misinforms his elder brother about the situation of their properties. Finally, Lucien will take hold of both Kazimir's beloved and his inheritance. An important aide in Lucien's manoeuvres is Aitzig Majulik, the Jew whose business relies on his contacts with the Polish nobility. Although Aitzig is useful to the Christians in the neighbourhood, he is despised. The Gerard sisters are able to understand the mechanism of prejudice and stereotyping which obliges Aitzig to respond with prejudice to prejudice. The echoes from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* can be the object of an interesting intertextual exercise. The Gerard sisters make Aitzig complain that he is treated like a dog although he is a faithful servant of the Polish aristocrat. "Aitzig is a dog?" whimpered the Jew; poor old Aitzig is a dog, to be

³ Kazimir.

kicked and trodden. Thus does the noble Pan use his faithful servants" (346)⁴. Shakespeare's Jew also complains about the way he is treated by his fellow Christians but his ideological tenet is the Renaissance generous embrace of all people, regardless their religion. Social hierarchies do not matter for him so much, nor are they used by Shylock as a reproach to the prejudiced Antonio.

The novels written only by Emily Gerard are mostly romances where one can feel the Austenian influence on the game of feelings and the traditional moral lesson which reinforces the values of matrimony. What distinguishes Gerard from Austen, though, is the subtle and benevolent irony which the latter used when portraying the world of the provincial gentry. On the other hand, while Austen places her novels among the gentry of England which she knew so well, Gerard, a transnational writer, prefers international locations – such as Germany in *The Herons' Tower*, a romance published in 1904. The plot is set in the first half of the eighteenth century. The heroine of the story, Luitgard von Pfeilhofen, is the only heiress of the Pfeilhofens. Her parents (Othmar and Hedwig) behave indifferently to her and she is constantly told that it was she who should have died instead of her twin brother. Victim of a patriarchal family, she has no friends and knows nothing except the Castle and the park that surrounds it. Her favourite place in the park is the Herons' Tower. Unfortunately, the Tower is locked and nobody wants to say why. Something terrible happened to her mother when she was pregnant; consequently, everything about the Herons' Tower is taboo.

Life changes when Luitgard turns seventeen. The will of Eberhard von Pfeilhofen (their ancestor) is discovered. Othmar and Hedwig find out that they are not the rightful heirs to their property, the true heir being their relative, Marquis Gastone Frecciacorte, who usually lives in Italy but he happens to be in Buxenburg, the capital of their land. Hedwig devises a plan. Luitgard will marry Frecciacorte, in this way preserving their property, Frecciacorte will get what should have been his and they will not have to publish the will. The use of daughters as mere tools for the interest of the patriarchal family is implicitly criticized here by Emily Gerard.

All of a sudden, Luitgard becomes very important, her parents buy her the most modern dresses, and they call in Wulfhild, a girl from the capital, to act as

⁴ "I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction" (Act III, scene I).

her companion. Luitgard does not understand the change. The problem is that before her mother devises this plan, Luitgard meets Delius (a boy of Greek origin) near the Herons' Tower. He becomes her secret friend and later also her lover.

When Luitgard realizes that she has to marry Gastone Frecciacorte, she is desperate. After some time, she convinces Gastone that she cannot marry him and he leaves for Buxenburg. Luitgard's mother discovers her daughter's secret lover and sends him away by paying him a certain sum of money. Then, by her cunning intrigues, she makes her daughter marry Frecciacorte. After the marriage, they live in Buxenburg. Luitgard is not happy. After some time she meets Delius again. They want to escape together, but her mother interferes again and reveals to Luitgard the bitter truth that Delius had been paid in order to run away from her. Luitgard confronts Delius, she decides to leave him, and wants to commit suicide by throwing herself from the Herons' Tower. Gastone saves her and Delius dies because of snakebites. This alert romance is, firstly, a critique of patriarchal matrimonial arrangements.

A very interesting character in this German novel produced by a Scottish writer living in the Austrian Empire is Othmar (Luitgard's father). He has always loved Hedwig and has also always been different than his ancestors. All his life he pretended to like hunting because it was a tradition in his family, whereas he was not interested in hunting at all, but in music. Hunting is supposed to be a masculine entertainment and Othmar has to follow the traditional patterns of masculinity if he wants to preserve the prestige of the family. Othmar likes Luitgard but is afraid to speak with her or to show her his feelings because of Hedwig, his wife. He is weak and turns into a puppet in Hedwig's hands. The reader understands him and sympathises with him. Finally, his good heart wins and he finds courage to do the right thing, even against Hedwig's will. Unfortunately, he is killed by a wild boar while hunting and the mercantile arrangements of his wife will be successful. The romance has feminist implications. Women are at a disadvantage when it comes to inheritance and they are used as merchandise for the pecuniary interests of the clan. The fact that Emily Gerard set her romance in Germany offers a transnational background to these feminist considerations. Women are in the same position everywhere, with patriarchy being the main structure of society.

Another genre cultivated by Emily Gerard, also in a transnational key, is the thriller. *A Secret Mission*, is a relevant example, in this respect. The plot begins in April 1887, in Stara-Wola, a Polish village near Warsaw. It is summer and inside the farmers' houses there are flies everywhere. Roman, a German officer comes to the house of Felicyan, his brother, where he has not been for many years. He comes with a secret mission which will change many things in the neighbourhood. Felicyan and his wife Hala live in Stara-Wola together with their children, Zosia and Kostus, and with Hala's sister, Luba, and their father, Pan Nicorowicz. Felicyan is a "tall, massively framed man turned forty" (1). He is a

farmer, and, according to his brother, “he is not clever, not good at any argument, nor were his opinions the result of any intellectual process” (p. 157). Hala makes a perfect wife for a man like Felicyan. She is “a simple country-bred girl, of pleasant appearance and affectionate disposition, sufficiently intelligent to be an agreeable companion, and of robust enough health to take her share of farm and household duties” (11). Luba, a single woman, falls in love with Roman, though he only loves her as a sister. She also gets to know some details about Roman’s mission and helps him. She hopes this will bring her Roman’s love, but it never happens. Roman, a handsome German officer, wearing clean and good-looking clothes, attracts the attention of more than one woman. Hala also finds Roman’s appearance very attractive but she does not fall in love with him, rather appreciates, even enjoys his good looks and careful appearance. Her husband is a farmer whose clothes are old, dirty, and worn-out. Hala always reproaches her husband for looking like a tramp.

The Russian police discover that Roman is a spy and he is imprisoned for six weeks. There is no evidence of his guilt and he keeps denying any guilt. Then his brother, Felicyan is accused of high treason and taken to Siberia for life. Everybody is devastated. Hala blames Roman for the misfortune of Felicyan. To a great extent, it is his fault. At first, he denies it and wants Hala’s forgiveness but he will not be forgiven. Roman leaves for Germany where he meets another spy, Biruta, who had escaped from Poland harmlessly. One day Roman and Biruta go to a museum and see a painting which reminds Roman of his brother who is in Siberia. He decides to return to Russia and save his brother. Finally, Roman succeeds in getting his brother out of the Siberian camp but he is killed. Brotherhood is more important than a spy’s duty.

A Secret Mission is a novel full of cunningness, naivety, morality, affection, friendship, manipulation, bravery, and virulence. It is about how life can change in a second because of such absurd circumstance as one fly sitting on a picture and being hunted by an old sick man. Emily Gerard is very good at seeing Roman’s psychological evolution when it comes to the suffering of his own family. On one hand, he wants to fulfil his mission, on the other hand, when the life of his brother and his family are at stake, he completely changes his attitude and belief and acts very bravely. The novel is very interesting as an image of Poland under Czarist rule. Emily Gerard identifies with her husband’s feelings for Poland and this country’s historical tragedy. By sublimation she transmits to the reader this fundamental truth: patriotism is a very important value because it gives one a belonging. Gerard’s transnationalism is militant; she implicitly condemns the aggressive imperialist policies of some countries, such as the Czarist Empire. People’s lives are destroyed because they are caught in the vortex of history, created by domineering empires.

Emily Gerard’s best known work is her travelogue *The Land Beyond the Forest: Facts, Figures, and Fancies from Transylvania*, published in New York in

1888. Like many other eighteenth- or nineteenth- century female writers married to foreigners, she tried to cope with the problems arising from her matrimony with a foreigner by writing. Her writing became a subliminal escape activity that allowed her to forget her own alienation and gave her a purpose and an existential meaning. *The Land beyond the Forest* was one of the results of Emily Gerard's movements all over the Austrian Empire with her husband. During her two-year stay in Transylvania, she got very familiar with the Transylvanian people, the landscape, and the local folklore. She got inspired by these new realities she described them for the Western public, re-inventing the Eastern border of Europe as a place of Gothic horror and attraction.

Her work had a decisive influence upon Bram Stoker, who initially wanted to locate his vampire in Styria but upon reading Gerard's article "Transylvanian Superstitions", he decided to place his Dracula in Transylvania. Gerard mentions the vampire superstition and the method used by Romanian peasants when vampirism was suspected: a stake was driven through the heart of the corpse while its mouth was filled with garlic. These anti-vampire strategies are also mentioned in *The Land beyond the Forest* (I, 320) and all these paraphernalia appear in Stoker's gothic fiction. We know from Stoker's notebooks that he was not entirely satisfied with Gerard's treatment of the vampire issue, as he thought that her approach was too scientific and too anthropological: "Madame Gerard says nothing about the intense panics which vampirism is said to have periodically caused in Transylvania as in Hungary; and what is more to be regretted, she does not satisfy our curiosity as to how living vampires succeed in carrying on their operations" (Stoker, I, 45). Descriptions of nature in Stoker's novel were also influenced by Emily Gerard's descriptions of nature in the Carpathians: dark forests, waterfalls, wolves. The people whom she describes as living in these forests are very poor and their life standards are very far from civilization. The Romanians are recognized as the most numerous ethnic group in Transylvania and the poorest.

It seems that Emily Gerard was also the source of the well-known terror-inspiring term "Nosferatu", which would be a corrupt version of the Romanian word "Necuratu," meaning the devil. In *The Land beyond the Forest* she mentions that "[m]ore decidedly evil is the *nosferatu* or vampire, in which every Romanian peasant believes as firmly as he does in heaven or hell" (1888, I: 319).

In her famous book about Transylvania, Gerard also talks about Baron K., who lives there in seclusion (I, 81). There is no proof that Jules Verne read Gerard's travelogue but her aristocrat living in seclusion reminds one of Verne's novel *The Carpathian Castle* where an important character – also an aristocrat – withdraws into the mountains because of a sentimental disappointment. The novel was published in 1892 so it is not impossible that Verne may have read Gerard's travelogue. Nevertheless, the description of the Carpathians as a wild territory situated on the margins of civilization is common to both Verne's and Stoker's novels and it originates in Emily Gerard's travelogue.

Typical of the way in which literary history is constructed, Emily Gerard became a shadowy literary personality and the canon only retained Stoker and his novel. Gerard is another of those cases when literary history has been unfair to women writers, simply erasing their work and merits for the benefit of some more fortunate male colleagues. A similar case is Marie Nizet, a female Belgian writer who may have had influenced Bram Stoker through her novel *Capitaine Vampire* (*Captain Vampire*). Nizet lived from 1859 till 1922; she never travelled to Romania but she heard a lot about the country from her father's lodgers, Romanians studying in Brussels. There are some similarities between the main title characters of Stoker's and Nizet's novel. Both of them are aristocrats who suffer from a terrible disease: vampirism. In both novels this pathological behaviour is a punishment from God and the cross is an important instrument in the healing process. In Nizet's novel, the vampire is of Russian origin and he is an officer, part of the occupying forces of Wallachia. Unlike Stoker's vampire, this one has an intensive social life, he goes to the balls offered by the Romanian aristocratic elite for the Russian officers, he gets married. *Capitaine Vampire* lures attractive Romanian women from all classes in order to quench his thirst for blood. On the other hand, vampirism gets political. Fighting against the monster is a good patriotic deed, it is fighting both for God and the country. The Belgian writer's transnationalism is an imaginary one (she never visited Romania) and it is based upon the Western complex of superiority and the belief that the Carpathians are a wild territory where man's killing instincts can manifest overtly. In spite of some common elements between the two novels, which could be the result of a certain Western power-inflicted perspective upon Eastern/Central Europe, we have no definite proof that Stoker had read Nizet but he does confess to have read Gerard⁵.

In order to integrate Emily Gerard into a comparative transnational perspective two other women should be mentioned: Mary Grant-Rossetti (1819-1893) and Emilia Lungu Puhallo (1853-1932). Both of them were nomadic subjects and their husbands had a strong connection with their work and/or public activity. The former was of Scottish origin, like Gerard, and she came to Wallachia (now part of Romania) as a governess. She married into a very distinguished aristocratic family and identified with the Romanian revolutionary ideals of 1848⁶. She became the first female journalist in Romanian history; she published essays, poems, and plays for children. Mary Grant-Rossetti was

⁵ In this respect, I strongly disagree with Matei Cazacu. Bram Stoker did not vampirize Marie Nizet. The analysis of the two novels does not support this claim. What connects Stoker and Nizet is their common inspiration from the vampire stock extant in the Western imaginary, at the moment they wrote, in connection with Eastern Europe.

⁶ It is interesting that the Scottish Mary Rosetti posed to the Jewish-Austrian painter Constantin Daniel Rosenthal (1820-1851) for the famous painting "Revolutionary Romania". This painting became the emblem of the Romanian nationalist trend in the nineteenth century. Nationalist artifacts, therefore, are far from being the product of some ethnically pure consciousness. They are rather the *bricolage* of individuals who **identify with** a certain ideology.

interested in women's issues and promoted in Romania what might be considered the first wave feminism. One of her main tenet was the necessity to provide women with possibilities to get education. This kind of belated Enlightenment genderized according to the realities from Wallachia was extremely topical at that historical moment. Both Grant and Gerard left their homeland in Scotland and followed their husbands to the other extreme of Europe. Both of them identified with their husbands' agendas and turned into a sort of mimetic Eastern or Central Europeans. Their transnationalism is the result of their family trajectory. The change in their identity was the result of the patriarchal assumption that woman should follow man. But in time this change of identity triggered their creativity and energies in ways which would probably have remained latent had they stayed in Scotland for all the duration of their lives.

Emilia Lungu Puhallo came from Banat (Sânnicolau Mare), a province that belonged to the Austrian Empire in the nineteenth century. Like Emily Gerard she got married to a foreigner: in 1887, she married lieutenant Puhallo, the descendant of a noble Croatian family who served in the Austrian army (Cosma, 62). Like Emily Gerard, she fully experienced the vicissitudes of an officer's wife. She moved with her husband from garrison to garrison. The moment they made friends in one place, they had to move to another location. It is probably this imposed instability that made both Puhallo and Gerard bend more on their inner life and choose literature as the best confidante. First, Emilia Lungu Puhallo lived in Sarajevo, then in Mostar. In Sarajevo she published articles in the newspaper *Die Post*, edited by Milena Mrazevalz (Cosma, 62). 1891 was a very tragic year for Puhallo. It is during this interval that she lost both her husband and her only child. Struck with this overwhelming tragedy, she returned to Timișoara in Banat, and she dedicated all her life to literature and improving female education. Like Mary Grant-Rossetti, Puhallo also realized that this belated (by Western standards) Enlightenment was necessary for Romanian women. She published short stories, essays, a history of the Romanian schools from Timișoara (*Istoria școalelor românești din Timișoara*), a history of the first school for girls in Banat (*Istoria primei școle românești de fete din Banat*), and a very interesting study on the Romanian woman⁷ where she reflected upon the causes of women's marginal status. From the point of view of this paper, most relevant is Puhallo's *The Voyage through Bosnia-Herzegovina*⁸, written from the same subject position as Gerard's *The Land Beyond the Forest*. Both women were officers' wives in the army of a hegemonic power that did not represent their national ideals. It is interesting that both of them identify with the master's look although they do not come from the centre of imperial power. Lungu was Romanian, Gerard was Scottish. Or both Romania and Scotland were objects of imperial desire and hegemony. Both of

⁷ In the Romanian newspaper *Drapelul*, in 1904.

⁸ *Călătoria prin Bosnia-Herzegovina*.

these two writers mimic cultural imperialism as an empowerment strategy. On the other hand, both are very sympathetic and eager to understand the realities of the countries where they lived at that moment. Gerard, particularly, shows that she is not only intelligent but also tries to find information about Transylvania and check if it corresponds to what she witnesses and sees in reality.

Disappointingly, Romanian scholars have scarcely been interested in Gerard so far. There is just one article by Radu Teuceanu, written from a historical perspective. It mentions the intertextual connection between Gerard and Stoker but only focuses upon the historical details of Gerard's stay in Sibiu and gives the reader a list of her works. Nor have British scholars been very keen on Emily Gerard. She is briefly mentioned in several literary dictionaries on the site Orlando, dedicated to British female writing, but no monographic study has been dedicated to Emily Gerard yet. Like Ouida⁹, she belongs to that group of Victorian and not only Victorian middle class or upper middle class women for whom literature is an escape from a way of life conditioned by rules and prescriptions, a life circumscribed by the impositions of patriarchy. On the other hand, the literature of these women was not taken very seriously by the canon makers. They were seen rather as amateurs, dabbling in literature in order to forget about the boredom of their everyday spoilt lives.

We are going to analyze Gerard's work, *The Land Beyond the Forest*, predominantly as a text of a nomadic subject and we shall also try to define the peculiarities of Gerard's female gaze and the way her view was impregnated by (post-)colonialism.

Gerard begins her travelogue by juxtaposing the period she spent in Transylvania with other circumstances of her life. "In the spring of 1883 my husband was appointed to the command of the cavalry brigade in Transylvania, composed of two hussar regiments, stationed respectively at Hermanstadt and Kronstadt,—a very welcome nomination, as gratifying a long-cherished wish of mine to visit that part of the Austrian empire known as the Land beyond the Forest" (I, V). She distinguishes this period as an exceptional span of time in her life: "The two years spent in Transylvania were among the most agreeable of sixteen years' acquaintance with Austrian military life; and I shall always look back to this time as to something quaint and exceptional, totally different from all previous and subsequent experiences" (I, V).

Gerard's strategy is that of a reporter who records all the details minutely and in an almost scientific manner. On the other hand, she is also a chronicler that is plunged into a time before modernity, a time when witchcraft, demons, and monsters are still very much alive. Although Gerard does not have any

⁹ See Mihaela Mudure. "Ouida: victorianism și pasiune." *De la victorianism la postmodernism. In memoriam Ileana Galea*. Coordonator: Mihaela Mudure. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2013, pp. 133-144.

anthropological background, she tries to adopt a politically neutral attitude, an almost scientific perception as she feels the subterranean tensions in the province. Gerard also combines the discursive level with pictures, which turns her text into a complex structure foreshadowing the age of the visual in the twentieth century.

Much interested in the wild beauty of the country, the strange admixture of races by which it is peopled, and their curious and varied folk-lore, I recorded some of my impressions in short independent papers, of which three appeared in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' one in the 'Nineteenth Century,' and one in the 'Contemporary Review.' It is only after I had left the country, that, being desirous of preserving these sketches in more convenient form, I began rearranging the matter for publication. But the task of retracing my Transylvanian experiences was so pleasant that it led me on far beyond my original intention; one reminiscence awoke another, one chapter gave rise to another: and so, instead of one small volume, as had been at first contemplated, my manuscript almost unconsciously developed to its present dimensions. When the work was completed, the idea of illustrating it occurred to me: but this was a far more difficult matter; for, though offering a perfect treasure-mine to artists, Transylvania has not as yet received from them the attention it deserves; and had it not been for obliging assistance from several quarters, I should have debarred the satisfaction of elucidating this problem borne of my descriptions by appropriate sketches. (I, VI)

Gerard's work is, therefore, based upon memory and more precisely upon the sublimation of memory in time. The distance in time between the Gerard's Transylvanian experience and the moment she put down her emotions and adventures may have caused distortions and highlighted the extraordinary, the sensational in this province of the Empire where Western civilization entered slowly and later.

Romanticizing and submitting to the dangerous charm of the province, Emily Gerard let herself be carried away a bit by the general geographical aspect of Transylvania: a fortress surrounded by the Carpathians. The way Gerard describes Transylvania reminds the Romanian of Nicolae Bălcescu's famous description of Transylvania¹⁰.

Situated by nature within a formidable rampart of snow-tipped mountains, and shielded by heavy curtains of shrouding forests against the noise and the turmoil of the outer world, the very name of Transylvania tells us that it was formerly

¹⁰ Nicolae Bălcescu (1819-1852) was a prominent representative of the Romanian Revolution of 1848. In one of his historical works, *Românii supț Mihai-Voievod Viteazul* (Romanians under the Rule of Michael the Brave) he gave a description of Transylvania which became classical in the literary repertory of Romanian nationalism. It is interesting the Bălcescu's description also relies on the rampart aspect of Transylvania and in this it coincides perfectly with Gerard's. Still, as Bălcescu's work has not been translated into English yet, Emily Gerard could not have read it directly. She may have heard about it or we are dealing here with a coincidence resulting from the striking geography of the place.

regarded, as something apart, something out of reach, whose existence even for a time was enveloped in mystery. (I, 4)

Although Gerard introduces an element of exoticism and mystery in her description, it is remarkable that she also looked for scientific information about Transylvania. For instance, she was aware of the linguistic and historical debates about the old name of Transylvania, i.e. "Ardeal" (in Romanian). Historical linguistics has established that this toponym comes from "erd", probably as in Ardennes (French) or Erdely (Hungarian) and meaning the same thing: a plateau surrounded by mountains and forests. Or this structure of Transylvanian geography was noticed by many eyes (see Bălcescu and Gerard).

The Scottish writer's aim is: "giving to the world the only correct and trustworthy description of Transylvania which has yet appeared" (I, 6). She wants to "seize the general color and atmosphere of the land" (I, 8-9) for the English reader. Truthful but equally careful to give the reader the truth of her own way of seeing the world, she openly acknowledges the subjective essence of her method, "I have taken more pleasure in chronicling fancies than facts, and superstitions rather than statistics" (I, 9).

Gerard feels that she is in a sort of competition with time. Thanks to the train, "Transylvania will become in time as civilized and cultivated, and likewise as stereotyped and conventional, as the best-known parts of our first European states, - it will even cease one day to be an island ..." (I, 5). Gerard feels it a duty to leave a fair record of Transylvania as one of the last reservations of pristine, authentic nature¹¹. Nowadays, Prince Charles sees Transylvania in exactly the same terms; tradition, authenticity, genuine natural beauty. Or the fact that two travellers coming from the British Isles, one of them a member of the royal house, the other a Scottish woman, have similar opinions clearly tells us that when abroad, Emily Gerard identifies with the imperial eye. Her provincial roots, her Scottishness seems to be forgotten. Apparently, she has no problem writing from an imperial(istic) subject position. This is an empowerment strategy that hides the writer's roots and relies on ambivalence. On the other hand, Gerard's Scottishness pushes her to sympathy and compassion towards the marginalized ethnicities from the Austrian Empire, namely the Romanians. In this respect, she makes an interesting remark: "... it is wiser to regard one's self as a tourist than as an exile!" (I, 29). She carefully avoids any possible political reading of her attitude (she was the wife of a military), but beneath the clear surface of her apparently detached presentation, the reader can feel her own predilections and torment. She is the representative of power, as the wife of a high officer, and also carries with her the trauma of having to leave her beloved Scotland because of religious prejudice.

¹¹ See "Transylvania's Authentic Charm" <http://zalan.transylvanianscastle.com/>

Emily Gerard begins her geographical presentation with demography. She mentions that in Transylvania live 600,000 Hungarians and 1,200,000 Romanians. In spite of these clear figures, she emphasizes the fact that the Hungarians are the dominant social group in the province. Cluj is one of their favourite towns: “the winter resort of the Magyar aristocracy of Transylvania” (I, 32).

The demographic superiority of the Romanians would entitle them to a better social status. Gerard’s honest gaze notices the Romanians’ poverty, the higher crime rate in their communities because of material deprivation, and their superstitions. In an Enlightenment spirit, Gerard explains all these by the Romanians’ impossibility to get education. A combination of poverty and prejudice turn them into an “ardent, ignorant and superstitious race” (I, 70)¹². She notices the ethnic prejudices against the Romanians: “to the Hungarian and the Saxon, the Romanian is but simple unqualified vermin” (I, 210). The privileged ethnic groups in the Transylvanian ethnic puzzle are the Hungarians and the Germans. To them, the Romanians are the “less civilized and also less educated neighbor” (I, 58). The majority of Transylvania’s population, the Romanians, are biologically vital but lack the sophistication and refinement brought by high culture. On the other hand, Gerard insists on the potential of the Romanians because they are the most numerous and their families are the largest. “The Romanians will be men a few generations hence, when they have had time to shake off the habits of slavery and have learnt to recognize their own value” (I, 211).

On the other hand, it is very interesting that Emily Gerard is aware that there is also a Romanian cultural elite and she appreciates the richness of the traditional Romanian culture. She talks about a song of Horea or Iancu, important heroes for the Romanian people (I, 269-270). She translates some proverbs (I, 273-274), a dirge (I, 313), as well as two very famous Romanian ballads: the song of Master Manole (I, 278-286) and *Mioritza* (I, 286). Professor Hugo von Meltzl from the University of Cluj also gave Gerard the text of the ballad about Negru Vodă, a legendary prince during the Romanian Middle Ages: (II, 135). Meltzl (1846-1908) was professor of comparative literature at the University of Cluj and the editor of the first journal of comparative literature in the world.

Important personalities of nineteenth century Romanian literature are mentioned, some of them living in Wallachia or Moldavia. Without mentioning this issue directly, Gerard is also aware that the Romanians live on both sides of the Carpathians, i.e. in Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia, that they are one

¹² Gerard’s insistent use of the word “race” is historical and must be understood as part of the vocabulary of her time. The term “race” fell into disfavor after World War II because it justified the attempt to destroy “the Jewish race.” Nowadays, we prefer to use “ethnicity” or “ethnic group” in similar contexts.

people and their culture is unitary. She mentions Vasile Alecsandri¹³ and translates one of his works: *Fat Logofat* (I, 293). She talks about the cultural impact of Queen Carmen Sylva (1843-1916). "And as in dress, so in literature, does Carmen Sylva take the lead, and endeavor to teach her people to value national productions, above foreign importations" (I, 295). Gerard does know the "poems in which she [the Queen] endeavors to reflect the spirit and the heart of her people" (II, 200). Gerard's insistence upon Queen Carmen Sylva is highly relevant. A foreigner herself, Carmen Sylva was the wife of Romania's first king, Charles I. Like Gerard she was an adoptee in a foreign country where destiny and her duty as a wife brought her. Gerard compares the Romanian culture with the well-established, consolidated national cultures of the West and concludes that "Romanian literature is in a transition state at present, and, despite much talent and energy on the part of its representatives, has not as yet regained any fixed national character (I, 291). The fact that she herself was Scottish and belonged to a culture marginalized by a neighbouring empire helped her understand another marginal culture from Eastern Europe.

On the whole, Emily Gerard is extremely sympathetic to the Romanians, whom she characterizes as "these people by nature imaginative and poetically inclined" (I, 327). She is aware that for centuries the Transylvanian Romanians have been at the bottom of the social pyramid. The rough realities of the Romanian communities, their poverty and backwardness must be considered from this perspective if one wants to be honest. "The Romanians have often been called slavish and cringing, but, considering their past history, it is not possible that they should be otherwise, oppressed and trampled on, persecuted, and treated as vermin by the surrounding races..." (I, 297).

An accidental trip gave Gerard the opportunity to go on a trip to Romania, i.e. cross the Southern border of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire and travel to northern Wallachia. In Romania "an air of Eastern luxury as well as of Eastern indolence pervaded everything" (II, 286). Orientalism in beautiful natural surroundings, this is what Emily Gerard sees on this side of the border. She went on a trip to the Făgăraș Mountains and the Bâlea Lake. The beauty of nature is amazing. The untouched nature of the Carpathian forests inspire both irony and romantic thoughts. "The pure light of the north star alone will point out my direction and neither Kant nor Hegel will rise from their graves to torment me here" (II, 328). The sublime of the Carpathians gave birth to a different culture where Kant's moral law and Hegel's law of history are not applicable. The common people seem to experience only skin deep civilization (II, 328). Gerard talks about "the all-destroying Wallachians" (II, 307) incapable of

¹³ Vasile Alecsandri (1821-1890), one of the most important Romanian writers of the nineteenth century.

preserving a chalet for common use. Still, she accepts a “wild Wallachian peasant” (II, 328) to do some service to her. The woman brushes Gerard’s dress and cleanses her boots, on the other hand she is “uncouth, swartly, [sic], one-eyed” (II, 331). Abnormality goes hand in hand with lack of civilization. And on top of it all, the woman is not even white, but “swartly” (II, 331). A touch of racism deepens this gaze laden with (post-)colonial prejudice and superiority paradoxically coming from a woman that had been subalternized by her Scottishness and her Catholicism in her home country. Gerard also remembers a shepherds’ cottage hidden in the forest and a “boy of about fourteen, with large senseless eyes and a fixed idiotic stare, [who] looked no more than semi-human” (II, 332). Everything suggests decadence, poverty, low standards, closeness to animality. The superior gaze finds satisfaction in this lowly-ness. Only the memory of the Scottish glen, comparable with the beauty of the Romanian landscape tames (II, 332) this colonial haughtiness, a saddening strategy of empowerment.

When talking about the Transylvanian Saxons, Gerard makes deadly comparisons that may have been to the liking of Bram Stoker. The Saxons are found by Gerard not to have changed at all during history “like a corpse frozen in a glacier which comes to light unchanged after a long lapse of years” (I, 56). She is aware of the predicament of the new comers in this land where everything is historical: “it is difficult to realize what it feels like to be a grafted plant” (I, 60). And here she also probably thinks of Britain and its graftings, of Poland divided and grafted forcibly upon the body of the Austrian Empire, the Russian Empire, and Prussia. These graftings she talks about are ethnic groups that moved from their native place, or ethnic mixtures, or imperialistic impositions that led to provinces being taken from the mother land and grafted upon the body of the conquering empire. Emily Gerard pays special attention to Michelsberg, “one of the few Saxon villages which have as yet resisted all attempts from Romanians or gipsies [sic] to graft themselves on to the community” (I, 79).

Gerard also puts down the details about an interesting Saxon custom from Transylvania. “The infant must not be allowed to look at itself in the glass till after the baptism, nor should it be held near an open window” (I, 196). The explanation of this interdiction is that the child, whose self is weaker, more fragile, might lose it altogether if he looks into the mirror, this space, which can be regarded as the entrance into the other world. Lacan’s discussion of the mirror stage, as a phase when the child becomes aware of the separation between his self and the others, has interesting coincidences with this traditional belief.

Comparisons between ethnic groups often have the crudity of direct observations unmitigated by diplomacy or false ethnic prudishness. “[F]or while many Romanian priests are drunken, dissolute men, open to every sort of bribery, the Saxon pastor is almost invariably a model of steadiness and

morality, and leads a quiet, industrious and contented life" (I, 117). Gerard is not able to understand that the so-called irregularities in the Romanian priests' behavior can be explained by poverty. She does not know about the century old discrimination against the Orthodox clergy in Transylvania and how this built solidarity and closeness between the priest and his flock. "Anywhere else, it would be a strange anomaly to see a clergyman putting himself on a level with a common peasant, attired in a coarse linen shirt and meekly carrying our bundles; but here this is of everyday occurrence!" (II, 336).

Special attention is paid to the Roma, a group that Gerard cannot help exoticizing. She sees them somehow doomed to their nomadism which is a sort of second nature for them. "[W]henever the Tziganes have endeavored to bring themselves to a settled mode of life and to adopt domestic habits, have they not invariably sooner or later returned to their hard couch on the cold ground, to their miserable rags, to their rough comrades and the brown beauty of their women? – to the somber shades of the virgin forests, to the murmur of unknown fountains, to their glowing camp-fires and their improvised concerts under a starlit sky – to their intoxicating dances in the lighting of a forest glade, to the merry knavery of their thievish pranks – in a word, to the hundred excitements they cannot do without?" (II, 77-78). With imperial majesty and (post-)colonial eye, Emily Gerard notices that the Roma are enduring. Acculturation fails with them. What a pity that no integrative strategies come to Gerard's mind! Haughty and imperialistic Madame de Laszowska identifies with the power structures when referring to the Roma and seems to forget that her own Scottish ancestors refused to submit and acculturate exactly like the incriminated Transylvanian Roma. "Instruction, authority, persuasion, and persecution have alike been powerless to reform, modify or exterminate the gipsies [sic]" (II, 73).

The Roma women are looked at with a kind of admiring racial bias that combines envy, wonder, pleasure, and admiration. These women prematurely ripen in what may be termed a tropical atmosphere of passion, they develop an almost supernatural power of clairvoyance, which enables them with incredible celerity to unravel hitherto undisclosed secrets by means only of intuitive deductions" (II, 112). Gerard also talks about Roma women's traditional gift of palm reading. In her opinion, this is only "a shrew's deciphering of character, coupled with logical deductions" (II, 116). The Western rationalism prevents her from giving any credit to such practices. Gerard is also very knowledgeable of the nineteenth century efforts to study and valorize Roma culture. For instance, she mentions Heinrich von Weislocki's collection of Roma folklore (II, 134) and even gives an example of Roma poetry which talks about the bond between the Roma musician and his fiddle.

I my father never knew,
Friend to me was never true,
Dead the mother that I loved
Faithless was my sweetheart proved
Still alone with me you fare,
Faithful fiddle, everywhere! (II, 138)

Gerard's discussion of the Transylvanian ethnic puzzle and her using the term "race" reminds the reader of the level of ethnic studies in Austria and Europe at the time and of the implied biological determinism of this terminology. But Gerard is not a naïve. She also realizes the excesses of the Austrian-Hungarian government's policy and delicately warns about the dangers of the future: "... the Government seeks to rob each one of his nationality" (I, 102).

The memory of Gerard's Polish connections leads to a comparison between Romanian and Polish manners. These Carpathian marginals seem to have some qualities, in spite of their poverty.

The Romanians have, like the Poles, a certain inbred sense of courtesy totally wanting in their Saxon neighbor; it shows itself in many trifling acts - in the manner they rise and uncover in the presence of a superior, and the way they offer their assistance over the obstacles of the path. (II, 334)

Emily Gerard is aware of the complexity of the Transylvanian ethnic puzzle. The study of ethnicity absorbs her completely. But it is interesting that she seems unable to see two Transylvanian ethnic groups: the Armenians and the Jews. She can see the privileged ethnic groups in Transylvania, she can see the problems of the most numerous ethnic group: the Romanians, poor and lacking sufficient access to education. The Armenians and the Jews, connected to business, trade, making money in a very capitalistic way, are invisible to her. How can one explain this bias? In our opinion, the explanation lies in the connection between these ethnic groups and the development of a modern, market based economy. The activities of the Jews and the Armenians show that Transylvania was connected to modern capitalism even at the time of Gerard's stay in Transylvania. Although Madame de Laszowska is a keen observer, she has her own priorities. Romanticizing, exoticizing, orientaling are her primary goals and her preferred strategy in order to construct an apparently coherent superiority of the Western gaze. Although not coming from the centre of Western power, she longs to be part of that power. Some identity trauma lies under the apparently calm waters of triumphant Occidentalism.

Gender is a category that Gerard looks at with very conservative, traditional eyes. One can find in this travelogue the same traditionalism as in

her novels¹⁴. During her outing in the Southern Carpathians, for instance, she had to resign to a “temporary degradation of sex” (II, 303) and ride as men do because there were no women’s saddles. Women must always follow the rules of modesty in very strict ways.

Ecological concerns - masters are reprimanded if dogs are “wantonly beaten by their masters” (I, 139) – and the mild irony directed against the Protestant priests give a interesting specificity to the Gerardian discourse. For instance, she notices that a German priest is very concerned about women, especially about women observing rules and wearing sober clothes. “The worthy prelate who issued all these stern injunctions appears to have been so uncommonly well versed in all the intricacies of female costume, as to make us wonder whether he had not missed his vocation as a man-milliner” (I, 146). Can we forget that this irony comes from a Catholic obliged to leave the predominantly Presbyterian Scotland?

Isolation and exceptionalism are the features that the Scottish Gerard borrows from a famous character of British literary history: Robinson Crusoe. “Leaving Transylvania after a two years’ residence, I felt somehow like Robinson Crusoe unexpectedly restored to the world from his desert island. Despite the evidence of my own senses, and in flat contradiction to the atlas, I cannot wholly divest myself of the idea that it is in truth an island I have left behind me – an island peopled with strange and incongruous companions, from whom I part with a mixture of regret and relief, difficult to express even to myself” (I, 1). The (post)colonial implications of this subject position must be considered with caution and restraint. Although she represents the force and the power of the imperial centre as the wife of a high Austrian-Hungarian officer, Emily Gerard introduces some nuances in a dichotomy that is not so stable and firm as it should be, according to the hierarchy. Coming from a margin of the British Empire she is able to understand the complicated ethnic structure of Transylvania and is not deceived by appearances or slogans. Probably something like “sympathetic” (post-)colonialism would be the best characterization of her ambiguous feelings and attitude.

Her nomadism prevents her from taking narrow, partisan positions because she knows better and hopes intensely that today’s centers may be tomorrow’s peripheries and vice versa. Life in Sibiu is described in poetical fragments which rely exactly on this versatility of dimensions and importance. “Life at Hermannstadt always gave me the impression of living inside one of those exquisitely minute Dutch paintings of still-life, in which the anatomy of a

¹⁴ A good example is the novel *Extermination of Love* where the main characters discover the pleasures of sex only after they have been put to several tests. As in the fairy tales, matrimony is the great prize offered to the Happy Prince and the beautiful young woman.

lobster or the veins of a vine-leaf, are rendered with microscopic fidelity, and where such insignificant objects as half lemons or mouldy cheese-rinds are exalted to the rank of centre-pieces" (II, 215). On the other hand, Sibiu is a marginal city in a huge empire and Gerard really gives the measure of her capacity of realistic depiction when talking about the monotony of provincial life: "everywhere ... the identical brown sauce, the same slices of lemon, the self-same dresses, cards and conversations!" (II, 231).

Exactly, as the subject and object positions in Gerard's (post-)colonial discourse are contaminated by her profound knowledge of the subjective histories and geographies of Europe, so are her literary strategies. It is difficult to classify *The Land Beyond the Forest* from the point of view of the literary genres. It is both a travelogue, personal prose of the diaristic type, reminiscence, and reportage. Contamination also exists at the level of her communication tools: images and words are put to work in order to render the specificity of the Transylvanian landscape and inhabitants. On the other hand, the fragments that often follow a chronological evolution seek for the precision of the scientific discourse. The impurity of the discourse makes it dangerous and fearing for the common minds. As a traveler who spent more time in Transylvania, Emily Gerard benefited from the generous and ambiguous duplicity of an inside out position. In her work, she recreated a Transylvania that does not correspond to the patterns of imperial subjection but to the ambivalent richness of a fascinating contact zone.

Undoubtedly, Emily Gerard's nomadism, her transmutations and transnational developments deserve to be better known and her contributions to European literature better acknowledged. Putting Gerard against a national(ist) frame is limiting. Her complex travelogue troubles the narratives of the nation-state and can only be understood within transnationalism and transnational identity stories.

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AMERICA IS A DEMOCRACY, WHEREAS AUSTRALIA STAYED A BUREAUCRACY

CLAUDIA NOVOSIVSCHEI¹

ABSTRACT. *America Is a Democracy, whereas Australia Stayed a Bureaucracy.*

Peter Carey is one of those authors who, through almost their entire body of fictional works, deal with politics, search for the political, examine how it permeates all layers of one's life, irrespective whether one is better or lower positioned in society. The more so this happens in *Parrot and Olivier in America* (2009), a novel in which his two main characters swing between the Old and the New Worlds, between political systems in the making. The twenty-first century reader is thus forced to question what has been made and what they are currently living in.

Keywords: *Peter Carey, Parrot and Olivier in America, Europe, France, French Revolution, America, Australia, political systems, democracy, bureaucracy, penal colony, Alexis de Tocqueville, narrative voices.*

REZUMAT. *America a devenit o democrație, iar Australia a rămas o birocratie.*

Peter Carey este unul din acei autori care, aproape în întreg corpul său de lucrări ficționale abordează politica, caută politicul, analizează cum acesta pătrunde toate straturile vieții individului, indiferent dacă acesta este plasat mai bine sau mai jos în societate. Cu atât mai mult acest lucru se întâmplă în *Parrot și Olivier în America* (2009), roman în care cele două personaje principale se perindă între Lumea Veche și Lumile Noi, între sisteme politice în construcție. Cititorul contemporan este astfel forțat să se întrebe ce s-a construit și în ce lume trăiește.

Cuvinte cheie: *Peter Carey, Parrot and Olivier in America, Europa, Franța, Revoluția franceză America, Australia, sisteme politice, democrație, birocratie, colonie penitenciară, Alexis de Tocqueville, voci narative.*

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Even since *Illywhacker* (1985) – Carey’s second novel, the United States has been perceived by characters in his fiction as the new colonial power; that is, crawling inexorably towards Australia in order to prevail over its economy, political development and culture.

1. Writing Technique – Narrative Voices (I)

Parrot and Olivier in America (2009) is written in a narrative technique that has become a classic recipe with Carey: the multiple voiced text. In an interview conducted by Andreas Gaile in 2004, Peter Carey indicates his influence for the plural narrative voice novel to be Faulkner’s novella, *As I Lay Dying*:

As I Lay Dying, with its conflicting points of view, had a huge effect on me. And, in a funny sort of way, cubism presents its truth like this. To me it’s simply a representation of reality. And it’s always like that – we’re both experiencing this conversation now, but what I think I’m saying to you and what you’re hearing are two different things. So it seems reasonable to represent that. Of course, it’s arrived at intuitively and compulsively, rather than systematically. (Carey in Gaile ed. 2005, 7).

Carey first approached this literary strategy in *Oscar and Lucinda* (1988), where, although written in the 3rd person, there are continuous shifts in viewpoints – from chapter to chapter, the author introduces alternative renderings of the unfolding story which correspond to the meaning different characters gather from one or another experience.

In *Theft. A Love Story* (2008), there are only two voices – those of the two brothers, who are also the main characters of the novel – and the thread is spun in the 1st person narrative.

Parrot and Olivier in America (2009) – the novel I intend to focus on this paper - is again a two-voiced narrative. Its protagonists? They shall introduce themselves:

I, Olivier-Jean-Baptiste de Clarel de Barfleur de Garmont, a noble of Myopia, am free to speed like Mercury while pointing out the blurry vegetable garden on the left, the smudgy watercolor of orchard on the right. Here is the ordure of the village road across which I can go sailing, skidding, blind as a bat, through the open gates of the Chateau de Barfleur. (Carey, 3-4)

Olivier, born – according to the novel – in 1805 in the noble family of de Barfleur de Garmont, is Carey’s fictional replica to Alexis-Charles-Henri Clérel de Tocqueville. The overlap between Olivier de Garmont and the historical character, Alexis de Tocqueville, from whom he was inspired, is

impressive. In addition to the 'identification list' items, the following are included: they are both coming from old Norman aristocratic families with ancestors who participated in the battle of Hastings of 1066, both had a grandfather guillotined during Robespierre's reign of terror and both of their parents barely escaped the same guillotine (hence the guillotine obsessive shadow over the novel):

"(...) so it was, at six years of age, I had my first lesson in the Terror which had been the flavor of my mother's milk. My parents had been thrown into Porte Libre prison where every day one of their fellow nobles was called "to the office" and was never seen again. In these months my father's hair turned white, my beautiful mother was broken in that year of 1793, when the *sansculottes* came up the road from Paris." (Carey, 17).

Following the plot, one can point out towards other facts, events, etc. that are more than similar, they are faithful 'carbon copies' of elements found in the resources the author researched for the writing of his novel. Thus, there will be several questions that can be addressed, which I prefer to tackle here, because they will broaden the context, allowing me then to better explain the interest for American imagery.

2. Historical Fiction. Political Fiction

The most consequential question with this type of writing is: how much is history and how much is fiction? In order to spare some of our attempts at detective work, Peter Carey posted a bibliography on his official website, in the section *Parrot and Olivier in America*, under the heading "author's bookshelf". It says: "This list is certainly not exhaustive, but it gives a good idea of what the author read while he was writing *Parrot and Olivier in America*." (Peter Carey official website). And there are some 40 titles... However, it seems that with all this research, there are inaccuracies, quickly spotted by sharp-eyed readers:

Despite Carey's repute as a bravura performer in the depth and accuracy of his research, his research and his inventiveness frequently blend to blur history. He jumps in and out of time like Dr Who in his police box. He credits the invention of carbon paper to his one-armed count, although it had been developed in England thirty years earlier and played no part in Tocqueville's notebooks. He cannot resist the temptation to drop in popular sayings, hoping the reader will not notice the anachronism. (Luck, *Peter Carey's Bootleg Tocqueville*, web)

Many reviews draw the readers' attention, while naming other Carey novels (such as *Oscar and Lucinda*, *True History of the Kelly Gang*, *Jack Maggs*) that the author is into (a lot of) historical fiction writing/rewriting.

Yet, what would make a novelist glide towards history? Antonia S. Byatt in her *On Histories and Stories* gives a series of justifications: the fact that "we cannot understand the present if we do not understand the past that preceded it and produced it" (11); "the aesthetic need to write coloured and metaphorical language, to keep past literatures alive and singing" (11); "the political desire to write the histories of the marginalised, the forgotten, the unrecorded" (11); nostalgia² (25-26); "because the idea of writing about the Self is felt to be worked out, or precarious, or because (...) we have no such thing as an organic, discoverable, single Self" (31); "the novelists' new sense of the need for, and essential interest of, storytelling, after a long period of stream-of-consciousness, followed by the fragmented, non-linear forms of the *nouveau roman* and the experimental novel" (38); and the "interest precisely in the secret and the unknowable" (56).

More ironic, even cynical voices, claim that the focus on the past, regardless of how original the turn may be, is testimony to authors' lack of originality, or to a lack of subjects in the present.

Geoffrey Luck, for instance, would say in his article on *Parrot and...* that:

Peter Carey comes to the Tocqueville drama with a reputation of using other authors' works as crutches for his novels. They are not historical novels in the traditional sense, but stories with an historical setting; Carey's flair is in his usually scrupulous and detailed research of the habits, the industries, and the social culture of the period, applied to embellish a theme he seems unable to invent for himself. (Luck, *Peter Carey's Bootleg Tocqueville*, web)

My position, with respect to the above-given examples of the rationale – is that one can indeed find, in *Parrot and Olivier in America*: 1) the past as a key for understanding, or a metaphor for representing, the present, or that the rewritten past provides an alternative meaning to the present; 2) the historical setting gives grounds for staging a show of craftsmanship in the use of language; but, overlaying all that, the most vigorous streak is the political one. In a debate with authors Claire Messud and Edmund White, when asked by Messud whether he considers himself a political writer, Carey answered "Is it possible to not be?" (Carey, *Live from NYPL*, web).

² "Frederic Jameson has written perceptively about 'what the French call *la mode retro*, the 'nostalgia film', pastiche of popular culture within popular culture itself. Makers of films about the fifties in the seventies and eighties, he observes, are nostalgic, not for the fifties values, but for the experience they had when seeing the films as innocent audiences" (Byatt, 25-26).

It is from this perspective that I shall look at what America stands for in the novel, as opposed to (colonial) Europe, on one hand, and to Australia on the other, as well as at the friendship between Olivier and Parrot, the other main character and 2nd voice of Carey's text.

3. Writing Technique – Narrative Voices (II)

That said, let's allow Parrot to introduce himself:

"YOU MIGHT THINK, who is this, and I might say, this is God and what are you to do? Or I might say, a bird! Or I could tell you, madame, monsieur, sir, madam, how this name was given to me--I was christened Parrot because my hair was colored carrot, because my skin was burned to feathers, and when I tumbled down into the whaler, the coxswain yelled, Here's a parrot, captain. So it seems you have your answer, but you don't.

I had been named Parrot as a child, when my skin was still pale and tender as a maiden's breast, and I was still Parrot in 1793, when Olivier de Bah-bah Garmont was not even a twinkle in his father's eye.

(...)

In 1793 the French were chopping off each other's heads and I was already twelve years of age and my *endodermis naturalis* had become scrubbed and hardened by the wind and mists of Dartmoor, from whose vastness my da and I never strayed too far. I had tramped behind my darling da down muddy lanes and I was still called Parrot when he, Jack Larrit, carried me on his shoulder through Northgate at Totnes. My daddy loved his Parrot. He would sit me on the bar of the Kingsbridge Inn, to let the punters hear what wonders came from my amazing mouth: *Man is born free and is everywhere in chains.*" (Carey, 53-54).

Parrot, by his real name, John Larrit, a motherless child, is raised by his father, a printer. The craft opens the way to knowledge, both for father and the son who very early becomes familiar with Rousseau, Adam Smith, Hume or Paine.

Jack Larrit and his son get to Dittisham, "Dit'sum, as they called it", in 1793, where the father can find work at an isolated print shop owned by Mr. and Mrs. Piggott. There, they meet other members of "that better educated class--I mean printers." (Carey, 56).

And Parrot is required (among other tasks) to run hush-hush errands, namely to take the meals and get the chamber pot from a talented and hidden engraver. In order to reach Mr. Watkins, Parrot finds his way up the chimney. Although the secret object of Watkins' work is not initially known by Parrot, the boy is fascinated by the printer's talent and a tutor-apprentice relationship, strained but somehow generous in knowledge acquisition for the boy, grows between the two. Parrot is told that he's not "an artist's bootlace", which makes him want to forget completely about Leonardo and Cicero, and become a "printer's devil".

As the narrative develops, we find out that it was money-forging that was kept under wraps in Watkins' attic workshop.

I had no idea that thousands of these assignats were forged in France and Britain and the Netherlands. Their purpose was to devalue the currency and thereby, by dint of ink and paper, destroy the beloved Revolution. All I knew was that forgery was a capital offense. Witnessing the two printers examine Mr. Watkins' work I understood I had betrayed the poor queer creature, trapped inside his cage. Of course I should have confessed to Mr. Watkins, but I wished him to like me and I was so ashamed that, on that Sunday night, I would not take my burin lessons. I said I was needed by my father. (Carey, 83).

A banknote leaked out by Parrot from the shrouded part of the house leads to the arrival of law enforcement representatives who, indiscriminately, want to arrest everyone in the printer shop.

Parrot manages to run away and, in the Scottish moors, he meets up with a familiar character – familiar because he had already encountered him at Mr. Piggott's print house: the one-armed Marquis de Tilbot.

Fleeing prison, the Marquis bribes the captain of a ship (ironically) packed with prisoners, heading to Australia, so that the two of them can get on. Frightened, insecure, and in lack of affection, Parrot develops allegiance to the Marquis who, nonetheless, disembarks in Rio, leaving the child by himself on the ship to Australia.

4. Writing Technique – the Connection

I shall bypass the retelling of significant parts of the novel in order not to spoil the readers' memories or appetite for reading and point only to the Marquis as the link between Olivier's and Parrot's life stories.

The Marquis was, during his entire life, the devoted admirer of Comtesse de Garmont:

I watched Monsieur's brows descend. For a soldier he had a very touchy equilibrium. On the right tray of his scales you had his infatuation with the Comtesse de Garmont. On the left, there was his mad impatience. I have seen him break a man's neck, in an instant, and now would you like a cup of tea, Monsieur? But with Lord Migraine's maman he was like a boy in love, not that he threw pebbles at her window or climbed a ladder like the Sorel fellow, only that he was a fool before her translucent skin, her long swan's neck, the ancient fire still glowing beneath the quartz. I never saw the like before or since, the way they blushed and whispered, traveling in closed coaches (...) (Carey, 125-126).

And the same Marquis lured Parrot back from Australia to Europe, promising the latter an artistic career in France. Monsieu did not keep his word and Parrot was only the Marquis' factotum, but elevated servant:

Monsieur had held me in this trap so many years I had come to accept it as my rightful place. I had food and shelter of a type my da could never have imagined. I handled prints and folios the most cultivated men in Europe wished to own, and there were not a few occasions when I gazed at myself in admiration. A fly on the wall, I thought, might mistake me for Monsieur's junior officer, or his disinherited brother, or his bastard son sired when he was twenty, but then hey-ho, enough of that my lad, and off along the frigging Paris road in the wind and rain, and *Chevalier*--it amused him to call me *Chevalier*-- *Chevalier, do take us to the bishop*. Then hell's gate for the bishop. I hope he dies. (Carey, 126)

5. Parrot and Olivier Travel to America

The political situation in France in 1830 (the July monarchy - the abdication of Charles X who "was most pigheaded", and the coming into power of Louis Philippe I), and all the events surrounding it, make it clear for Olivier and his friend, Blacqueville, that monarchy does not keep up with the times anymore. Although hired as lawyers at the Court, the two friends start secretly attending the more radical talks given by the French Protestant - historian, and politician in the making - François Guizot.

That prompts Comtesse de Garmont to consider the circumstances too dangerous for her son to stay in France. Pretexting the need for a study of American prisons, which are conceived for the recovery of the individual and not for their complete perdition/execution, a study that might be replicated by the French penal system; the Comtesse obtains this assignment to be conducted by her son, the "French commissioner in America".

With the help of the Marquis de Tilbot, she manages to 'ship' a reluctant, drugged (because his opposition had to be defeated) Olivier to America. Equipped with a servant: Parrot. And because the valet had his own personal drama -a love relationship with a younger, beautiful and talented painter, Mathilde; the Marquis managed to embark the angry 'paramour' and her mother on the same ship to America.

Crossing the ocean brings along two other intersections and passages... Olivier and Parrot turn from master and servant to friends towards the end of the novel, and democracy wins over... democratically or not.

Still on the ship, Olivier is warned by a fellow traveler, a successful American - farmer converted into banker (because in America everything is possible and accessible to anyone) - that if he wants to be trouble free and not draw hostile attention from the other passengers, he should share his cabin, better located and equipped, with his secretary: in the New World there are not servants.

“For instance, the plutocrat and the lowly worker shake hands in the street. Ha-ha,’ he cried. ‘You like that, no? Good morning, good to meet you.’” (Carey, 176).

6. Parrot and Olivier on Democracy in America

The two accounts alternate, reflections on America and Americans, including the negative ones, pertain, both to Olivier and to Parrot, although the latter will end by adopting and living the American dream.

It is through Olivier that we find out how Americans lack in culture:

That is, dear Peek lacked so many of the cultural pretensions with which the bourgeois, wishing to ape his betters, always cloaks himself. Of literature and philosophy he proudly declared himself a dunce. When I mentioned Proudhon, and even Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun, he did not know who they were. And this, I supposed, was what one should expect of this new democracy which made itself without the benefit of a noble class. (Carey, 186).

With respect to the country’s administrative organization, there is no need for a central structure of power to manage the wealth: there is plenty for everybody in America and there are no poor, because as Parrot learns: “No man who will work can be poor.” (Carey, 193)

Parrot finds Americans to be very optimistic and with superbly inflated egos:

The banking chamber of the Bank of Zion was supported by the most boastful columns, but if the name had made me think it would be the home of Jewish bankers I was a fool. On coming beneath its rotunda, we beheld a great symbol laid in mosaic on the floor, this being a triangle and a laurel and three stars which later proved to be the sign of American Protestants who believed their voyage had been more than equal to the Israelites’. (Carey, 232)

Young women in America are not chaperoned as in Europe, they can freely engage in conversations and walks with men, but the richness of their thoughts and interests dies with marriage. “Delicacy prevents me from listing the dinners, the peculiar menus, the names of the ladies who lived only to marry and, when married, thought only of their husbands.” (Carey, 244) The two picaros follow each their individual personality development on the American territory. And love pervades both stories.

Olivier falls for and is loved by an American woman. He proposes to her, they are about to get married, until she finds out that he cannot take her to France since his mother would never accept a non-noble woman to marry her son. Consequently, rejected by Amelia, Olivier decides to go back to Europe, but before embarking, he pays a visit to his now friend.

Parrot buys a house on the bank of the Hudson River, similar to the one shown in the picture bait by the Marquis. However, with America, as opposed to Europe, one can follow and fulfill the most daring dreams. He sets up a business in bird engravings with his former art tutor, Mr. Watkins, and with Mr. Watkins' wife, and insures the sales of their art production in Europe via the Marquis de Tilbot. Parrot's wife pursues her passion in painting and in her husband with whom she will have a child.

7. Writing Technique – Narrative Voices (III)

The end of the book brings the triumph of the democratic voice, which becomes THE VOICE, and the scribe turns into the overpowering single author:

I dedicate this account of our lives and travels to Olivier-Jean-Baptiste de Clarel de Garmont (...). To him I say, in the fullness of my heart, sir, your fears are phantoms.

Look, it is daylight. There are no sansculottes, nor will there ever be again. There is no tyranny in America, nor ever could be. Your horrid visions concerning fur traders are groundless. The great ignoramus will not be elected. The illiterate will never rule. Your bleak certainty that there can be no art in a democracy is unsupported by the truth.

You are wrong, dear sir, and the proof that you are wrong is here, in my jumbled life, for I was your servant and became your friend. I was your employee and am now truly your progenitor, by which I mean that you were honestly MADE IN NEW YORK by a footman and a rogue. I mean that all these words, these blemishes and tears, this darkness, this unreliable history--although written pretty much as well as could be done in London--was cobbled together by me, jumped-up John Larrit, at Harlem Heights, and given to our compositor on May 10, 1837. (Carey, 575-576)

However, Carey's political cunning in writing style contradicts to a certain extent Parrot's words: the author's power (read author as the 'I' writing the novel) is in Parrot's puppeteer's hands because he stands for the many which is, in fact, synonymous to the tyranny of democracy.

But the scheme belongs to a political conscience born in Australia, living for the past twenty years in the US, blaming the US for a new form of imperialism while acknowledging that the very existence of Australia is only a consequence of the Americans' fight for freedom and independence. Australia came into being as a penal colony when the British could not any longer send their prisoners to America. Thus Australia became a bureaucracy: when America developed itself into a democracy.

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TEACHING AMERICAN STUDIES. A RUSSIAN VIEW

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ABSTRACT. *Teaching American Studies. A Russian View.* The article addresses the issue of teaching American studies to university students. In the atmosphere of anti-Americanism which characterizes life in contemporary Russia, the subject acquires a particular significance as an effective means of educating people for democracy. Such an approach determines the choice of topics and the method of presentation. The author discusses both challenges of American democracy and its advantages, as viewed from Russia. Particular emphasis is made on values and fundamental principles of American political life, which are compared to those in Russia.

Keywords: *American studies, Russia, challenges of democracy, American values.*

REZUMAT. *Problema predării studiilor americane. O perspectivă rusească.* Acest articol abordează problema predării studiilor americane la nivel universitar. În atmosfera de anti-americanism ce caracterizează viața din Rusia contemporană, subiectul acesta capătă o semnificație deosebită, ca un mijloc eficient de educație a maselor pentru democrație. O astfel de abordare determină alegerea problematicii precum și metodologia. Autoarea discută atât provocările democrației americane cât și avantajele ei, așa cum se văd ele din Rusia. Un accent deosebit se pune pe valorile și principiile fundamentale ale vieții politice americane, care sunt comparate cu cele din Rusia.

Cuvinte cheie: *studii americane, Rusia, provocările democrației, valori americane.*

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Introduction

American studies appeared in the curricula of Russian universities after 1991, when political changes brought about new approaches to education. A review of the general situation in the next fifteen years or so in the sphere of teaching and research in American studies was given by Professor Olga Antsyferova of Ivanovo State University in central Russia. She outlined the activities of several centers for American studies in Russia, conferences and summer schools in American studies, mentioned the main publications and named major Russian Americanists. In her succinct conclusion she called the 1990s-2000s “an interparadigmatic period”, when traditional academic approach coexisted with new interdisciplinary attitudes (Antsyferova 2006). Since then new challenges have arisen, making the subject even more meaningful than ever before.

The Significance of American Studies in Russia Today

Today teaching American studies in Russia has acquired a huge political significance as a way to combat xenophobia and, particularly, anti-American phobia. After the annexation of the Crimea, the Russian government has been conducting a policy of self-isolation. The U.S. has been presented in the officially supported media as an arch-enemy, allegedly planning to destroy Russia. The United States and President Obama became targets of continuous attacks. The cumulative result of such policy is sad: according to Levada-Center opinion polls, negative attitude towards the United States expressed about 70% of Russians in 2014 and 2015, and between 66 % and 70% in 2016, a significant drop increase from 10 % in the early 1990s (cf. Gazeta.ru. August 2016).

In the atmosphere of anti-Americanism, it is imperative that Russian academics should use American studies not only to widen students' cultural horizons, but fight existing prejudices and phobias. At a time when the very idea of democracy is being deliberately and systematically compromised, the study of the U.S. may be an effective channel of educating people for democracy. From a Russian perspective, the importance of American studies now consists mainly in entrenching in students' minds fundamental values of liberty, equality in the law, popular representation, and human rights – values which, to use Ralph Waldo Emerson's phrase, “have no parallax” (Emerson 1888, 15).

Lecture courses on American studies traditionally include such topics as geography, population, political system, elections, political parties, and education. My experience of teaching the subject in Saint-Petersburg State University for over twenty years has led me to believe that a topical approach needs to be complemented by presenting the United States as a political system in evolution,

with a specific system of values and a way of life. Teaching American studies in Russia may increase the students' awareness of the fundamental principles of the American political system as well as its values. The facts about the U.S., when compared with facts and features of contemporary Russia, produce something of a shock for a Russian audience. Comparing the two ways of life, our students may reassess political and social phenomena at home; they can obtain a clearer picture of how far we, Russians, have veered from democratic principles entrenched in our constitution. The method of juxtaposition, both implicit and explicit, therefore, is an effective way of teaching the subject.

Challenges of American Democracy

While discussing challenges the U.S. has faced since its foundation, it seems pertinent to emphasize the idea of a difficult path to progress, both in social and political terms. America had to choose from various options, some of which could be presented as a set of alternatives:

- The “no faction” stance was taken by George Washington and James Madison in the early years of the American republic. In “Federalist No 10” Madison defines a faction as a number of citizens who are united “by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens”. He admitted that faction may be detrimental to “the aggregate interests of the community”. But its “mischiefs” can't be cured, since it will mean destroying liberty which “is essential to its existence” (Federalist 1961, p.78). This was apparently the reason, why the “no faction” stance was challenged by Thomas Jefferson. Since his time this, opposite view of the mechanism of renewal and change, took the form of party politics spelt large.
- The concept of a weak government, which dates to the times of the first U.S. Constitution (the Articles of Confederation) of 1781, came to be regarded as inadequate in conducting foreign policy. So, the idea of a strong federal government was envisaged in the Constitution of 1789. As James Madison put it in “Federalist No. 45”, “[t]he powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite. The former will be exercised principally on external objects, as war, peace, negotiation, and foreign commerce; with which last the power of taxation will, for the most part, be connected” (The Federalist 1961, p.292). The significance of the “Federalist Papers” can't be overestimated in implementing the transition from a weak to a strong government;

- The famous saying attributed to Jefferson “That government is best which governs least” signifies one trend in American social thinking, which is associated with philosophical anarchism (Adler 2000, p.378); an opposite view of the role of state was represented by John Adams. Interestingly, American Transcendentalist Henry Thoreau expressed a sensibility supporting the above-mentioned motto, thus continuing the tradition of philosophical anarchism in American thought. In his “Civil Disobedience” he went even further when he said: “That government is best which governs not at all” (Thoreau 1993, p.1) In the 1780s the size of the government was still a debatable issue. Jefferson poignantly expressed it in his letter to William S. Smith on February 2nd, 1788: “We are now vibrating between too much and too little government, and the pendulum will rest finally in the middle” (Founders Online), which meant that he favored the limitation of government within proper bounds.
- Liberalism versus government regulation in economy (or, *laissez-faire* against protectionism) has been a much debated issue over the years. In the 1880s this alternative was formulated by William Sumner as a choice between two options: “equality & poverty” or “inequality & wealth”. This view, though, was challenged by socially oriented philosophers; the Social Darwinists of the time – William Sumner and John Fiske-- favored free trade, while Lester Ward thought it necessary to combine competition with protectionism. The conservatism of the former, in the words of Perry Miller, meant an obstinate belief “that only in a society where the struggle for survival is allowed to work itself out can there be freedom”. Lester Ward, however, belonged to a different camp. The interference of government was viewed differently by both philosophers. What seemed to Sumner “a blasphemy and an idiocy”, became for Ward “the end of human existence” (Miller, Perry 1961, p. xxvii, xxix). A debate along these lines is still continuing;
- The challenge of democracy lies in making difficult choices – “choices that inevitably bring important values into conflict” (Janda K., et al 1997, p.27-28). According to American scholars Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey Berry and Jerry Goldman, every government “infringes on individual freedom,” but the degree of the infringement depends on commitment to order and equality. So, government in the U.S. faces two dilemmas: one centers on the conflict between freedom and order, and the other focuses on the conflict between freedom and equality. In other words, the government has to choose between two opposite stances: a) freedom and a certain amount of disorder; b) order without freedom. The former is regarded by Americans as the only possible *modus vivendi*. Freedom of speech and

freedom of religion are cited as the top examples of America's supreme values compared to other places in the world (The Atlantic 2012). It is difficult to imagine that Americans could deliberately choose order at the cost of giving up freedom.

- Isolationism or globalization is the dilemma, especially pertinent to the policy of American government in the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. This or that choice necessarily involved heated discussions in the political spheres and eventually determined the world's history. The same dilemma historically treated is discussed by John Moore and Jerry Pubantz. They contrast George Washington's and Woodrow Wilson's views of America's perception of its place in the world. Washington and the other founders, the scholars contend, believed that the United States would be active in the world, "but they sought to sustain the uniqueness of America by maintaining independence from the encumbrances and entanglements of international politics". Conversely, Woodrow Wilson "argued for an active internationalism ... for committing the United States to help make the world over in light of universal values". Washingtonian unilateralism (called sometimes "isolationism") dominated American foreign policy throughout nearly the entire nineteenth century. The Wilsonian tradition, in their words, "has held sway for most of the period since World War I" (Moore and Pubantz 1999, p.15). The election of President Trump, however, may put to a test what they called "Wilsonian tradition" in American life.

Understanding America

There are several aspects to focus on while discussing the fundamental principles of American life. Emphasis can be made on those which guarantee the working of the democratic system, particularly the division of powers, multi-party system, and free elections – all basic for understanding American political life.

The division of powers

A fundamental feature of the U.S. constitutional system is the division of political authority between two levels of government – state and national. This so to say, the "vertical" division allows the central government to deal with problems national in scope, while leaving the states free to handle matters of local concern. The rationality of such an arrangement seems obvious to an unprejudiced observer in Russia who can compare it to the dependence of local Russian authorities on the central power.

An even more important feature of American political life is the “horizontal” separation of powers into legislative, executive and judicial branches. “The Separation of Powers devised by the framers of the Constitution was designed to do one primary thing: to prevent the majority from ruling with an iron fist. Based on their experience, the framers shied away from giving any branch of the new government too much power. The separation of powers provides a system of shared power known as checks and balances” (The U. S. Constitution Online). Conversely, a fusion of powers which can be witnessed in Russia has resulted from a gradual erosion of democratic principles entrenched in Russian Constitution of 1993. Dependence of the legislature and the courts on the presidential power is the reality today. Notoriously known is the pronouncement of a former speaker of the Russian parliament: “The Duma [the Parliament. – *E.O*] is not the place for discussions”. Once, Thomas Carlyle called the British Parliament “our National Palaver”. Our case is much worse: the Russian Duma of 2011-2016 belied its name (“duma” from “dumat”, i.e., “to think”) and virtually excluded discussion.

The division of powers in the U.S. can be viewed as the cornerstone of stability of American political structure. It comes as a surprise to our students that the U.S. President does not have the whole power. In fact, the House of Representatives controls spending and finance, “so the President *must* have its agreement for his proposals and programs” (Stevenson 1993, p.35). As the famous saying goes, “The President proposes, but the Congress disposes”. This simple statement conveys the idea that in America the head of the executive branch is not all-powerful. On the other hand, the U.S. Congress, which limits the power of the President, has never been a rubber stamp parliament.

The U.S. party system

American experts in party politics consider parties a powerful means of mobilizing citizens (Walker 1991, p.20); they are important intermediaries “capable of aggregating broad sets of interests and providing coherent leadership in the American setting” (Hershey 1995, p.13). Jeffrey M. Berry notes that parties in America “contribute to democratic government through the functions they perform for the **political system** – the set of interrelated institutions that link people with government” (Janda et al. 1997, p.249). He specifies their four functions as “nominating candidates for election to public office, structuring the voting choice in elections, proposing alternative government programs, and coordinating the actions of government officials” (Janda et al, p.249). Presenting the specifics of the U.S. party system to a class in American studies may enhance their knowledge of this particular aspect of democracy. Students may compare

it with what they know about the role of “the Party” in their own country, where the Communist party, which used to be officially called “the leading and driving force”, was the only existing party for about seven decades. The fact that in the United States the two major parties keep *alternating* in power both on the federal and state levels, is a proof of a democratic system. Another poignant difference is the fact that party life in the U.S. is not hinged on an imposed “ideology”, as was the case in the Soviet Union. It is important to note that this term has different implications in Russia and the U.S. In Russia it is understood as allegiance to an abstract idea (building communism; the dictatorship of proletariat). Though the Russian Constitution of 1993 proclaims ideological diversity, still, attempts to introduce an 'obligatory' ideology are now being made. Discussing American example, therefore, is quite pertinent. Instead of one dominant ideology, parties in the U.S. are pursuing concrete, though different, interests in the spheres of taxes, trade, immigration, defense, welfare, and environment. One of the crucial points of contention is spending money. “The differences in spending patterns reflect some real philosophical differences between the parties” (Janda et al. p.271). As to the core principles of American democracy, they have been kept intact.

Elections

Elections in the US as an instrument of democracy appear to be a fascinating topic for Russian students. What seems strange to a Russian is that Americans have to register for elections, whereas in Russia, with its low mobility and a deeply established institute of “propiska” (residence registration), people are automatically included in official lists for voting. What else is different is the system of counting votes. Whereas in the U.S. it is practically an automatic process, in Russia, it is the counting that matters, not the voting. Various sophisticated methods of achieving the desired result are used in this particular stage of the election process. Another specific – and very attractive – aspect of elections in the U.S. is pre-election debates, which are *sine qua non* for presidential and vice-presidential nominees. In Russia they are either optional or not considered obligatory for those who are nominated for top positions of state. This juxtaposition highlights the fact that in contemporary Russia, the principle of people's representation is not implemented. Elections have become a misnomer, since the final results are predetermined through rigging the process in its various stages. Discussion of American elections is thus instrumental to widening students' horizons by acquainting them with democratic practices abroad. Very impressive for the Russian eye seems people's fight for a wider participation of ethnic minorities and women in American elections. (See: Janda et al. 1997, p.211-245).

Knowledge of the above-mentioned aspects of American democratic system deepens students' understanding of America. Very helpful for realizing the similarities and differences between our countries is David Remnick's book "Resurrection. The Struggle for a New Russia" which analyzes events and sensibilities in post-communist Russia in the 1990s (Remnick 1997). The democratic constitution, new openness, implementation of 'glasnost', or, the freedom of the press, the freedom of meetings and demonstrations, as well as fair elections gave us hope. Gradually, this progressive trend stalled and a reverse process ensued, thus bringing to mind the atmosphere of pre-Gorbachov times. According to the latest Freedom House Report, "Russia's political rights rating declined from 6 to 7 due to the heavily flawed 2016 legislative election, which further excluded opposition forces from the political process" (Freedom House Report 2017). Russia's Freedom Status "Not Free" adequately describes the situation from which we can assess American institutions.

American Values

In addition to discussing fundamental principles on which American life is built, it is feasible to focus on values. Features characteristic of American life, in general, are self-reliance, inherent patriotism, religious tolerance, a combination of individualism and collectivism. They are different from those characteristics which are considered to be Russian national features, conditioned by a long history of subjugation and feudal dependence, be it in tsarist or communist times. Many Russians do not seem to protest against being forced to falsify election results. Some yield to being used, or, rather, misused in the so-called "carousels" during elections; others do not protest against being driven to organized public rallies, which are presented in the media as "mass" voluntary gatherings. Discussion of American values may help our students take a more critical look at our society with its high degree of hatred and aggressiveness in social life, its political infantilism, and conformism.

The fundamental concept of Liberty is an important aspect in a system of juxtapositions which requires discussion. One of the first and foremost values identified in the Declaration of Independence is freedom. It characterizes America as a country, whereas in Russia it is not duly valued. It is not surprising that in the country which liberated itself from the communist regime after seven decades of total oppression and disregard for personality, opinion polls show that freedom as a value is rated very low. According to an opinion poll taken in September 2013 by FOM (The Foundation of Public Opinion), 73% of Russians value stability more than liberty, and only for 16% liberty is a greater value (FOMnibus). This fact shows that we need to instill liberal thinking and respect for democratic principles in the

minds of young people. I usually quote the famous saying, attributed to Jefferson and many times repeated in the nineteenth century: "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." Its importance is stressed by the fact that it is carved on a granite pedestal at the entrance to the National Archive in Washington. It may have and it may have a base special meaning for us, Russians, as a warning and advice.

Self-reliance is known to stand very high on the list of American values. In its economic aspect, this feature of American character was shaped by the whole history of America. The concept of spiritual self-reliance formulated by William Ellery Channing, Ralph Emerson and Henry Thoreau is another facet of this sensibility. In contrast to the United States, in Russia, self-reliance is all but lacking; here the people are used to rely more on the authorities or on the "national leader" rather than on themselves. Decades of persecutions and mass repressions against individual entrepreneurs, peasants, and intellectuals have resulted in a radical psychological change. As a result, the country is reaping a sad harvest of the past. The teaching of American studies gives us a chance to talk about Henry Thoreau and Ralph Emerson and their views of self-reliance (Osipova 1985; Osipova 2001). Emerson's words from "Self-Reliance" "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist" (Emerson, 1888, p.13), and Thoreau's statement from his famous essay "On Civil Disobedience" sound pertinent in Russia: "Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison... [It is] the only house in a slave state in which a free man can abide with honor." (Thoreau 1993, p.9). The Russian dissident movement was rooted in, and still gets sustenance from, the tradition of European and, particularly, American non-conformism. The names of Thoreau and Tolstoy are symbols of non-alignment with the government when it blatantly violates human rights.

Patriotism as it is manifested by Americans in official, public and private life seems a genuine expression of people's pride in their country. This sensibility may not exclude social or political criticism. An interesting comparison of Martin Luther King's patriotism and that of the conservative black pastor Henry Jackson is made by Sam Hitchmough. King's patriotism, he contends, "was a challenge to the consensual patriotism of the country, to liberate the best in the American creed and save the soul of America. Jackson's patriotism was pragmatic and conservative, a belief that the meanings within the Constitution and the American creed shouldn't be wrestled with, they should simply be respected and adhered to, and that all protest energies should be channeled through the existing system" (Hitchmough 2011). As we know, King's kind of patriotism turned to be historically right, but both co-existed in time. In other words, patriotism in the U.S. may assume various forms and shades. This is not the case, though, for contemporary Russia. The state, through its media, dictates what forms people's patriotism should take. Television propaganda equates xenophobia with an

expression of patriotism. Moreover, people who have different views from the officially declared are labeled 'unpatriotic', which often brings about reprisals. It should also be noted that a threat of terrorism in recent years has caused a certain slide towards a state imposed form of patriotism in the U.S. Also we must note that the recent developments in US politics during the last eight years point to a certain slide towards of a state imposed form of patriotism, such as the American citizens' obligation to report any act or person suspicious of terrorism).

Some Strategies in Teaching American Studies

Approaching such a complex subject as the United States in profile, we need to resort to different methods. Using comparative, historical and interdisciplinary methods of study, we draw facts and ideas from the fields of philosophy, history, sociology, political studies, and literature.

Russian Americanists need to give students a well-balanced view of the country whose language they study. It can be done by skillfully exposing lies constructed by ideologues in politics, journalism, and the church. The most harmful myths about America concern the U.S. role in World War II and its aid to Russia regarding the amount and significance of the Lend-Lease programs. The belief that America "has never helped Russia" is widely spread. Actually, the opposite is true, and it comes as a surprise to students. We can mention four episodes in the history of U.S.- Russia relations: aid during the 1895 famine, aid given by the American Relief Association (ARA) in 1920-21 and the famous Lend-Lease Programs during WWII, as well as aid given during the perestroika at the end of the 1980s and later, at the outbreak of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Now it seems heresy to remind people that soon after 1945, Stalin admitted that the USSR would have never won the war, had it not been for American help. Indeed, the amount and the very nomenclature of supplies defy the average Russians' imagination: airplanes and anti-aircraft guns, machine-guns and trucks (used as tugs), fuel and non-ferrous metals, aluminum and sheeted steel, powder and tanks, cargo vessels and locomotives, various cables and rails, railroad cars and radio stations, tractors and lathes and, of course, food. The very mention of facts and figures of aid given to us in the framework of Lend-Lease invariably produces a strong effect in the audience.

The present generation of Russians knows practically nothing about the role the U.S. played in WWII, from its war in the Pacific to the Arctic convoys and the Normandy landings. Highlight these events seems particularly important in creating a balanced image of our American ally in the Second World War.

There is still another misconception which needs to be discussed. The image of the U.S. as a country of sheer individualists – a familiar cliché of Soviet journalists - is currently popularized in the media. Not surprisingly, our

students find it hard to believe that collectivism is a feature of American daily life. The real picture of volunteerism - concrete examples of volunteer work - evokes students' admiration and comes as a surprise to those who have never had a chance to visit the United States. The role of people's solidarity is another aspect of collectivism in U.S. twentieth-century history. Episodes from the Civil Rights Movement illustrate the case: the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama and the lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Birmingham, Alabama, when non-violent protesters were arrested and jailed. Many White people joined Blacks in their protests, working together with them in SNCC (Students Non-Violent Coordination Committee).

My emphasis on positive the lack of emphasis on positive aspects of American democracy may be accounted for by the fact that, in the public debate and the state-supported media in Russia, positive aspects of American life are tendentiously given small script or altogether neglected. In fact, teaching American studies includes such issues as the problem of slavery in the nineteenth century, the ugly face of racism in the twentieth and various instances of discrimination based on race, gender and class in the twenty-first. The criticism, though, is complemented by discussing the efforts American society is undertaking to set things right - through legislation, improving education, and widening the sphere of culture. Teaching the history of U.S. literature, as a part of an in-depth study of America, also gives ample opportunities to show how American authors addressed the problems of political corruption, manipulation of public opinion and conformism (or "mobocracy", in the words of Irving and Cooper). A rift between democratic ideals and realities of life features in the writings of American authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: Thoreau, Emerson, Cooper, Melville, Twain, Faulkner, Steinbeck, Bradbury, Vonnegut, Kesey, and Morrison, to mention just a few.

Teaching American studies as a review course in the framework of area studies has a different goal. I can't but agree with Rodica Mihaila in her assessment of the role of American studies in the former communist countries. It "has always dealt, more or less overtly, with a virtual America - a New World that has always existed as a challenge and a dream of fulfillment." American studies, as she put it, "is no longer an U.S. export but a national investment in democratic reforms" (Mihaila 2002). This is the case both with Romania and post-communist Russia. Yet now, even more than in the times of perestroika, or in the 1990s, the study of America helps Russian students accept democracy as a model of social and political life. It is particularly important now, when democratic principles are continuously derided in the official media and abusing the U.S. has become a part of political rhetoric.

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A NOVEL OF CELIBACY: SWINBURNE'S *LESBIA BRANDON*

ROXANA PATRAȘ¹

ABSTRACT. *A Novel of Celibacy: Swinburne's Lesbia Brandon.* Swinburne's lost masterpiece, *Lesbia Brandon*, is a text that reflects upon the burden of family memory and on the ways a particular individual could escape the reproduction chain. Caught at different ages, Beauty represents for the Decadent writer a state of unequalled perfection, which can be neither expressed nor related to a referent. In this context, celibacy becomes the social condition of Beauty as well as an aesthetic form. A novel with bachelors and about celibate, Swinburne's *Lesbia Brandon* transcends its shocking premises (lesbianism, incest, violence, flogging) and reveals itself as a meditation on the evanescent condition of mortal beauty. Along with his favored typologies and themes, Swinburne also devised here a different way to think the relationship between authoritarian (complementary partners) and egalitarian love (equal or identical partners) within the wider ideological frame of republicanism.

Keywords: *roman célibataire, indirection, seriality, memory, decadence, androgyny.*

REZUMAT. *Un roman al celibatului: Lesbia Brandon de Algernon Charles Swinburne.* Capodopera pierdută a lui A.C. Swinburne este un text care reflectă asupra memoriei apăsătoare a familiei precum și asupra soluțiilor individuale de a ieși din lanțul reproducerii. Surprinsă la vârste și prin generații diferite, Frumusețea reprezintă pentru scriitorul decadent un nivel inegalabil de perfecțiune, care nu poate fi exprimat pe deplin nici prin scris, nici prin raportare la un referent real. În termenii definiți de Jean Marie Schaeffer, celibatul devine nu numai forma socială a Frumuseții, ci și figura sa estetică cea mai potrivită. Roman cu celibatari androginici și despre condiția celibatului, *Lesbia Brandon* reușește să-și tranșeze premisele șocante (lesbianism, incest, violență, biciuire) și să se reveleze ca o meditație profundă asupra condiției evanescente a Frumuseții muritoare. Pe lângă tipologiile și temele ce l-au consacrat, Swinburne a reușit să propună aici un nou mod de a înțelege distincția dintre amorul autoritar (dintre parteneri complementari) și amorul egalitarist (dintre parteneri egali sau chiar identici) în contextul mai larg al unei ideologii de tip republican.

Cuvinte cheie: *Lesbia Brandon, roman celibatar, indirecție, serialitate, memorie, decadență, androginie.*

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The (Mis)adventures of *Lesbia Brandon*. An unknown novel

In his letters written around 1904, D. H. Lawrence draws the attention to the value of Algernon Charles Swinburne's work. Himself a literature connoisseur, the writer tries to persuade his acquaintances to read aloud Swinburne's texts:

If you see Mrs. Eder, do ask her if she could send the Swinburne Frieda left at her house at Christmas. I love to read him... You sent atlases and Swinburne – then the cake and the sweets Frieda ordered. This is a most surprising array... I will have Swinburne and Shelley and Herodotus and Flaubert: just the four, round the round table in the tower... Thank you very much indeed for Swinburne. I lie in bed and read him, and he moves me very deeply. The pure realization in him is something to reverence: he is very like Shelley, full of philosophical spiritual realization and revelation. He is a great revealer, very great. I put him with Shelley as our greatest poet. He is the last fiery spirit among us... There was more powerful rushing fame of life in him than in all the heroes rolled together. One day I shall buy all his books (Lawrence, *qt. in* Murfin 186).

It is not sure if Lawrence achieved his plan on buying all Swinburne's books. However, it is quite sure certain that, around 1900 (when this letter was written), he had formed a strong intuition of the resemblances among Swinburne, Shelley, and Flaubert. In all three cases identified by the young writer, the attempt at reforming the language and the incessant effort of stylization brought into existence a gray space of quasi-failures, that is, a huge amount of literary productions set in-between aesthetic realization and complete rigmarole. Nevertheless, these "minor" writings are still under the signature of the three major writers just mentioned above, so they are meant to disarrange a bit the equation of critical evaluation. When Lawrence was writing these lines, much of Swinburne's prose pieces were completely unknown to the public. Apparently, they had been introduced only to those happy few (bibliophiles and suchlike) who could traffic them as *infernal* items.

Among the four novels, *Love's Cross-Currents*, *A Year's Letters*, *Lesbia Brandon*, *La Soeur de la Reine*, *La Fille du Policeman*, only one had been published, yet with great caution and under a feminine pseudonym ("Mrs. Horace Manners"). Indeed, *Love's Cross-Currents*, *A Year's Letters* is brought out to the public in 1877, and then re-issued, under Swinburne's own signature, only in 1905. A second novel, currently entitled *Lesbia Brandon* (Gosse 164)², circulated

² In his biography, Gosse names the text after of the characters' names (*Lesbia Brandon*), and considers that it should not be made public: "Swinburne carried out this scheme in a disjointed romance called, from the name of its heroine, *Lesbia Brandon*. After keeping it for nearly ten years in MS., he had it set up in type in 1877. The original MS. is lost, but a single galley-proof, lacking both the beginning and the end, was kept by Mr. Andrew Chatto, and is now in Mr. T. J. Wise's collection. In his opinion and mine this mélange of prose and verse, which Swinburne thought he had completely suppressed, ought never to be published". Nevertheless, in Randolph Hugues's opinion, Gosse's title is not relevant but can be accepted as a convention.

clandestinely as a collection of scattered fragments, until Randolph Hugues endeavored to remake the original narrative project in 1952, after almost a century of misadventures and pecuniary disputes over the manuscripts³ (Mayfield 1-100). Preceded by some short stories (*The Portrait*, *Lucrezia Borgia: The Chronicle of Tebaldeo Tebaldi*, *Dead Love*, *The Chronicle of Queen Fredegond*, *The Marriage of Mona Lisa*) and by two parodic micro-novels written in French (*La Soeur de la Reine* and *La Fille du policeman*), Swinburne's ampler texts should impress a contemporary sensibility with its sophistication of language, its infinitesimal shading of psychologies or with its relativizing of viewpoints, all these stressing the modernity of Swinburne's *écriture* albeit his option for a somewhat obsolete form such as the epistolary novel.

On the surface, Swinburne does not seem to have bet much on his talents as a prose writer. Always looking for Apollonian impersonation, theater and poetry should have carried about them the air of social dignity and signification. Contrarily, the novel bears witness of the Dionysian discharging, which is "the reverse of the medal", an art already "decayed" and meant for decadence. In time, the clandestine circulation of *Lesbia Brandon*, *La Soeur de la Reine* and *La Fille du Policeman* has emphasized the eccentric and shadowy details of Swinburne's biography, some of their commentators being ready to discover just there the secrets of Swinburne's life at Putney, the real drive of Swinburne's relationship with Theodore Watts-Dunton, and, last but not least, the significance of Swinburne's own "celibacy", assumed not only as a social option, but also as an aesthetic form (Bertrand, Biron, Dubois and Pâque 4-193). Edmund Wilson considers that Swinburne had a story to tell, a story which could not be conveyed through poetry but which has been partially reported through fiction works (Wilson 10). Such biographic "swerves" turned Swinburne's unknown novel into an appendix of the six-volume edition of letters, published in the 60s. Other interpreters also formulated the hypothesis that *Lesbia Brandon* should be related to the aesthetic experience from *Poems and Ballads*, being a sort of "genial detritus" (Fletcher 44).

Commentators used with A.C. Swinburne's experiments should find it pretty difficult to justify the writer's outmoded option for the 18th-century epistolary novel. In his 1905 preface to *Love's Cross-Currents*, Swinburne himself pointed out that his only wish was to perfect a novel's formula that Balzac and Walter Scott could not manage thoroughly:

As it is, I can only hope that you may be for once mistaken in your favourable opinion of a study thrown into the old epistolary form which even the giant genius of Balzac could not restore to the favour it enjoyed in the days of Richardson and of Laclos (...) I do not forget that the king of men to whose hand we owe the famous history of Redgauntlet began it in epistolary form and

³ Mayfield comes with important facts about the posthumous destiny of Swinburne's unknown works.

changed the fashion of his tale to direct and forthright narrative when the story became too strong for him, and would no longer be conceived within the limits of conceivable correspondence (*Love's Cross-Currents*, v-vi).

So his leading impulsion might be interpreted either in terms of competition with models or in terms of critical theory, as a variant of his lifelong interest in “the noble pleasure of praising”.

Which is the proper way of reading *Lesbia Brandon*? Should we read the novel through its virtual intentions or through its “restored”, well-rounded form that is proposed by Randolph Hugues in 1952? Should we consider *Lesbia Brandon* as a laboratory, as work in progress that cannot arrest aesthetic attention? Should we consider it as a memoir or a biographic piece, written in a coded fashion but absolutely transparent when set side by side with the timeline of Swinburne’s life? Should we consider *Lesbia Brandon* as “a novel of novels”, a “book of books”, as later French critics do (Aquiien 194-211)? Should we really read it as a meta-text, a palimpsest, as a “novel-interrogation” addressing all literary genres and ages? Should we take it as a “saturated” inter-text, full of references to *Telemac*, *Paul et Virginie*, *Les Châtiments*, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Le Chevalier de Faublas*, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, *La Cousine Bette*, *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*, *Eugenie Grandet*, *The Old Curiosity Shop* and so forth? In postmodernist fashion, a saturation indicating the void of meaning (Grădinaru 10-53)?

If we boil down the critical texts and the letters to the essence of formative patterns, there are indeed some references that, through their repeated occurrence, might be taken as narrative models of Swinburne’s prose experiments: The Marquis of Sade, Laclos, Restif de Bretonne, Walter Scott, Theophile Gautier, Edgar Allan Poe, Victor Hugo, the Brönte sisters, Honoré de Balzac, and Charles Dickens. From all early exegetes, Georges Lafourcade is the only one who investigated the affinity between de Sade’s literature and philosophy and Swinburne’s ideas. However, a keen inquiry of both writers came to the conclusion that, in terms of cultural acquisition, Swinburne’s relationship with de Sade is rather superficial and late. Around 1880, the bard from Putney used to assert that Voltaire’s and Fénelon’s writings read like modest commentaries to de Sade’s novel *Justine, ou Les malheurs de la vertu* (Swinburne *Letters IV* 136-137). Drawing near to the end of his life, Swinburne writes to Theodore Watts-Dunton that Restif should not be labeled anymore as a “pornographer”, but as a species of “French Defoe” (Swinburne *Letters VI* 103-105). Consequently, recent biographies have accentuated the fact that readings from de Sade and libertine literature occur pretty late in Swinburne’s intellectual journey, most of them being imposed throughout the writer’s praise for Lord Houghton and his library, named *Aphrodisiopolis* (Henderson, Thomas, Rooksby).

Celibacy and memory: the recipe of a decadent novel

In a recent anthology focused on Swinburne's maturity writings, Yisrael Levin identifies a symptomatology of critical verdicts that connect prematurity to the hasty burnout of creative powers (Levin 1-6). It is not by chance that Swinburne's commentators give either a diagnosis of early artistic maturity or one of prematurely interrupted development (Bush; Rosenberg). The overall feeling about his works is one of stagnation or of imperceptible evolution, barely quantifiable (Dobrée in Levin 1).

Yielding profit from the exciting "critical biographies" published by Jean Overton Fuller (1968), Philip Henderson (1974), Donald Thomas (1979) and Rikky Rooksby (1997), the cultural studies consecrated to Decadence that have adjudicated Swinburne's personality and work (Murfin; Weir; de Palacio; Dellamora; Paglia). For instance, Ross C. Murfin notes that the kinship with the decadent prose does not lie in a shared imaginary ground, but in the air of "aesthetic prematurity" imparted by Swinburne's writings. When under scrutiny, Swinburne's prose should not be labeled as suffering of "sterility" or "impotence", as a *demon de impuissance* (de Palacio 16-18), but it should be connected with a sort of spontaneous reactivity, which is characteristic for all "preemies" (Murfin 159).

Decadence, says David Weir, does not have a posterity; everything that comes after decadence is not decadence anymore (Weir 146). The American critic emphasizes the fact that, within the Decadent frame of thought, birth is one and the same with death; the decadent imagination refuses the idea of evolution, wherefore the decadent writers' obsessions with genealogies. The lack of inheritors corresponds, on the aesthetic level, to the lack of aesthetic manifests or communities. The individualism of the decadent mind (Călinescu 131-89) comes with an awareness of genetic singularity with a problematic relationship between the individual and his/her ancestry. For Swinburne celibacy becomes a lifestyle option as well as a main theme of his work. Like in a system of communicant vessels, he turns the atypical traits of his biography and genealogy into literary themes. In the same vein, a fictional bachelor such as Helen Midhurst (*Love's Cross-Currents* and *Lesbia Brandon*), who appears to be an English version of M-me de Merteuil from Laclos' *Liaisons Dangereuses*, is endowed with an atypical discursive style.

Departing from these facts, Swinburne's unknown novel *Lesbia Brandon* can be analyzed by applying the concept of "celibate novel" (*le roman celibataire*) framed by Jean-Pierre Bertrand, Michel Biron, Jacques Dubois and Jeannine Pâque in a collective volume from 1996. Usually, the phrase has been related to masculinity but in Swinburne's case, it could be applied with success when one turns to the typology of *the cerebral/ ultra-rational woman* (an extremely

cultivated, refined and malicious lady), most of the times paralleled by the typology of *the beautiful old lady*. The narrator himself comments that Helen Midhurst is a sort of “Madame de Merteuil *en bourgeoisie*” (*Lesbia Brandon* 69), endowed with a “style of sarcasm” in both writing letters to her younger relatives and in memorizing her family business. In her turn, Lesbia Brandon is a talented poetess who chooses bachelorship even though Herbert Seyton seems to be, from a symbolical point of view, her perfect match. For Swinburne, the woman cannot escape celibacy unless she discharges herself from the burden of memory, that is, when the woman becomes a mother. Biologically speaking, Amicia (Lady Midhurst’s niece) drops into regenerative and healing forgetfulness only when the forbidden relationship with her cousin produces a son:

She makes a delicious double to her baby, lying in a tumbled tortuous nest or net of hair with golden linings, with tired relieved eyes and a face that flashes and subsides every five minutes with a weary pleasure — she glitters and undulates at every sight of the child as if it were the sun and she water in the light of it. You see how lyrical one may become at an age when one’s grandchildren have babies. I should have thought her the kind of woman to cry a fair amount of tears at such a time, but happily she refrains from that ceremonial diversion. She is the image of that quivering rest which follows on long impassive trouble, and the labour of days without deeds — quiet, full of life, eager and at ease. I imagine she has no memory or feeling left her from the days that were before yesterday. She and the baby were born at one birth, and know each as much as the other of the people and things that went on before that (*Love’s Cross-Currents* 230-231).

If related to the symbolic level of *Lesbia Brandon*, the peculiar *post-partum* amnesia of Lady Midhurst’s niece corresponds to Lesbia’s way of generating forgetfulness. The young poetess pictures herself as the new Persephone who has lost now the fertile, regenerative traits that the ancient goddess used to have. As a matter of fact, Persephone’s sadness is not due to her imprisonment within Hades’s realm, but to her confinement to the memory of human reproduction. Swinburne takes from the usual Pre-Raphaelite props white and red poppies, which adorn his fictional figure. It is also a way to emphasize how the natural cycles overlap with the mechanisms of memory: birth and death, the succession of seasons, and the sea movements have a correspondent in the cycles of memorization-forgetfulness-remembrance.

Developed along with Lady Midhurst and Lady Margaret Wariston, a chain of masculine characters (Reginald, Frank, Herbert, Denham, Linley and so forth) dovetails the typology of the Swinburnian bachelor. Irrespective of their personal and family stories, the bachelors – be they in their youth or in their late maturity – act like true oracles; they do not participate in discussions, they just give forth snippets without any real connection to the context of the conversation. Carrying an androgynous air about them, both old

people and teenagers emanate the same fascination. Using a gnomic style and being always obsessed with the memory of her own family, Helen Midhurst can be considered a feminine Tiresias, a legendary figure also referred to in Swinburne's poems from *Songs before Sunrise*:

I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind,/ Whom the strong heavy-footed years have led/ From night to night and dead men unto dead,/ And from the blind hope to the memory blind;/ For each man's life is woven, as Time's life is,/ Of blind young hopes and old blind memories.// I am a soul outside of death and birth./ I see before me and afterward I see.

The bachelor has indeed a problematic relationship with memory, both his own and the human race's. When reading Swinburne's novels, Maurice Halbwachs's classic distinction among individual, personal, and cultural memory is of little use (Halbwachs 53-58). David G. Riede notices, in his turn, that Swinburne is prone to the thematization of memory; for instance, his poetry seems to evince the functions of an inventory memory, on the one hand, and to respond to the signals of a "pure memory" (Riede 151), on the other. Also, in perfect consonance with the typical androgynous characters of "the celibate novel", one may recall John R. Reed's distinction between *the narratives of decadence* and *the decadent narratives*. In point of fact, Swinburne is not one of the writers that avail of the sensational bits of the decadent imagination. This happens because he prefers to explore the "poetic" functions of borderline, ambiguous situations such as incest, androgyny or flagellation.

Through his favoring of the *technique of indirection* (Hugues 294), the author of *Lesbia Brandon* shows that he was aware of the essential difference between the rhetoric and the (real) dissolving spirit of decadence, developed by John R. Reed with respect to the previously mentioned distinction between *the narratives of decadence* and *the decadent narratives*. "Indirection" means, first of all, the possibility to find a precise answer through aberration and divagation. The mediating discourse occurs between the emitter's intention and his proper words, in redundant narrative situations, when the speakers (usually two of a kind) do not want to name what they have in mind. In other terms, even though the characters of *Lesbia Brandon* mean one thing, they are invariably uttering something else. The "in-directed" meaning does not necessarily challenge the real message; on the contrary, it focuses the concealed through a paradoxical effect of "insolitation".

Dramatic techniques: serial situations and in-directed speech

Adding to "the bachelor typology" and to the "in-directed speech", the text's own theatrical features constitute the third axis of its decadent mode. The dramatic code of *écriture* is unveiled through the obstinate use of terms

coming from the theater's semantic sphere. Thus, all Swinburne's characters are "actors" or want to experiment a sort of histrionic life: "I should like to die acting – says Lesbia Brandon – I've heard of people dying on the stage" (*Lesbia Brandon* 165). Action and life, in general, can be pictured, in terms of seasonal tropes, as "comedy", "tragedy" or "domestic romance" (*Love's Cross-Currents* 241). Moreover, the word "play" preserves its semantic polyvalence: from children's play ("you two poor children are not to be given more play", remarks Lady Midhurst as if she has assumed the posture of a director) to the meaning of "a plot, a game of counter-chances". The drawing-room conversation and gestures are named by the same Lady Midhurst "exploring cruises in search of characters" (*Love's Cross-Currents* 13).

For instance, the fifth chapter of *Lesbia Brandon* re-enacts the Renaissance setting from the whimsical play *The Sisters*. Before that, in the chapter entitled *A day's work*, the characters had been prepared for the stage, being involved all together in a *drawing room novelette*, where the narrator presents the rhythms of living in Margaret Wariston's residence and brings into focus a pageant-like sequence where identities and sex are changed because of costume shifts. In the same vein, Lady Midhurst "migrates" to Lesbia Brandon's story, where she is in charge with the same directing role. The aforementioned chapter confirms that Helen Midhurst is an actress equally gifted at both 15 and 54, who dresses up in a "rococo" costume, whereas Herbert Seyton's sister (Margaret Wariston) chos a robe tailored after a Venetian picture, probably representing Lucretia Borgia:

There is a head like you in San Zanipolo; a portrait head in the right corner of a picture of the Virgin crowned; we shall see that. Only it has thick curled gold hair, like my sister's. You had that hair when you sat to Carpaccio; you have had time to grow perfecter in since (*Lesbia Brandon* 227).

The men's attire (Lord Wariston' and Mr. Linley's), is composed of ribbons and silk pieces, taking after the Elizabethan fashion. The young Lunsford plays the part of Gennaro, the victim of Lucrezia's love. But the theatrical impression emanated by the whole narration comes neither from this Renaissance play's embedding nor from the intertextual techniques counting on seriality and reduplication of characters. A sense of theatricality is formed from the amalgamation of theatre and real life. When their little set-up is over and they are already installed in living-room conversation, the characters decide to keep their costumes. In this precise moment, Herbert – the only male in the company dressed up as female, is introduced to Lesbia Brandon as Margaret Wariston's twin sister. Under this disguise, Mrs. Seyton awakens Lesbia's sexual interest.

At the end of the novel, when she is lying on her death bed, Lesbia gives tongue to her desire to re-enact that precise theatrical context and to see

the feminized Herbert again. The fragment also epitomizes a phenomenon of consciousness reduplication: the avatar of ancient Sappho (Lesbia) dreams that she is actually Sappho's lover Anactoria, the one that pushes Sappho off the Leucadian cliff. The personality of Swinburne's heroine is built on the principle of scenic duality: she is both the destroyer (Lesbia, Sappho's murderer) and the creator (Lesbia, Sappho's imitator and symbolic inheritor). Swinburne's infatuation with Sappho's story and verse is manifest from the debut volume, where a poem entitled *Anactoria* is included. On the genesis of this text, the poet himself left a few valuable testimonies:

In this poem I have simply expressed, or tried to express, that violence of affection between one and another which hardens into rage and deepens into despair... I have striven to cast my spirit into the mould of hers, to express and represent not the poem but the poet (Swinburne Replies. Notes on Poems and Reviews. Under the Microscope. Dedicatory Epistle 20-21).

But the theatricality of the text is also enhanced by resorting to female characters who have an appetite for disguise and who surely understand seriality. All Swinburnian women – in both plays and novels – wield an irrepressible attraction because their whole existence appears to be reeling off on the scene. Among them, the most representative is Mary Stuart, the Queen of Scots (lead character of the plays *Chastelard*, *Bothwell*, and *Mary Stuart*), who lives her royal destiny as if fully aware of acting in a play. According to the same scheme, Margaret Wariston (also spelled as Waristoun) is shown in full theatrical mood when surrounded by her children: she is paying attention to the effects that her voice pitches have on her kids, she is minutely calculating her gestures and postures. Likewise, Helen Midhurst is endowed with a keen theatrical (self)awareness; when she is in the middle of her family, Lady Midhurst is set upon a pedestal by her nephews who, almost enthralled, closely follow her words and movements. As a matter of fact, making an inventory of Swinburnian *femmes fatales*, Christian La Cassagnère demonstrates that seduction is not by far produced by the heroines' particular personalities but by a *drame scopique* (La Cassagnère in Dennis Bonnecasse and Sébastien Scarpa 243), conditioned by the sensorial activity of the spectator/ perceiver.

How to turn lead into gold: from the novel's laboratory

Like in a minuet movement where dancers exchange their places, Swinburne's heroes have an appetite for changing gender polarities and ages. The erotic plot (Margaret-Herbert), the politic plot (the ex-revolutionary Attilio Mariani), the family plot (the Waristons' and the Brandons' story of

unchaste marriages and consanguine intercourse), as well as the bohemian plot (lifestyle of the writers Lesbia Brandon and Herbert Seyton) are issued by a complicate identity equation that also brings to the novelist's attention a complex problem of dramatic technique. How is it possible – without magic aids – for a man to live in a woman's body and for a woman to live in a man's?

The argument can be unfolded by presuming a certain “inter-medial” feature of all fictional situations (for instance, the themes of sexual same-ness and incest) when gender, age, and social role are jumbled. Accordingly, from a structural viewpoint, the novel *Lesbia Brandon* seems to follow the scheme of social dances such as *minuet con trio*. The incestuous kiss between brothers (Margaret and Herbert) from the sixth chapter (*A Day's Work*) landmarks the end of the first “measure”. The chapters evoking the characters' London life and experiences resemble the *trio* moment, or the rotation of partners around an axis – an idea of love in this case. The third measure is consecrated to identity shift: Margaret becomes Herbert, whereas Herbert gets to the background of the scene and lives “womanhood” for Lesbia's sake.

In the editor's remake, the “action” of *Lesbia Brandon* progresses through 17 chapters, counting 168 pages. Intensely ironized and contested, the bold edition of the “frustrated masterpiece” brought off by Randolph Hugues remains the best starting point for investigating the way the prominent dramatic moods perpetuate within the epic medium. Also, Swinburnian scholars have established that the writer was working on *Lesbia Brandon* in parallel with *Chastelard*⁴, the first of the three historic tragedies devoted to Mary Stuart's spectacular life, with William Blake's biography, and with the Greek play *Atalanta in Calydon*. At the same time, it might be relevant that the epistolary novel *Love's Cross-Currents* was already finished (Hugues 196-198). Taking into consideration the singularity of its conception, *Lesbia Brandon* should be interpreted as a project, as a laboratory, and cannot be granted with autonomy. Broadly speaking, it is a panopticon that provides a view into Swinburne's whole work.

Nevertheless, the variety of styles does not beat back the hypothesis of a thematic arrangement. Departing from the motifs belonging to the same thematic and typological sphere (incest, consanguinity, disciplinarian father, *famme fatale*) and from the high intra-textual mobility of characters, Randolph Hugues could establish 4 stages in the development of Swinburne's prose: 1. the version conventionally entitled *Reginald Harewood*; 2. the novel *Love's Cross-Currents*; 3. the sketch *Herbert Winwood*; 4. the novel *Lesbia Brandon* (275). Yet,

⁴ The idea of the novels' choreographic structure was inspired by Swinburne's play *Chastelard*, especially, Act I, Scene II. The scenic indications of the minuet scene when the two pretenders to the Queen's hand – Chastelard and Darnley – revolve around the beloved woman (“they dance a measure; they pass”) have been particularly suggestive for my interpretation of Swinburne's prose as they enabled me to catch the rhythmic component of the characters' movements.

there may be noted a significant difference between *Lesbia Brandon*' imaginary and the previous texts'; here, there is no disciplinarian (father or mentor), prone to inflict severe punishments on children.

Especially the variant entitled *Herbert Winwood* confirms the hypothesis that the English writer attempted at a larger narrative project and intended to create a family chronicle. However, Swinburne's project does not count on a naturalist poetics inspired by Zola's *Les Rougon-Macquart*. On the contrary, as his letters attest, Swinburne hated Zola and the monstrous premises of naturalism. Thus, Swinburne's family chronicle is not meant to picture heredity miseries, but to illustrate exceptional cases that manage to escape the biological series. Moreover, Swinburne's serial narration is not based on nature's fatality, but on a psychological fatality, which makes that all his psychologies have an "anamorphic" component (Riede 53; La Cassagnère 242-254). It seems that around 1850 and 1860, Swinburne outlined an ampler two-volume work, which should have been consecrated to the cozy life of Kirklowes and, respectively, to the psychological and genetic entanglements from Ellerstone society. Very keen on biographical details, Swinburne gives clear indications about his characters' birth dates: Cecil Winwood is born in 1847, Rosamund in 1848, and Ethelbert in 1850. On Herbert Winwood's birth certificate was about to be written the year 1837, which coincides with both the year of the marriage between Philip Harewood and Amicia Cheyne and the year of Swinburne's own birth. Apparently, the fictional scheme was meant to be extended to virtual erotic relationships between Herbert Winwood-Margaret Lunsford, Anne Halden-Edward Wycombe, Anne Halden-Arthur Lunsford, Frank Halden-Catherine.

Swinburne focuses on several generations of consanguine lovers. For example, in *Love's Cross-Currents* one can discover three pairs whose erotic attachments are debatable from a moral point of view: Helen Midhurst and Philip Harewood who are in their sixties, Clara Radworth and Reginald Harewood who are in their thirties, and the teenagers Amicia Cheyne and Frederick Cheyne. The family-tree is enrooted in a family myth, that is, in the founding story about the intercourse between the archetypical Lady Margaret Cheyne and the prototypical Reginald Harewood in the 17th century. *Lesbia Brandon* too is grounded on a subtextual arabesque of incestuous relationships: Mr. Linley and Lady Midhurst are in their sixties, Mr. Denham and Margaret Wariston are in their thirties, while Herbert Seyton and *Lesbia Brandon* are presumed to be younger, nearly teenagers. Right in the heart of the novel, Swinburne places the intertextual reference to Shelley's *The Cenci*, a play which turns incest into a romantic myth. Also in Swinburne's version, there are two noble sisters, Margaret and Catherine, who are courted by two young aristocrats Linley and Charles Brandon; but one of the sisters, most probably the demonic Margaret, gets involved in a pre-marital relationship with Frank Seyton, a sin which would leave deep traces in the erotic imagination of future generations.

When sex ends at a certain point

The energetic flux, circulating like a voltaic arch between the two genders can be grasped from the novel's opening. Assuming the part of a *mise en abîme* (both from a thematic and from a stylistic viewpoint), chapter I of *Lesbia Brandon* is a slow-motion description of two faces – one of them female, the other male – bearing a hieroglyphic resemblance because of their gender specifications. The former is Margaret Seyton, the latter is her brother, Herbert.

Through the abyssal effect of concentric circles, the description of Margaret's eye suggests that her figure has been repeated several times before, and that, in her actual shape, it contains all colors, nuances, and secrets enclosed in the looks of her feminine predecessors. Bertie Seyton's sister carries about her, like a Russian doll, all her ancestors, and offspring; her unequalled beauty is composed, like Walter Pater's "gem-like flame", from a series of perceptions:

Her eyes had an outer ring of seeming black, but in effect of deep blue and dark grey mixed; this soft and broad circle of colour sharply divided the subtle and tender white, pale as pure milk, from an iris which should have been hazel or grey, blue or green, but was instead a more delicate and significant shade of the colour more common with beast or bird; pure gold, without alloy or allay, like the yellowest part of a clear flame; such eyes as the greatest analyst of spirit and flesh that ever lived and spoke had noticed as proper to certain rare women, and has given for a perpetual and terrible memory to his Georgian girl. In a dark face, southern or eastern, the color should be yet rarer, and may perhaps be more singularly beautiful than even here, where it gave to the fair and floral beauty of northern features a fire and a rapture of life. These eyes were not hard or shadowless; their color was full of small soft intricacies of shade and varieties of tone; they could darken with delicate alteration and lighten with splendid change. The iris had fine fibers of light and tender notes of color that gave the effect of shadow; as if the painter's touch when about to darken the clear fierce beauty of their vital and sensitive gold had passed in time and left them perfect. The pupil was not over large and seemed as the light touched it of molten purple or of black velvet. They had infinite significance, infinite fervor and purity. The eyelashes and the eyebrows were of a golden brown, long and full; their really soft shade of color seemed on a skin of white rose-leaves, between a double golden flame of eyes and hair (1).

Having in mind Swinburne's praise of Balzac, we can discover here a replica of Paquita Valdez from *La fille aux Yeux d'Or* as well as a subtle intertextual hint at Ligeia's eyes depicted by Edgar Allan Poe in the short-story entitled *Ligeia*.

By contrast with the aforementioned models, for Swinburne, old age represents an aesthetic ideal because it engraves a special kind of beauty on people's face. Far from being worn-out, niggard and hideous, the *senex* imagined by the English author is close to the marbled tranquility of statues.

Along with an astute mind, elaborate style in both speaking and writing, psychological insight and comprehensive culture, the elder Lady Midhurst preserves her beauty and magnetism. Furthermore, even though he has the look of a satyr, Mr. Linley acts his last life scenes with the dignity of a stoic, with the disengagement of a moralist, and with a young man's sexual appetite, youth occurs at once with sexual differentiation, which triggers, in its turn, a chain of mishaps and ecstatic moments. It is during the adolescence and the old age when the human being contains both sexes, as Master Denham avers: "but sex ends at a certain point – male and female coalesce" (122).

However, the writer's most notable contribution in *Lesbia Brandon* does not lie in his "noble pleasure of praising" Balzac or Poe as models. His originality rests with Swinburne's talent in catching the imperceptible tones of Herbert Seyton's figure, almost in the same way Oscar Wilde advances in picturing Dorian Gray. Colored in ineffable golden, Bertie looks like an aesthetically upgraded version of his sister. Apart from the features that Herbert shares with Reginald Harewood from *Love's Cross-Currents* (poetic talent, bohemian spirit, and political passions), probably one of the most enhanced is this character's androgyny, which is also a means to preserve a link with the archetypal man's innocent and amoral memory. Thus, androgyny does not signal mere effeminacy; when Bertie is introduced to Margaret's guests (Lady Midhurst and Mr. Linley), the narrator comments the following: "the critics could not taint him of effeminate or vulgar bearing" (50). Additionally, when Margaret finds him sleeping in her own bedroom, she throws him a look suffused with masculine desire; when the statue rendering the embrace between Ampelos and god Bacchus is referred to (a statue that, undoubtedly, Swinburne had studied at the museum Uffizi of Florence during his Italian sojourn), the indication of same-sex love becomes quite obvious. Accordingly, Margaret has the impression that Bertie has not anything to do with the child Cupid, but with the grace of an Ampelos sculpted by Polykleitos (74).

Therefore, Herbert's face from the first pages of *Lesbia Brandon* should be taken as a masculinized treatment of a feminine model, which is a technique borrowed from the - Pre-Raphaelite theories; following details from letters and testimonies, scholars have demonstrated that Dante Gabriel Rossetti's portrait of *Joan of Arc kissing the Sword of Deliverance* departed from the lines of Swinburne's face. Both the adverbs of intensity and the adjectives' comparative forms stress that Bertie's face is more exquisite than his sister's; he is the impersonation of immemorial perfection, being undetermined in terms of gender or social role:

While yet a boy her brother was so like her that the description may serve for him with a difference. They had the same complexion and skin so thin and fair that it glittered against the light as white silk does, taking sharper and fainter tones of

white that shone and melted into each other. His hair had much more of brown and red mixed into it than hers, but like hers was yellower underneath and rippled from the roots, and not less elastic in the rebellious undulation of the curls. The shape of the face and set of head was the same in either, but the iris of his eyes, which might have been classed as hazel more fairly than hers, was rather the colour of bronze than of gold, and the shades and the tones of its colour were more variable, having an admixture of green like the eyes of pure northern races, and touched with yellow and brown; except for the green in them, best definable as citrine eyes, but not easy to define; soft and shining like brilliant sea-water with golden lights in it; the pupils purple and the rings violet. Either face would have lost could they have changed eyes; the boy's even when his face was most feminine were always the eyes of a male bird. Looked well into and through, they showed tints of blue and grey like those of sea-mosses seen under a soft vague surface of clear water which blends and brightens their sudden phases of colour: they were sharp at once and reflective, rapid and timid, full of daring or of dreams: with darker lashes, longer and wavier than his sister's: his browner eyebrows had the exact arch of hers, and the forehead was higher, of a thicker and a harder white: his lips were cut out after the model of hers, but fuller and with less of purple; the cheeks and neck were not less clear and pale, but had gathered freckles and sunburns in the hard high air; his chin and throat were also copies from her on a due scale of difference, and his hands, though thinner and less rounded, were what hers would have been with a little more exposure to sun and wind (2-3).

In spite of their common artistic aspirations and talents, Sappho's heir (Lesbia Brandon) and Ampelos's (Herbert Seyton) cannot engage in a natural, Dionysian relationship as all the others do. Moreover, Lesbia declares that she might be considered Bertie's *major* (101).

The second chapter captures the daily rhythms from Ensdon, where Bertie passes his childhood. Inspired by the views Hadji-Algernon kept from the Isle of Wight – *the inland moors* and *the sea* (7, 9), Ensdon residence is set in-between darkness and light, in-between unconscious and superconscious. An “unmeasured” quantity of French and English literature determines a book-mediated perception of reality whose main feature is the ambivalence of the child's responses to the cultural stimuli (10). But, once the child gets over the “pagan” stage of childhood, he is forced into maturity by his tutor's didactic “experiments” based on “elaborate” stories of cruelty, whip, rod and other physical traumas (13-14). Yet, in spite of brutality, Bertie's relationship with Denham does not seem to epitomize a handbook case of victim-aggressor attachment. No matter how much their forces can be really compared, the two men engage themselves into a “duel” (17), anchored in the principles of masculine aristocratic honor. Paradoxically, it is not Bertie the one who is traumatized, but Denham himself, as he has to censure his instincts, to get through “quiet stages of perversion” (20), eventually to refine the erotic drive awakened by his half-sister, Margaret.

By far the most consistent from a narrative viewpoint, the fragment entitled *A Day's Work* (running along chapters II, IV, V, and VI) is formed from the assortment of various episodes that happened during a day's time. It goes without saying that, as a novelist, Swinburne wanted us to picture Herbert Seyton as a perfect *gentleman*. All in all, Herbert Seyton behaves like a hero and not like an anti-hero (in Stephen Dedalus' fashion for instance) in each of the following circumstances: when he endangers his life in order to save a child from drowning, when he discusses with Walter Lunsford about education through a harsh disciplinarian spirit, when he is whipped in the library of Ensdon Residence, when he engages in literary discussions with his sister's guests, and when he plays his strange role in the relationship with Lesbia Brandon. The incestuous scene that took place between the siblings Margaret and Bertie Seyton (the kiss) is only a way to enhance the moments when Herbert Seyton becomes a man, thus when he steps outside Lesbia Brandon's erotic interest.

By getting beyond the novel of manners, the writer aims at bringing out into full relief a sort of *écriture* stamped by gender cues. After a quick scan of the human samples gathered in Lord Wariston's dining room, we can see how the two genders separate the domestic spaces and their ways of discoursing about reality. Nevertheless, Herbert's androgynous beauty carries as a common topic of both sides. The men tell stories from the old times of regency and remind themselves about Helen Midhurst's incestuous relationship with her son-in-law, while the women come in the drawing room. Bertie is left only with Lady Midhurst and "the sadist" Mr. Linley who press him to debate over manhood and school floggings. Chapter IV brings more details about life at Ensdon. Randolph Hugues notices that these four chapters cover a period of over 4 years; it is also highly probable that Swinburne imagined a narrative scheme implying Margaret's elopement with Denham after a similar script to that played by Clara Radworth and Reginald Harewood in *Love's Cross-Currents* (Hugues 341).

Chapter V presents us with a Herbert Seyton who is no more a lethargic hermaphrodite, prone to be influenced and activated on either his feminine or masculine side. On the contrary, he behaves like an easy-going young man, a bit touched by his failed academic experience. Gathered in a similar formula for the second time, Margaret Wariston's guests are in the mood for charades and *quid-pro-quo*s. Again, *mutatis mutandis*, they brew a drawing-room play. For the play, Herbert puts on a woman's attire and, dressed like that, he awakens Lesbia Brandon's erotic interest. But once he returns again to his masculine identity, the hero finds out that he cannot become a partner for the famous poetess; the only thing they share in common is their artistic ideals and their sense of failure.

Chapter VI contains a narrative about the Balaklava assault. Margaret's guests appear to be particularly impressed by the story of two lovers (the motif of *Les Noyades* is here obvious) who, tied up tightly, are thrown into the

sea. Chapter VII confirms Herbert Seyton's artistic destiny. More and more sterile, he is haunted by the idea that the perfection of Beauty cannot be caught in words. But is this a way to suggest that the Decadent ideal itself (art for art's sake) should be treated only in terms of artistic behavior and not in terms of artistic production? Indeed, Herbert pursues the sense of Beauty while his feminine counterpart, Lesbia, chases after the beauty of Sense. Seated at Lesbia's feet, the young poet finds out that his lover (also his aesthetic trainer) can neither love a man nor marry:

And now you must take me as I am. If I could love or marry, I am sure I could love and marry you, absurd as people would call it. But I can't. I don't know why at least I don't wholly know. I am made as I am, and God Knows why – I suppose. You quite deserve that I should be fair to you, and truthful. I never felt for anyone what I feel for you, and shall while I live. I do really in a way, so to speak, love you. And you can see by my way of telling you this that I can never by any chance love you otherwise or love you more [...] But you must understand there may be love between us, but must be no more lovemaking. I am not marriageable. Neither you nor I will ever revert to this (99-100).

The following fragments (entitled *Turrus Eburnea*, *Another portrait*, *An Episode*, *La Bohème Dedorée*) catch/offer glimpses of London's social life; the wagtail Leonora Harley, Linley's lover and afterward Herbert's, is described as "a woman too stupid for vice or virtue" (105). Perfectly contrastive to Leonora's figure is Count Attila Mariani's character; he is an old militant of the Italian cause, a revolutionary and an anti-Bonapartist or, in the author's own words "an aristocrat and Republican, virgin and martyr" (108). Knotting together countless contradictions, Mariani exercises a tremendous influence over the young Seyton as the dialogue from chapter XI (*An episode*) illustrates.

This piece makes it clear how Swinburne conceived his own "republican" allegiances. Departing from an integrative and "unionist" paradigm and refusing "the municipality" of historic republics, Swinburne's democratic ideal did not ground on either the power of the many or on the principle of equality. Swinburne's republican ideal represents an average position between the old aristocratic values and the new social order praised by Alexis de Tocqueville in his work on America. Thus the Victorian writer's political thinking directs towards a sort of paradigmatic humanism that is apt to surpass the history's accidents and catastrophes and keep humankind unchanged: "I see not a certain number of men, a given number of years; I see humanity and time" (114). Unfinished, Chapter XIII is left without a title. It focalizes a discussion among three cynical voices; Lady Midhurst, Lady Wariston and Mr. Linley speak about a conflict between art and nature, also put in terms of ideological opposition between "aristocracy" and "democracy":

I fear sometimes that nature is a democrat. Beauty, you see is an exception; and exception means rebellion against a rule, infringement of a law. This is why people who go in for beauty pure and plain – poets and painters and all the tail trash of the arts, besides all men who believe in life – are all born aristocrats on the moral side (119).

Presented as such, these principles can serve as a framework for the following chapter entitled, in de Sade's fashion, *Les malheurs de la vertu*. It is the right moment to unveil "the history" of the odd figures crammed together in Lady Wariston's dwelling. By far the most narrative of them all, this episode presents Denham paying a visit to his former tutor, Mr. Linley. A letter that appears out of the blue is the pretext for unfolding an intricate genetic story, which finally sheds light on the liaisons among all Swinburne's characters. Bertie's ex-tutor and Margaret's ex-lover (Denham) finds out that he is half-brother to the two Seytons. Moreover, he discovers that, soon after she had abandoned Denham, Denham's mother got married to Lord Brandon, which also makes Denham a half-brother to Lesbia. In this moment, Denham's concern is not his previous cruelty (as Bertie's tutor), but the burden of the previous generation's foolishness. From a cruel aggressor he now turns into a victim: "then it struck him that the whole involved story might be a sudden fiction, kindled by wine and lascivious fanciful humour in the labouring brain of this inventive cynic, this great blagueur of private life" (125).

This kind of narrative complications can be considered both an effect of indirect speech but also a typical hoax, in the spirit of critical texts where young Swinburne derived great satisfaction from inventing Decadent authors (Félicien Cossu, Ernest Clouët and suchlike) who could offend the Victorians' prudery (Patras 158).

The overall impression left by the fragment *Via Dolorosa* is that it represents an experiment of narrative and theatrical hybridization. The demonic Margaret Wariston is now the mother of four children. As she chants old Scottish ballads or poems composed by Uncle Herbert, her offspring is magnetized by Margaret's theatrical gesticulation. Served with a mixture of death and cruelty, they are introduced to the melancholic beauty of decomposition and decay:

Her singing rather than her song had fulfilled her threat; before she ended, the boys stood by shuffling, with cheeks that twitched and eyed that blinked, stung by the bitter sweetness of her soft keen voice. She lifted her face and laughed again; as though their tears had the power to dry her own [...] As the fierce fragments rang from her lips, their eyes glittered and their lips moved; now they stood abashed and troubled. The brilliance of her voice and face became stronger at each note; her features assumed a fierce and funereal beauty, her eyes a look of insane and bitter foresight (154-155).

Swinburne seems to be in his best command of dramatic techniques because the episode starts with the separation of two lovers (which is rather imprecise and presumably out of context) and ends with the movie-like scene of Denham's suicide. The intensity can be measured through Margaret's gestures and speech with her children; apparently innocent, many of the mother's utterances have the gravity of choruses from Ancient tragedies.

The chapter coming before the last displays the scene of Lesbia's death. We find out that, after Denham's suicide, the young Herbert Seyton suffers a sort of "inward defeat"; his whole existence is marked by "the shadow of a hopeless hope, the phantom of labor unperformed" (157). Consequently, more than an aggressor, Denham used to be a virile referent, a symbol of manly behavior. Half-sister to the one who committed suicide, Lesbia is the embodiment of the auto-referential work of art that can dispose of both its creator and its worshippers. The refinement of Swinburne's own art in conveying Lesbia's death should be proven by an extended quotation. Following John A. Cassidy's suggestions (Cassidy 85-88), Pascal Aquien affirms that the scene has the greatness of *Traviata's* finale (Aquien 188). I believe that the resemblance with Violetta from *Traviata* can be related only to the atmosphere of contaminating *malaise*. Nonetheless, one can elaborate on this hint and find a richer ground of reflection in the comparison with other androgynous *enchantresses* such as Norma or Turandot.

Addicted to perfumes and opium, Lesbia acts her part with ghostly, slow gestures while her voice sounds almost prophetic. As she lays dying, the poetess feels only the slow decay of flesh: "I'm dying upwards", she says (159). In fact, Lesbia confesses that she experiences agony as an enhancement of vital signs, a form of exceeding vitality. Now reduced to an infantile Bertie whose love should be "sad and pure as a prayer without hope" (160), Herbert becomes the depository of her dream about the old and the new Proserpines. While the beauty of the old goddess used to be nurtured from life itself, the beauty of the new Proserpine comes from lifelessness and stillness. This new goddess – *gravis dum suavis*, as Giorgio Aurispa describes his lover in the novel *Il trionfo della morte* – has no "memory" and no "aspiration", Lesbia being the only one who, among Swinburne's chains of characters, will not be subjected to the endless chain of anamorphosis. The only one who will not be repeated as everybody else:

Then I tried to see Proserpine, and saw her. She stood up to the knees almost in full-blown poppies, single and double. She was not the old Proserpine who comes and goes up and down between Sicily and hell; she had never seen the sun. She was pale and pleased; there was nothing in her like memory or aspiration. The dead element was vital for her (161-162).

Under woman disguise (in order to please his friend in agony), Herbert Seyton agrees to be his sister's surrogate image.

The sacrifice of Bertie's tutor (also, the sacrifice of Margaret's incestuous lover) as well as Lesbia's exit are not instances of moral justice. On the contrary, one must keep an eye on the relationship between Herbert and Margaret, being perfectly aware that Denham and Lesbia (who are half-brothers themselves) represent only collateral victims of this story of mediated love and of indirect discourse. In fact, Margaret and Herbert experience mutual love only through mediators. The intricacy of consanguine relationships – up to a point where the reader feels that all of them are related and lead promiscuous lives – reinforces the aesthetic value of brotherly love.

Through his narrative explorations, Swinburne devised a different way to think the relationship between authoritarian (between complementary partners) and egalitarian love (between equal or identical partners). The Austrian novelist Robert Musil – who, if we give credit to his essays, was quite familiar with Swinburne's works (Musil 218) – developed the same scheme in *The Confusions of Young Törless* as well as in his great project *The Man without Qualities*. For the two novelists who approached the theme of incestuous relationships, this kind of love represents the only scenario where the human being disentangles from its celibate condition and where actual replacement can be conceived.

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“WHEN WILL I BE BLOWN UP?” – WILLIAM FAULKNER’S WRITING WARFARE

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ABSTRACT. “*When Will I Be Blown Up?*” – *William Faulkner’s Writing Warfare.* The American Civil War (1861-1865) is not William Faulkner’s only warfare. The American modern writer remained faithful to his romantic creed that the poet’s mission is to render the innermost human (self)contradictions. Faulkner’s own writing style evinces this endless state of warfare at the back of his mind. It is like him to make us readers doubt our own peace delusions; yet it is like him also to doubt the solemn rhetoric of any “serious” historical warfare. The purpose of my essay is to prove that William Faulkner’s fiction evoking historical warfare can still help us readers out of our mortal fear. By means of his writing art, championing a sound sense of humor as the only hope for spiritual survival, Faulkner’s message is universal and still valid.

Keywords: *mock-heroic, anti-hero, parody, irony, visionary poetic imagination, history as fact and/or fiction, warfare trauma and/or memory.*

REZUMAT. “*Când voi fi aruncat în aer?*” – *Războiul scrierilor lui William Faulkner.* Războiul Civil american (1861-1865) nu este nicidecum singurul război al lui William Faulkner. Scriitorul modern american a rămas credincios convingerii că misiunea poetului este de a reda cele mai adânci contradicții din sufletul omenesc. Însuși stilul literar al lui Faulkner stă mărturie acestei continue stări de asediu din profunzimea minții scriitorului. Este caracteristic pentru el să-și pună cititorii pe gânduri în legătură cu amăgitoarea lor stare de pace; și totuși, la fel de caracteristic pentru el este să pună sub semnul întrebării retorica solemnă a oricărui război istoric „serios.” Scopul eseului meu este de a demonstra că proza literară a lui William Faulkner, evocând diverse momente din războaiele istorice, ne poate încă ajuta pe noi, cititorii lui de azi, să ne învingem teama de moarte. Prin arta sa narativă, arborând un înviorător simț al umorului ca singura speranță de supraviețuire spirituală, mesajul lui Faulkner rămâne universal și valabil.

Cuvinte-cheie: *pseudo-eroism, anti-erou, parodie, ironie, imaginație poetică vizionară, istoria ca fapt și/sau ficțiune, trauma și/sau memoria războiului.*

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Motto: "Our tragedy today is a general and universal physical fear so long sustained by now that we can even bear it. There are no longer problems of the spirit. There is only the question: When will I be blown up? Because of this, the young man or woman writing today has forgotten the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself which alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat."
(William Faulkner's *Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature*²)

The paragraph quoted in the motto above has many key-words and key-phrases, which in the long run have come to represent William Faulkner's *ars poetica*: "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself" is perhaps the best known of them all remembered here. Yet, what strikes me now is Faulkner's *today*: it reads too much like our today, sixty-six years after this solemn speech was uttered. It is his visionary (sense of) *today* which fits into our puzzle now just as well as it used to fit into his puzzle formerly. What was then "the general and universal fear" of the Cold War that had even acquired a feeling of routine has now turned into our everyday living with global terrorism – indeed, "so long sustained that we can even bear it." And thus we seem to share the question "When will I be blown up?" with those mid-twentieth century generations so painfully aware of a relative survival that should never be taken for granted.

The culture of war is essentially embedded into Faulkner's mind as a writer and as a man of his time. There is hardly anything else that he seems to write about – except, perhaps, love. Yet what Faulkner, the artist, fights in this celebrated confession is his younger colleagues yielding to defeat, their surrender to the all too human panic when outward "real" warfare appears as the only literary topic left. This is what makes out of Faulkner's aesthetic plea for "the human heart at conflict with itself" a genuine heroic plea in times of deadly danger.

Therefore, we get in this kaleidoscopic view a threefold vision of warfare: the war outside – i.e. the Cold War threatening most survivors of the Second World War; the war inside the Old South myth – i.e. the American Civil War of 1861 – 1865, haunting the map of Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi and also the mind of its "sole owner and proprietor;" last but not least: "the human heart in conflict with itself" – perhaps the most unflinching kind of warfare. William Faulkner's writing warfare, though perhaps devoid of any hope, still desperately clings to the skeptical lesson of his elders, in fact and/or fiction: "[b]ecause no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools" (*The Sound and the Fury*, "June Second, 1910," 48). William Faulkner gave heroism not a chance but the poet's mission.

² Malcolm Cowley, 723.

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"When will I be blown up?" asks for the same kind of (rhetorically warning) answer as the prophecy: "The past is never dead: it's not even past" (*Requiem for a Nun*, 80). War is never over. And no heroic deeds of honor and valor can compensate in fiction for its horror and clumsy grotesque in fact.

Like no other writer in world literature, William Faulkner can give us a sense of immanence/ imminence of a war neither heroic, nor justified by any kind of logic. The paradox of warfare in Faulkner's diegesis borrows something from the paradox of time – or rather from the way both are rendered there, in Yoknapatawpha. Faulkner dismantles our notion of time and turns it into a surprise. Yet, nostalgia for the past – enhanced by a common sort of conventional fiction – is the most ordinary attitude in storytelling. The Faulknerian shock occurs precisely when the past is recaptured as some raw (diegetic) material – no nostalgia included. No conventional enhancement either. The past is as awkward and ineffable as the present: war is here and now. And may we paraphrase: (Faulkner's) war is never dead; it's not even war.

Faulkner can make us see that political/historical warfare has never been about what it pretended to be: this is where its perversity lies. The Union victory in American Civil War was to ensure above all that there be no secession; the Confederacy institution of slavery was just one aspect of the political rivalry between the highly industrialized North and the agrarian Old South. War proves and solves hardly anything – hence it is utterly pointless. Although African American chattel slavery was abolished, interracial tensions have survived, despite emancipation and Civil Rights movements. And last but not least, war defies reason and logic – hence it is preposterous. Yet it will be carried out in virtue of arguments claiming immunity to both reason and logic.

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In this essay we will resort to a few aspects of two canonical Faulknerian novels: *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *Light in August* (1932) – plus a couple of funny tales which would later become the collection *The Unvanquished* (1938) and which are now part of the *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner* (1979). In all these illustrative fragments war appears to be preposterous, pointless and perverse.

And no touch of gilded kitsch heroism added, war is but one of the daily challenges of precarious human survival. With a precursor like Stephen Crane³, William Faulkner can employ warfare as an allegory of everyday life in times of peace. Not even then is the human heart spared its conflicts with itself.

³ See Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War* (1895), a novella about the ambiguities between courage and cowardice on any allegorical battlefield. Its fine sarcasm and bold satire have earned this little book a safe top rank in the classic American literary canon. Stephen Crane's vision upon the Civil War stems from the very opposite viewpoint, since Henry

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Romanian readers and moviegoers have always regarded Old South stories with affection and sympathy – primarily under the impact of Margaret Mitchell's best-selling novel *Gone with the Wind* (1936) and the Hollywood cult movie (1939) drawn after it, with all-time stars Vivian Leigh, Clark Gable, and Leslie Howard cast in the roles of Scarlett O'Hara – the resilient Old South *belle*; Rhett Butler – the cynical ungentlemanly Old South survivor; and Ashley Wilkes – the weak White aristocratic Southerner defeated by the fratricide war.

And yet, although not nearly as numerous, there have always been enough fans among us for a most unusual Old South book, published in 1936 – the same year as *Gone with the Wind* - and defying all categories and trends, almost impossible to classify theoretically and critically: William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*

It is the book with the first version of William Faulkner's map of Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. The map mentions its absolute master: "William Faulkner, Sole Owner & Proprietor". The map is preceded by the impossible Chronology and Genealogy adding up to this enigmatic multilayered narrative and deepening its meaning and mystery.

The map's legend also provides some census data: "Area, 2400 square miles. Population: Whites, 6298; Negroes, 9313" (*Absalom, Absalom!* 409). This apparent accuracy is highly ironic, of course: not only does it imply that – as long as there is no mention of the (historical or at least fictional) moment – the figures can have hardly any relevance; but it also makes the reader consider the element of surprise in (real or fictive) life: the fact that the two population segments must have bred a third one by miscegenation – thus escaping the chartable realm of abstract figures.

In our country this strange book got first published in 1974. It was translated into Romanian by Mircea Ivănescu, a poet and also one of the acknowledged masters in the trade of high literature translation. This is how I met William Faulkner. I was in my teens, indeed a precocious reader.

Five years before that, in 1969, the Romanian Writers' Union had awarded its annual prize to Sorin Alexandrescu's thorough monographic study *William Faulkner*, one of the best Romanian books of literary criticism and history focusing on a major writer of the twentieth century canon. This

Fleming, its protagonist, is a young soldier of the Union troops, fighting against the Confederate rebels – what matters in Crane's masterpiece rather concerns and confirms William Faulkner's vision of "the human heart at conflict with itself." It is to himself that Crane's Youth must prove to be a hero. And he fails. But his fellow-troopers hardly ever realize that. And so he ends up with "the red badge of courage." Stephen Crane himself had never been on a battlefield, yet his virtuoso strategies of verisimilitude in *The Red Badge of Courage* have remained exemplary for warfare narrative art. Likewise, William Faulkner missed his own chance to military heroism in World War I; yet his gift for empathy has rendered his warfare imagery flawless.

exceptional work has remained a must for any Romanian student of Faulkner's entire artistic achievement.

Three years ago, in 2013, I received a fine gift that honors me. It confirmed my belonging to this unofficial exquisite club of Romanian addicted admirers of William Faulkner: the outstanding essay volume *Ce rămâne: William Faulkner și misterele ținutului Yoknapatawpha*⁴ by Mircea Mihăieș. The author is more than a scholar: a writer himself and – as a university professor – a true Romanian authority in contemporary Faulkner studies. His book was awarded the Romanian Writers' Union prize for 2012.

Thus, beyond all sophisticated American and international Faulknerian exegesis, from Cleanth Brooks to Jay Parini and/or Richard Gray, beyond all the complex cultural studies analyzing his work and his life – I daresay that there is also a Romanian cultural destiny for William Faulkner. His universality and especially his enduring presence in our minds over here cannot be questioned: they can only prove that his vision of the American Old South is, by no means, provincial.

William Faulkner's novels and short stories have appealed and will always appeal to those Romanian readers who are aware of the fact that family (and national) stories require the book plus the map, plus the chronology, plus the genealogy. And the meaning within it all will still stay a mystery.

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In his book, Mircea Mihăieș follows an a-chronological pattern and employs chapter and subchapter titles prompted rather by the writer himself than by the professor. For instance, Chapter "III: Ce rămâne? Blestemul și periferia"⁵ includes a subchapter called "1938: Războaiele necivile"⁶. This segment mainly concerns Faulkner's book *The Unvanquished*, but it also keeps up pace with the ghostly loomings of Thomas Sutpen, even after the story plus the chronology, plus the genealogy, plus the map of *Absalom, Absalom!* were supposed to be over and done with.

What I should like to borrow here from Mircea Mihăieș (if I may) is this particular coinage – the "*Uncivil Wars*." What he means by this in his own approach – so much more than an academic study – is that the American Civil War was carried out on battlefields both visible and invisible; moreover, that it engaged not only men officially fighting as soldiers and officers, but (their) women also, fighting as unofficial rebels. Children – both black and white – were part of the war, too. Often they were orphaned by parents but still relying on some Granny, who could do the odd job of survival for the entire family. Because this family consists of them all, it takes them all: dead or alive, white or black,

⁴ Mircea Mihăieș, *What Will Endure: William Faulkner and the Mysteries of Yoknapatawpha County* – in Romanian in the original (author's translation).

⁵ "III. What Will Endure? Doom and Periphery" – in Romanian in the original (author's translation).

⁶ "1938: The Uncivil Wars" – in Romanian in the original (author's translation).

young or old. They are all wanted in the enduring spirit of the doomed land. And they speak the same language: the drawling English of the defeated; the prim English of the winners; the globalizing English of the readers of their stories – who can (understand and) translate it both ways.

Miss Rosa Millard is the maternal grandmother of Bayard Sartoris. Her daughter has died. Her son in law, John Sartoris, is a Confederate officer. She is the only one adult left in the family mansion, to take care of two boys of the same age: young Bayard, her own grandson, and Ringo, the son of a black slave. *The Unvanquished* tales are told from Bayard's point of view. Miss Rosa Millard has to betray her moral principles and face the challenges of her hallucinating condition. For the two boys' sake, she gets involved into some improbable trade with mules, selling the animals twice and thrice to the Yankees. Yet her unorthodox profit is for a good cause: she gives the money to the community she belongs to, i.e. to the family members left at home by Confederate soldiers and officers. In the American tall tale tradition, Granny somehow always manages to accomplish her task until she gets murdered by Grumby the villain. Then Bayard and Ringo shoot him dead, cut his killing hand and tie it on Granny's gravestone. Poetic justice has been done: two boys have grown up together in insanely hard times.

Therefore, writing and reading about the "*Uncivil Wars*" is still worthwhile: it can take us all miles away from the nagging petty question: "*when will I be blown up?*" Since the "*Uncivil Wars*" can only be about "*the human heart in conflict with itself*" – "*Uncivility*" can only stand here for the survival of the spirit defying death of any kind – whether it would-be military glory or just because of some (natural?) circumstances.

This may remind us of a funny poem written in full swing of that same *(Un)civil War*:

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.
We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility⁷ - (Emily Dickinson, 219)

Whether as a soldier or as a civil(ian) escort on a trip, Mr. Death is but a flirt. *What Will Endure* is within the poet's mind, within the reader's soul; or rather within "*the human heart in conflict with itself*." Q. e. d.

⁷ Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), poem 479/712, "Because I could not stop for Death." According to R. W. Franklin, the poem must have been written in 1862.

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The narrative spider-web of the book plus the chronology, plus the genealogy, plus the map got woven in the same American tall tale tradition, to prove both its force and its vulnerability. The same American Civil War provides the necessary setting for the climax in the crises between Thomas Sutpen and his sons. Fighting together for the same Lost Cause, the failed father and Henry Sutpen, and Charles Bon are brought together for the inevitable confrontation.

The crises of the failed father and his sons stay under the same sign of doom: they are resumed whenever the story is retold; they are irreconcilable:

"Yes," Quentin said. The two children" thinking Yes. Maybe we are both Father. Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds, has fed, did feed, let this second pool contain a different temperature of water, a different molecularity of having seen, felt, remembered, reflect in a different tone the infinite unchanging sky, it doesn't matter: that pebble's watery echo whose fall it did not even see moves across its surface too at the original ripple-space to the old ineradicable rhythm thinking Yes, we are both Father. Or maybe Father and I are both Shreve, maybe it took Father and me both to make Shreve or Shreve and me both to make Father or maybe Thomas Sutpen to make all of us. (Absalom, Absalom! 273)

It is highly significant that William Faulkner chooses this particular instance of Quentin Compson's interior monologue, projected upon the screen of Thomas Sutpen and his sons' formidable story, to affirm again his own authorial vision on his highly poetic narrative art: "maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished." In the Old South spirit of "oratory of solitude" – there is no zero level. No beginning can ever be innocent. The paternal principle itself is an illusion. And as for authority – this is just a matter of point of view. Round the ripple circle, protagonists may play narrators who may play authors who may play.

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No son of Thomas Sutpen can measure up to his daughter Judith when it comes to endurance. Judith Sutpen sums up all the qualities her father had dreamt of for his perfect son: boldness, bravery, determination, endurance. Plus the obstinacy running in the family! Yet, she is just the daughter Thomas Sutpen begot in his lawful marriage to Ellen Coldfield. Other daughters of his were Clytemnestra (Clytie) Sutpen, whose mother was a slave; and last but not least, the nameless baby of Milly Jones, who was Wash Jones's granddaughter. Somehow, it is this nameless baby daughter who has Thomas Sutpen killed: Wash Jones, his faithful orderly in

the Civil War, feels betrayed by his master, who despises the infant girl and her mother. So this inadequate birth means the end of the failed father's life. The Oedipal complex works and is fulfilled by an unnamed baby daughter.

The entire baroque plot of the book is built up on tragic-comic irony. In this narrative labyrinth, (out)rage is the key-mode. And for all the displayed masculine hybris, it is a woman's presence (or even absence) that accomplishes the fatal act. Clytemnestra, the name of Judith's African American sister name, plus its preposterous diminutive – Clytie – will just function as echoes (analepses) and preludes (prolepses) to this doom pattern.

Judith is ineluctably present and absent in Charles Bon's short life. Repudiated by his (and her) failed father for his mother's black blood quotient, Charles Bon makes a final attempt to have Sutpen Sr. acknowledge him as a first born son. The American Civil War is nothing more than a setting here: it provides the opportunity for this fateful confrontation. Not only does the failed father ignore his chance of reconciliation with the denied first son: he makes Henry – his official white son – promise him that Charles shall never marry Judith. And his verdict is not even dictated by the scruple of incest (this would have meant the failed father's acknowledgement of the rejected son): it is dictated by the father's obsessive fear of miscegenation. Therefore, Henry Sutpen will kill Charles Bon, his half brother, on his father's *dark house* threshold. It is a Bakhtinian place: the threshold that must mark this polyphonic narrative plot. No prodigal son(s) welcome.

Judith Sutpen and Charles Bon must live their (twice) forbidden romance despite their failed father, despite their blood that both unites them and separates them; despite all conventions; despite the Civil War, which is no more than the busy screen against which their love story unfolds.

The letter written by Charles Bon to Judith Sutpen adds up to the metafictional standard of the book. As a piece of (lyrical) writing about (literary) writing, Charles's letter to Judith can only tell her (and other unsuspected readers) that "words are no good:" the author's own acknowledgement of failure. William Faulkner had previously put this sentence in the soliloquy of Addie Bundren⁸, another one of his strong feminine protagonists in Yoknapatawpha.

The only letter from Charles that Judith will keep is entrusted by her to Quentin Compson's grandmother, after Charles's death. This is one of the oldest fiction narrative tricks to win over the readers' confidence. The "genuine" (mock) historical document! Yet, here it is: "without date or salutation or signature."

⁸ William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, 1930. Addie Bundren resolves to die after having done her duty for a lifetime – like a good soldier. Though the Bundrens are poor white trash and Addie is just a country schoolteacher, she obviously shares her sense of commitment to her family and her independent passionate personality, with the aristocratic Judith Sutpen. For such strong feminine protagonists, William Faulkner seems to owe a lot to one of his classic American precursors, Nathaniel Hawthorne.

Charles's only surviving letter to Judith, his widowed half-sister, is a masterpiece of literary seduction. Moreover, since it is (allegedly) written by a Southern *belle's* suitor and half-brother with some African American blood in his veins, it displays the classic projection of Africanism⁹ more than half a century before Toni Morrison defined it.

From the rhetorical point of view, this epistolary interlude shows its author's (rather vain) virtuosity. The essential message still remains a mystery – although when such a message has to be conveyed there is no need of ink or of any other conventional substance that may leave a print on paper – or on any other writing support. Instead of ink, the letter writer boasts he was using fresh New England stove polish. (William Faulkner will replace ink again in *The Unvanquished*, when Miss Rosa Millard manages her fraudulent mule-trading and profit distribution book-keeping in hellebore.)

Instead of ordinary paper, the letter writer can ironically only afford a much more luxurious support (*à la guerre comme à la guerre*): "a sheet of notepaper with, as you can see, the best French watermarks dated seventy years ago" – i.e. about the time of the previous grand warfare on American soil, the Revolutionary War of Independence. In those days, note-paper might have come directly from a European country like Revolutionary France, still entertaining some secret hopes of political influence upon the new independent United States of America.

Twice in his letter, Charles Bon emphasizes: "You will notice how I will insult neither of us by claiming this to be a voice from the defeated even, let alone from the dead" (133) and then again: "You will notice how I do not insult you either by saying I have waited long enough. And therefore, since I do not insult you by saying that only I have waited, I do not add, expect me. Because I cannot say when to expect me" (134-135).

Between the two occurrences of the mesmerizing formula "you will notice how I will not insult you/ us, etc." – there comes the blow: "*We have waited long enough*" (134; my emphasis). So that the letter may now conclude meaningfully – yet cryptically, too: "I now believe that you and I are, strangely enough, included among those who are doomed to live" (135-136).

The rest of this would-be enamored Old South soldier's letter from the American Civil War battlefield is a (bragging and self-ironic) digression – more or

⁹ See Toni Morrison's concept of Africanism as postulated in her book *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*: "Rather I use this term for the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people. [...] Through the simple expedient of demonizing and reifying the range of color on a palette, *American Africanism makes it possible to say and not to say, to inscribe and erase, to escape and engage, to act out and act on, to historicize and render timeless. It provides a way of contemplating chaos and civilization, desire and fear, and a mechanism for testing the problems and blessings of freedom.*" (6-7; my emphasis)

less. On the other hand, the main message is metafiction and metaphysics, and metaphor – all the more so since Charles Bon knows that he may probably die – not at all like a hero of the Lost Cause, but like the victim of a crime of passion of his own design.

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No more/less of an anti-hero is Rev. Gail Hightower in *Light in August*. Hightower was in empathy with his grandfather who had lost his life in the Civil War while trying to steal chickens. Ironically, the grandfather was evoked in glorious images by his grandson who would, thus, justify both his professional calling and his personal fate in Jefferson: “God must call me to Jefferson because my life died there, was shot from the saddle of a galloping horse in a Jefferson street one night twenty years before it was ever born” (*Light in August*, 478).

As a senior protagonist in William Faulkner’s fiction, the ghost of Rev. Hightower’s grandfather cannot remain at a safe distance from the Old Colonel William Clark Falkner, the writer’s own paternal great-grandfather, whose statue still guards his memory as a Confederate officer in Ripley, Mississippi, and who died murdered in broad daylight by a political rival. Just like Gail Hightower in his youth, William Faulkner idealized his grandfather all along his boyhood and hoped to become one day as gifted a writer as the Old Colonel, the author of the successful romance *The White Rose of Memphis*.

Yet instead of ensuring the heroic aura, the Lost Cause makes everything debatable. Devotion – whether in warfare or religion – may help replace fact by fiction; so the un-heroic version of the faithful Confederate soldier dying in action has one basic motive, hunger:

You see before the crash, in the abrupt red glare the horses with wide eyes and nostrils in tossing heads, sweatstained; the gleam of metal, the white gaunt faces of living scarecrows who have not eaten all they wanted at one time since they could remember; perhaps some of them had already dismounted, perhaps one or two had already entered the henhouse. All this you see before the crash of the shotgun comes: then blackness again. It was just one shot. ‘And of course he would be right in de way of hit,’ Cinthy said. ‘Stealin’ chickens. A man growed, wid a married son, gone to war whar his business was killin’ Yankees, killed in somebody else’s henhouse wid a han’full of feathers.’ Stealin’ chickens. (484-485)

Hightower had kept this dreadful grotesque secret to himself though he had lost his parishioners and his place in the pulpit just because of his preaching about his invented Confederate heroes instead of saintly issues. His redemption would occur when he hosted and helped Lena Grove in childbirth. This moment is another triumph of fiction over matters of both history and religion. Actually, listening to Byron Bunch’s arguments in favor of supporting the pregnant young woman, Hightower exclaims exasperated: “Ah Byron, Byron.

What a dramatist you would have made" (389) – which sounds like a witty aside granted to us readers by the author himself, under the narrator's mask.

Ironically, Hightower's house also provides the final setting stage for the savage racist execution of Joe Christmas. To the horror of an audience avid for such shows, his lynching and castration are directed and accomplished by Percy Grimm, an over-eager young policeman of Jefferson, a confirmed racist whose fanaticism verges on insanity. Having been born too recently and thus, having missed his chance to becoming a hero in some military action, on the genuine battlefield, Percy Grimm surpasses himself in useless cruelty to his victim. Joe Christmas's ambiguous identity to the end of the book enhances the monstrosity of this super-efficient executioner, a model of devotion to his wasted military calling.

This is what has made literary critics see in Faulkner's odious Percy Grimm a gruesome warfare prophecy at that time (in 1932). Fictive rendering of early twentieth century American racism was just as convincing an anticipation of Nazism and the horrors of Holocaust and World War II already on its way.

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The American Civil War was not at all William Faulkner's only war in fiction. In *Soldier's Pay* (1926) and *A Fable* (1954) World War I had been Faulkner's inspiration. His celebrated *Address upon Receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature uttered in Stockholm on December 10th 1950* remains representative for the mid-twentieth century mood of the Cold War. It will still move us readers of the twenty-first century first two decades who can decode it as a prophecy of our own sense of insecurity in a world at the mercy of terrorism.

The American Civil War was not Faulkner's only war, obviously. But it remains a truthful symbol of (any kind of) warfare trauma never completely overcome by interludes of peace. And moreover, Faulkner's allegorical Civil War renderings can still involve us all in a quest for our conscience – Faulkner's visionary project which he liked to call "the human heart in conflict with itself."

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HYPHENATED IDENTITIES IN CRISTINA GARCÍA'S *DREAMING IN CUBAN AND THE AGÜERO SISTERS*

VERONICA POPESCU¹

ABSTRACT. *Hyphenated Identities in Cristina García's Dreaming in Cuban and The Agüero Sisters.* The two novels analysed here are organically connected by their exploration of the effects of the Cuban Revolution on the families divided by their political allegiances and their experience of that revolution. The present study investigates the author's personal journey towards understanding her own hyphenated identity as a "1.5er" reconciling her own conflicting impulses and cultural identities, using writing as a means to heal herself and others through an on-going interrogation of all aspects that help configure communal and personal identity and exploring their interdependence, in fascinating and intriguing tales of survival and atonement.

Keywords: *Cristina García, Cuban American fiction, hyphenation, identity, trauma, ethnicity, "1.5" generation.*

REZUMAT. *Identități cratimate în romanele Dreaming in Cuban și The Agüero Sisters ale Cristinei García.* Cele două romane analizate aici sunt legate organic prin explorarea efectelor Revoluției Cubaneze asupra familiilor divizate de loialitățile lor politice și modul în care au trecut prin revoluție. Studiul de față investighează călătoria personală a autoarei către definirea propriei identități împărțite ca reprezentantă a generației „1,5”, reconciliind propriile impulsuri și identități culturale conflictuale, folosindu-se de scris ca modalitate de a se vindeca și a-i vindeca și pe alții printr-o interogare continuă a tuturor aspectelor care conturează identitatea personală și pe cea a comunității, explorându-le interdependența, în povești fascinante și provocatoare despre supraviețuire și împăcare.

Cuvinte cheie: *Cristina García, literatura cubanezilor americani, cratimare, identitate, traumă, etnicitate, generația „1,5”.*

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Along with remembered or received memories of Cuba comes
ideological baggage—this too is an inheritance.
(Gustavo Pérez Firmat)

Introduction

Hyphenation, Gustavo Pérez Firmat writes in the Preface to the revised edition of *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way*, “fundamentally ... names a spiritual bilocation, the sense of being in two places at once, or of living in one while residing in another. That one of these places no longer exists only intensifies the desire to inhabit it; the demon of discontinuity must be exorcised.” (xi) Much of Cuban-American literature – at least that written in English by writers Pérez Firmat identifies as “one-and-a-halfers,”² who came to the United States as children and now feel compelled to write about their cultural contradictions – is a literature of double engagement. On the one hand, the children of Cuban-Cubans feel they have a duty towards their parents’ culture, which they experienced in their families through stories and nostalgic recollections, and, on the other hand, to the culture in which they function as adults, the U.S. cultural environment in which their education and professional lives have taken shape. In the particular case of Cuban-Americans, the conflict between these two cultures is further complicated by history and politics more than in the case of any other Latino community, identity being a site of psychic conflict that some attempt to solve through their art.

The Cuban-American diaspora was born primarily as a consequence of political conflict fuelled and reinforced by Cold War ideologies and historical realities. To many, Cuban Americans are people living in relative isolation and self-exclusion as exiles (Schutte 69), in Little Havanas that recreate the pre-revolutionary Cuba they left in 1959 or the early 1960s, idealizing perhaps the Cuban-U.S. relations prior to the Revolution to justify their demonization of the Castro regime – the only reason they had to leave their homeland.³ They are die-hard anti-communists, dreaming of returning to the island as assassins of Fidel Castro and freedom heroes relieving Cubans of a monstrous communist regime. They are Cuban Americans without a hyphen to signal a double allegiance, since they regard their American experience as a temporary situation, an exile that will end as soon as they can return to a liberated Cuba.

² Firmat borrows the term for the Cuban sociologist Rubén Rumbaut (1991), the first one to speak of a “one-and-a-half” or “1.5” generation of immigrants with very specific problems of adaptation and cultural negotiation.

³ For a fine analysis of the first generation of Cuban immigrants and their ideological stance to this day, including their perception of contemporary Cuba, see Guerra (1-17).

This creates, according to Ruth Behar, an environment of intolerance for any other position regarding Cuba and the diasporic subjects' cultural identification, widening the gap between Cubans across the Florida Strait:

Within this conflicting web of representations born in the Cold War, there is little room for a more nuanced and complex vision of how Cubans on the island and the diaspora give meaning to their lives, their identity and their culture in the aftermath of a battle that has split the nation at the root." (Behar 2)

On the other hand, Cubans born in the U.S. to "1.5" generation parents seem more than a half generation (or even one whole generation) apart from their grandparents, as for them Cuba is even less real than for their parents. These ABCs (American-Born Cubans) or CBAs (Cuban-Bred Americans), as Pérez Firmat would call them (4), know Cuba only from the stories they happened to hear growing up or they read in books. They are (and they feel) "Americans through and through" (Pérez Firmat 4), unicultural rather than bicultural, like their grandparents.

The only genuine Cuban-Americans, with a clear hyphen as symbol of biculturalism and a hyphenated identity, are the "1.5"ers, who, through their exposure to both cultures, are in many ways "marginal to both the old and the new worlds, and are fully part of neither of them," as Cuban sociologist Rubén Rumbaut explains (qtd. in Pérez Firmat 3). Trapped in-between cultures they create a third space, the kind of mental space that Gloria Anzaldúa called a *borderland*, in which the dwellers, those with a hyphenated identity, develop a "tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity," they learn to "juggle cultures," operating "in a pluralistic mode," turning "ambivalence into something else." (101) In the process of discovering the polyphony of their inner voices, of finding out exactly how their homeland and their new land shape their identity in a "mixture of confusion, ambiguity, uncertainty, denial, anguish, and/or paradoxical love-hate feelings toward things Cuban (and/or American)" (Rivero 111-12), they also heal an emotional trauma of displacement by learning to cope with the inherited nostalgia for the homeland that prevents them from acculturating or transculturating completely.

The recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Whiting Writers' Award, among other honors, Cristina García is one of the major authors of the Cubana Boom (Rivero 2009), displaying the same kind of hybrid sensibility as many of her Latina contemporaries and the authors following in her footsteps, among whom Achy Obejas, Andrea O'Reilly Herrera or Ana Menéndez, to name just a few of the Cuban-American authors published by major commercial presses. Like other ethnic writers, she too started by writing about what she knew, her experience as a "one-and-a-halfer," in an attempt to retrieve her

family memories and understand their significance for her own life, tied as they were with fine yet strong webs of cultural information and nostalgia, doubled by her own understanding of her heritage and the homeland. Unlike other Cubans living in the United States, however, she has always rejected the exceptionalism of the Cuban diaspora, the self-exclusion from a national (North American), integrationalist binding and the rhetoric of exile, choosing instead to feel and think of Cuban-American identity in terms closer to Pérez Firmat's as a hyphenated one, a site of negotiation and complex processes of (self)interrogation and (self)assessment in relational terms. For Cristina García, therefore, the hyphen becomes a metaphor for identity-in-the-making, which she explores in her fiction by going beyond national borders and the temporal limitations of the present aware of the fact that if she is to understand who she is, as a woman, a Cubana, a North American, a "one-and-a-half," a kin to her relatives in the U.S. and in Cuba, a Latina, a dislocated being and a bicultural, bilingual person, she has to delve deeply into the history and the culture of her people – on the island and in the U.S. That is exactly what she does in her first three novels *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), *The Agüero Sisters* (1997) and *Monkey Hunting* (2003), a trilogy of sorts in which the novelist attempts a mapping out of the complex web of emotional and physical wounds – of the island, of its people, which has provoked a national trauma affecting Cubans on either side of the Florida Strait.

When asked to comment on the title of *Dreaming in Cuban*, the author replied that "because it's a book written by a hyphenated-American as opposed to a Cuban-Cuban, a lot of it is a sort of projection and dream and distortion," (García 2003) openly acknowledging that the fabric of her fiction operates in the realm of psychic and emotional reality, where knowledge and understanding are only available to those open to alternative forms of experiencing reality, mostly magical and supernatural. In García's first two novels "women's dreams," Ruth Behar notes, "begin to heal the wounds of the divided nation" (12), building bridges of communication, mutual understanding, forgiveness and acceptance, healing and transformation.

***Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and the Cuban Revolution – A Transgenerational Saga**

Dreaming in Cuban (1992) focuses on the destinies of the members of the del Pino family, some living on the island, the others in New York, being a transgenerational saga covering a period of twenty years before and twenty after the Cuban Revolution – a character in its own right it would seem. This is, in many respects, the most autobiographical of her novels and the text that comes closest to a favourite genre within the relatively young tradition of ethnic literature, the (fictional) autobiography. "The writing of autobiography"

writes Paul John Eakin “emerges as a second acquisition of language, a second coming into being of self, a self-conscious selfconsciousness.” (18) It is a young author’s claim for an artistic as well as an ethnic identity through writing her own experience of being enmeshed in two cultures: the one in which she grew up (Brooklyn, New York) and the culture that her parents brought with them from a tropical island that she cannot remember.

On more than one occasion García has described her childhood as “bifurcated,” hyphenated. Growing up in Brooklyn, surrounded by a white culture, she only experienced her Cubanidad at home, where her mother, fully aware of the connection between language and culture, insisted on her learning Spanish. Gradually, García confesses to Irraida H. Lopez, her sense of Cuban identity, a “family affair,” became “very important,” particularly after her visit to the island in 1984 (García 102, 104). She soon became aware of the impact of historical events on the lives of individuals and communities, including the lives of her own family, divided by the Revolution into exiles and struggling islanders, the former anti-Castro activists, the latter people who did not or would not leave Cuba. Her life as a reporter brought her in contact with many Cuban exiles particularly while working for the *Times* in Miami, and she was soon to understand that cultural identity was a more complicated aspect of her and their life than she had imagined. And that is how her journey into the past – her family’s, her homeland’s – began with a jump in history to the moment when, at least for most Miami Cubans, it all began: the Revolution.

Dreaming in Cuban focuses on the politics of Castro’s regime as seen through the relationship between a mother, daughter and granddaughter (Celia, Lourdes and Pilar, respectively) across generational and geographical lines. Here, like in many Cuban families, divergent political views and life choices induce separation, miscommunication, and broken emotional ties, to the point that the people who stayed and those who left seem to be living in mutually exclusive worlds. As if to reflect the separation existing between members of the same family, the novel takes the form of interweaving third person and first person narratives, with epistolary interludes belonging to Celia, that record the history of the del Pino family, before and after the fateful victory of the Revolution. The only uniting presence is that of granddaughter Pilar Puente – an interesting name considering its reference to bridges as carrying across (translating, Pérez Firmat would say) and also uniting – who emerges as the central consciousness of the novel, and whose task is to restore all lost connections. Through reconciliation and an understanding of her family history, she will also get a grasp of how her own identity and sense of belonging are linked to her Cuban cultural heritage.

It is with Pilar that the author identifies the most. Like García, she is the daughter of exiles, a kind of “skeptical punk who dabbles in art and Santería.”

(Alvarez-Borland 137) She has a tense relationship with her mother and a deep longing for her grandmother, from whom she was separated in infancy. For García Cuba is a mental construction, a fiction that she pieced together from the stories of her family members, whose recollections of their homeland serve as temporary suspensions of reality in bouts of nostalgia. Pilar, on the other hand, has more than imagination to rely on: "I was only two when I left Cuba but I remember everything that's happened to me since I was a baby, even word-for-word conversations." (*Dreaming in Cuban* 27) Yet she is aware that for everyone else memory is a great deceiver and it rewrites history appropriating it, using it as a means to either reduce the past to that one event that marked the separation from the homeland (as Lourdes did), or to idealise it by association with a lifestyle or a happiness long gone. She writes in her diary:

I resent the hell out of the politicians and the generals who force events on us that structure our lives, that dictate the memories we'll have when we're old. Every day Cuba fades a little inside me, my grandmother fades a little more inside me. There is only our imagination where our history should be. (*Dreaming in Cuban* 138).

Pilar is ready to fall prey to her imagination, the faculty that turns her childhood memories and the telepathic messages from Abuela Celia into an idealised picture of Cuba, a safe haven for a confused teenager. "Even though I've been living in Brooklyn all my life," she writes "it doesn't feel like home to me. I'm not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out. If I could only see Abuela Celia again, I'd know where I belonged" (*Dreaming in Cuban* 18).

The mother and daughter's return to Cuba is a necessary act of healing for Lourdes and of self-knowledge for Pilar. Though unimaginable for a long time, Lourdes' return to the island becomes possible only as her daughter reaches a level of maturity that enables her to really see her mother and connect with her. Though the first step toward reconciliation is made by Lourdes, who defends her daughter in public after Pilar humiliated her with an offensive punk mural in the new Yankee Doodle bakery Lourdes has just opened, Pilar meets her halfway by understanding that her mother's defence is an act of love. The connection between the two women will be strengthened after Pilar's initiation in Santería in a New York botánica, a ritual that reconnects Pilar to a Cuban form of spirituality without which her journey back could not be complete.

A character modelled after the kind of Cuban exile for whom post-Revolution Cuba is an open wound, a constant reminder of the reason why exile was the only option, Lourdes associates Cuba with pain, suffering, humiliation and inhumanity, with a loveless mother whose allegiance to Castro she cannot comprehend, and with the brutality of her own people. In the early days of the

Revolution Lourdes was raped as a punishment for defiance and her pointless refusal to accept the revolutionaries' authority and power. The last memory she has of Cuba is as a place of chaos and of violence, where nothing makes more sense than the unintelligible scratches made by the rapists on her skin, signs and symbols of her emotional trauma. Two months later, as she and her husband were driving up north of Miami, getting away from anything that might remind her of Cuba and her life there, she could only think of getting as far away as possible from the island. "This is cold enough" she said as they reached New York, her new home where she can reinvent herself through acculturation. Unlike many Cubans of her generation, this woman is not an exile but an American-in-the-making, rejecting her homeland, her culture, her Cubanidad, reinventing herself as citizen of this new country. The narrator comments:

Lourdes considers herself lucky. Immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful. Unlike her husband, she welcomes her adopted language, its possibilities for reinvention. She wants no part of Cuba, no part of its wretched carnival floats cracking with lies, no part of Cuba at all, which Lourdes claims never possessed her" (73).

She joins the local auxiliary police forces and fights crime in her spare time from the Yankee Doodle bakery – her business and her pride. She will go to great lengths to become the most typical American citizen possible, everything that her mother and her daughter despise and reject; the former because of her political convictions and socialist ideology, the latter because she is a punk and a rebellious teenager, more attuned to her father's nostalgia of Cuba than her mother's love of the cold New York. Pilar comments sarcastically that:

Mom makes food only people in Ohio eat, like Jelly-O molds with miniature marshmallows or recipes she clips from Family circle. And she barbecues anything she can get her hands on. Then we sit around behind the warehouse and stare at each other with nothing to say. Like this is it? ... We're living the American Dream? (137)

What Pilar ignores is that her mother's Cuban wounds go deeper than the Revolution. Lourdes communicates with her dead father the way Abuela Celia did with her granddaughter, and in these talks we learn of Lourdes' original and deepest wound, inflicted on her by Celia when she first held her. As Lourdes is flying into Miami at some point, the ocean takes her back to the day she was born:

Lourdes could smell the air before she breathed it, the air of her mother's ocean nearby. She imagined herself alone and shriveled in her mother's womb, envisioned the first days in her mother's unyielding arms. Her

mother's fingers were stiff and splayed as spoons, her milk a tasteless gray. Her mother stared at her with eyes collapsed of expectation. If it's true that babies learn love from their mothers' voices, then this is what Lourdes heard: "I will not remember her name." (74)

Emotionally maimed by her own mother, Lourdes is incapable of relating to either Celia or her own daughter. She had no one to teach her what it means to be a mother, to offer love and care as only a mother can. And neither had Celia, orphaned from an early age and mistreated by the two men in her life who should have treated her kindly.

Not much is said about her relationship with her other two children, daughter Felicia and son Javier except that her communication with them is cold and professional, in the spirit of the Revolution, to which she dedicates all her energy. She is proud of Javier, who embraced her cause from an early age, moving to Czechoslovakia to bring his contribution to the strengthening of the communist block against the U.S. Yet she cannot understand or control her other daughter, Felicia, a misfit in the new social order, who slides into madness and takes refuge in Santería. She is a symbol of old Cuban values, everything that the Revolution set out to destroy because it did not fit the new norms or ideology. She suffers from amnesia – a mirroring of a national amnesia that seems to have stopped time and history in a continuous present of the Revolution, one that is in progress without really moving anywhere – and then fades away silently into an “emptiness without history or future.” (*Dreaming in Cuban* 187) Subjected to physical and psychological violence in educational camps, Felicia eventually disappears during a Santería ritual – the symbol of spiritual resistance *par excellence* in pre- and post-revolutionary Cuba. Felicia's three children, daughters Luz and Milagro and son Ivanito, are a new generation of Cubans for whom the future is yet to be written. The girls are more Celia's daughters, products of Fidel Castro's regime. As embodiments of Cuba's socialist future, they reject their own mother because she represents the wild, untamed Cuba which cannot be subdued or controlled. Ivanito's soul is not corrupted yet like his sisters', and Lourdes decides to offer him a future in the United States. Ivanito's rescue, her understanding that Cuba has also been scarred – by poverty and dictatorship – seeing her mother old and weak, reaching out for a connection with her granddaughter Pilar, Celia's death and her own daughter's understanding that her home is in New York, with her, all have a role to play in Lourdes' healing and her finding a kind of inner peace that she had denied herself all these years.

Celia's death at the end of the novel is thus a necessary stage in the psychological-emotional journey of both Lourdes and Pilar. Through their special connection, Pilar will carry with her into the future and into her life a history that her grandmother has written in the form of letters and that she

has telepathically transmitted to her after their separation. In the last letter written by Celia to her great love Gustavo, a letter which concludes the novel, Celia writes: "The revolution is eleven days old. My granddaughter, Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today ... I will no longer write to you, mi amor. She will remember everything." (245) Pilar becomes thus the recipient of a valuable historical baggage – one that unifies personal, family history and the history of the nation – which she understands as part of the fabric of her own life story and, therefore, of her own identity. Not that she can totally grasp its significance. Yet.

Failure to fully see through the complicated web of familial, cultural and historical ties is perfectly understandable. Pilar is "the bicultural character at the crossroads" (Kevane 97), frustrated by her realization that she has misremembered Cuba and misunderstood her own connection with the island for so long. By identifying Cuba with her own grandmother, she has simply reduced it to a set of positive features associated with images of happiness and safety. The reality, however, takes her by surprise. Celia represents a Revolutionary Cuba that has become old and obsolete in the 1980s. The dire poverty in which people live and the empty propaganda of the Castro regime, García seems to say, have weakened people's belief in the Revolution and the bright future ahead. Celia's cancer is symbolic of the weakness of the Castro regime after too many years of waiting for the Revolution to be complete. From the outside, Cuba is just like Celia: a weak, scarred old woman, abandoned by her own children. Celia's tragedy is that she had abandoned her family first in favour of her political and social causes, and now, at the end of her life, all her legacy consists of a few letters and a granddaughter's subjective memory of what Celia has told her. Celia's disappearance into the blue sea of the island is a symbolic acceptance of failure and a final identification with her homeland. This is how her granddaughter will choose to remember her, against a sea of blues, more than she could have possibly imagined. Her story, the story of a Cuban-American's experience of Cuba, will be told by Pilar in a language of her own choosing, neither English nor Spanish, but her own "hyphen - language" of lines, volumes, colours and textures – the language of art.

Having learned to love Cuba for its magic and beauty, Pilar is ready to love herself more and to allow Lourdes into her life. Rocio Davis points out that Pilar's trip to Cuba makes her understand that "she belongs to a family as well as to Cuban history and culture. This discovery enables her to decipher the master codes of her increasingly complex subjectivity, allowing her to signify on her own, yet within the network of women of which she forms an inextricable part." (61) She has to allow her mother's special kind of Cubanidad to be part of her identity because it represents a side of the hyphen that she must acknowledge, just as her grandmother represents the other side. Pilar's

experience of beautiful Cuban nature, of Spanish, of Abuela Celia in her world of wonderful blues and her stories of the past, of the sharp contrast between her grandmother's image of the country's future and the facts of the real Cuba make her understand what her longing for a half-remembered island prevented her from understanding before: "sooner or later I'd have to return to New York. I know now it's where I belong – not *instead* of here, but *more* than here." (*Dreaming in Cuban* 236) With these final words Pilar begins a new stage in her identity-formation, incorporating her American and her Cuban identities in a new fashion which is entirely her own.

Reconciliation and Healing in *The Agüero Sisters* (1997)

If in *Dreaming in Cuban* it is the Revolution and the Castro regime that are the primary causes of the sharp division between the Cuban diaspora and the island – with historical traumas becoming personal physical, emotional and psychological traumas – in García's second novel it is the Spanish-American War of 1898 and the subsequent military and economic presence of the U.S. on the island that trigger chaos, conflict and the destruction of family ties, with consequences well into the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, if in the former novel Cuba appears as an old woman, with visible signs of a former beauty counterpointed by signs of decay, disease and poverty, in the latter Cuba is represented as a mysterious young woman with an irresistible charm, a natural beauty that mesmerises and subdues yet seems to be an agent of self-destruction at the same time, especially in the context of patriarchal (understood here also as colonial) oppression.

As in the previous novel, the narrative voices in *The Agüero Sisters* alternate, making the story polyphonic and the perspective multiple, capturing the complexity of cultural and family experience. Thus the third person limited narrative of the novel is occasionally interrupted by the first person narratives of grandfather Ignacio and granddaughter Dulcita, the former covering the decades when the island was still under U.S. control, and the latter describing a poverty-stricken, hopeless and desolate island from which the lucky few manage to escape. The story follows the lives of Reina and Constancia, the two Agüero sisters whose destinies were marred by a terrible family secret which has kept them apart for most of their lives, showing how the two were finally reunited on U.S. soil, where a long process of self-discovery begins, culminating with the discovery of the truth about their mother's death. The novel begins and ends in the Zapata Swamp on 8 September 1948, with an account of the occurrence that was to mark the destinies of all three survivors of the Agüero family. The only difference between the Prologue and the Coda is one of

perspective: the former is a third person narrative of how Ignacio shot his wife in the swamp; the latter is a confession of murder which Ignacio pens in his diary, a necessary yet incomplete explanation for his daughters to understand their family history. What makes the novel remarkable is the allegorical form that García gives to her tale of Cuba's turn-of-the-century natural and economic history through a masterful weaving of historical detail, of Santería symbolism and magical realism of the finest quality which work together to tell a story of suffering, victimization, confusion, atonement and healing that, once again, begins in Cuba and follows the characters into their adoptive country, where their lives acquire their true meaning only after the past is unveiled and understood. Once again, it is through the fictional exploration of the destinies of three women empowered by self-knowledge and self-understanding that the novelist works her way closer towards finding answers to her own questions about the intricacies of cultural identity, and the answer suggested here is that, apart from the knowledge one gains from a scrutiny of one's own family history and the relations it forges among its members, the picture is never complete without the history of the homeland – complicated as it may be by foreign influences – with which individual destinies are inextricably linked.

Constancia and Reina Agüero are half sisters sharing a mother and a problematic history of family relations. Born three years apart and not sharing the same biological father, the two girls lead separate lives before their mother's death and share only a few years in a boarding school together, a period in which Constancia, the elder sister, does everything in her power to ignore Reina's existence, just as Blanca Agüero had done to her after Reina's birth. The exodus of the rich Cubans in the first two years of the Castro regime takes Constancia and her second husband, with their baby girl Isabel, to New York, a place that suits her quite well, though she does not share Lourdes' enthusiasm for cold weather and everything that is American. Like Lourdes, however, she becomes financially independent from her husband. Constancia displays a Puritan attitude to life and work: she is very correct in appearance and speech, she is very hard-working and precise, with "a low threshold for disorder" and an obsession with old age, accentuated by her working for a cosmetics company. Underneath this controlled appearance and demeanour lies the wounded soul of a girl rejected by her own mother, cast from her family's home at the age of three and then abandoned by her first husband Gonzalo, whom she loved with a passion that was out of the ordinary. Like Lourdes in *Dreaming in Cuban*, Constancia paid dear a price to be able to leave Cuba with her family: her son Silvestre, shipped hastily in 1961 to a boarding school in the U.S. so as not to be sent to Ukraine by Castro's government, becomes deaf and is convinced that his mother abandoned him as his birth father had before her.

Her life in New York is well organized and her homesickness kept repressed. When she and her husband Heberto retire in the Miami area, the past is suddenly revived for both. 51 and experiencing the first symptoms of menopause, she now has her senses awakened by the smells and flavours of native Cuba and the memory of her first husband returns with a passion that has diminished only very little in time. She will have to overcome her ambivalent feelings for Gonzalo and the memories of her suffering in childhood and as a young wife, feeling a foreigner among the other Cubans. Heberto will embrace the cause of Miami Cuban exiles planning a new attack on Cuba, losing his life heroically as he wished he had done thirty years before.

The opposite of her sister in appearance and character, Reina is an independent, strong, sensual mulata working as an electrician, a kind of “amazonic superwoman” (Alvarez-Borland 143). Often on the road doing the hardest jobs with the confidence of a professional in full control of her hands, not afraid of anything, but most of all not afraid of death, Reina has a powerful effect on all the men she meets, mesmerising them with her scent and her body rhythms. Pepín, her lover of over two decades, has never stopped adoring her and dreaming of her during the day, yet their love stays an illicit one for Reina is untamed as nature itself. When she was sixteen, she fell deeply in love with the revolutionary hero José Luís Fuerte and together they had a daughter, Dulcita. A rebellious teenager, Dulcita is forced to practice prostitution to get by in the early 1990s, and she manages to escape Cuba one day accompanying one of her Spanish clients to Madrid. The strained relation between mother and daughter is caused primarily by the mother’s early separation from her daughter, whom she sent to a boarding school as her own father had done with her. Their communication is only superficial, Reina being partially disconnected from the harsh realities of life with all the gifts she receives from Pepín. Her daughter’s desperate measures to insure a decent life for herself go almost unnoticed, and so does the failure of the Revolution. Until one day she is struck by lightning while working on a difficult electrical job, her skin being almost entirely burned out and her special scent gone forever. It is now that she opens her eyes to the reality of her nation, ironically afflicted by a new and mysterious disease that makes Cubans blind – not a very subtle allusion to some Cubans’ refusal to acknowledge the dire consequences of their country’s self-isolating foreign policies – and she realises that the new Reina – whose skin incorporates skin grafts of her daughter, her lover and several other people – can no longer remain in Cuba. Without fully understanding it, she is irresistibly drawn to her sister, the one person in her life that can help her make sense of the past and perhaps of the present.

In spite of their remarkable differences, the sisters are both victims of traumatic events which begin in childhood, continue in their early youth and mar their adult lives as well. Their lives, Isabel Alvarez-Borland writes, “are filled

with coincidences, strange happenings and omens,” and they will only find guidance and help for healing their inner wounds through Santería rituals (143). The memory of Ignacio, as recorded in his confessions, serves as a connector of destinies and a tool for the sisters’ interpretation of past lives and present consequences. Unhappiness in the family goes all the way back to the sisters’ grandparents, who seem to have been brought together by fate, without ever being happy together. His father, a Spaniard in exile, yearned for his native land all his life, whereas his mother, a woman with an unhappy past, could never get over the death of her first child, a daughter she had had as an unmarried woman. Ignacio's birthday on October 4, 1904 is associated was to be associated not only with the parade and the president’s visit to Pinar del Rio, but also with an evil omen: an owl stole his blood-dripping placenta and flew over the parade, making everybody fear the worst. And this is how personal and communal history interweave: Ignacio’s birth is also the beginning of a controversial period in the history of Cuba as a supposedly independent nation, the five decades of unofficial U.S. control of the island’s politics and economy affecting not only the natural balance on the island through massive deforestation and its immediate consequences, but also the lives of millions whom the Revolution engaged to free the island of its economic colonisers.

Much of Ignacio’s text – interrupting the sisters’ story of reunion and restoration of the past like flashes of memory – is dedicated to describing the transformations suffered by the island in the 50 years before Castro’s army took control of the island and restored it to the Cubans. Even the story of his marriage to Blanca Mestre and their life together can be seen as related to that evolution of events – an allegory of Cuba’s history. In a 2007 interview Cristina García confirmed that she wanted to write about the geopolitical transformations of her parents’ homeland as the U.S. investors took hold of more and more land and civilised it, a traumatic experience for the island, which ended in political, economic and cultural exile, all consequences of The Spanish American war of 1898 and the Platt Amendment in 1904. “The more Cuba ‘developed,’ the more unnatural it became. The political and social alliance with the United States really meant the denaturalization of Cuba.” (178, 1789) To make this reality of Cuba’s history and integral part of her story, García writes Blanca Mestre’s character as undistinguishable from Cuba, the island as a very beautiful, mysterious, an untamed being with a life that seems to run parallel to everybody else’s and the embodiment of the natural:

There was something about her presence – quiet, luminescent, distracted – that stirred people, although it did not induce them to come close to her. Her gifts had nothing to do with her intelligence, which she displayed in impressive abundance, but were born of qualities much less tangible. Instinct.

Intuition. An uncanny sense for the aberrational. ... she seemed to have an odd, mimetic gift for inanimate substances. When she worked with sulfur, for example, her normally green eyes took on a yellowish tinge. If an experiment called for phosphorus, she vibrated with its unearthly glow. And ordinary lead made her appear heavy and malleable and gray. It was as if matter spoke to Blanca directly, revealed to her its secrets. (*The Agüero Sisters* 182-3)

Following Lydia Cabrera's demonstration of the strategies for the integration of Santería oricha gods and goddesses into the religious practices of Christians in Cuba and the multiple paths or hypostases of the Yemayá and Ochún/Oshún gods, Amparo Marmolejo-McWatt makes a compelling demonstration of the hypothesis that, in this novel, Blanca represents Cuba by being the embodiment of various paths of the goddess Ochún/Oshún, the oricha goddess of love and honey, but also an Afro-Cuban Venus-like figure and a symbol of Cubanidad, associated in Cuban culture with Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre, the Patron Saint of the country. She writes: "Santería in this novel offers a supernatural means of resolving the tensions between characters, particularly between the two sisters, and thereby suggesting a source for the reconciliation and healing of the Cuban society as a whole." (Marmolejo-McWatt 90). By discovering their mother through their father's account of their life together – a discovery prompted by a santero, who tells Constancia to return to Cuba on a quest for her father's confession - the two sisters discover a Cuba that they carry within their DNA and their affective memory, and it is only after they understand how they are connected to their mother/island that they can break the chain of victimization across generations and take full control of their future.

Everything we find out about Blanca is significant for our reading of her character as a mirroring of the goddess Ochún/Oshún. She is "the repository of many behaviours" (Marmolejo-McWatt 93), beginning with her personification of sensuality and love, the "independent mulata that no one can resist" (90), a healer who uses herbs and natural substances (91), a bad mother (93) and the owner of fresh waters, the lover of the god of fire, Changó (96), a beautiful deity sometimes called the Holy-goddess-whore (99). Blanca appears to be everything that the goddess she represents is. She is a very beautiful, mysterious woman Ignacio and many other men find irresistible though not one of them, not even Ignacio can say he possesses her. She has a solid knowledge of the curative powers of plants and natural substances, and she lives in perfect harmony with her environment. She always makes love to her husband in fresh water, which is where she conceives her first daughter, Constancia. Not long after getting pregnant she claims more and more independence from Ignacio, threatening to leave him and work for other researchers if he will not pay her for her work. Her nature cannot be tamed, he soon realises, but there is nothing to be done. When Constancia is barely five

months old, Blanca disappears and returns three years later, pregnant and bearing the signs of serious physical violence. Without any explanation, she moves into the guest room until she gives birth to Reina, a mulata, whom she feels the need to protect from her sister's jealousy, sending Constancia to a boarding school, where she never visits her. Much of the story of this family is imbued with elements of the supernatural, which is unsurprising if we read Blanca's story as reflecting an Afro-Cuban spirituality, in which, according to Eugenio Matibag, "the natural and the supernatural, the human and the divine, the temporal and the eternal interact and communicate normally" (qtd. in Marmolejo-McWatt 95).

Blanca and Cuba are connected not only through Afro-Cuban spirituality, but also through a series of historical and geographical elements that are revealed one by one in the story. Blanca as Cuba's unspoiled, wild nature is variously evoked through descriptions of Blanca with reference to or in connection with the rare birds that her husband is observing and scientifically analysing. Blanca is shot by her husband when he pretends to aim a bee hummingbird of exceptional beauty, and the painful pleasure he feels holding his wife's lifeless body is that of a collector who is finally in possession of an aspired trophy. As an ornithologist he kills in order to study and preserve. This is how Cristina García explains to Ylce Irrizary his shooting Blanca in a period of relative tranquillity in their relationship: "I think that in him we sense the need to kill something, to murder something, to be able to hold it in your hands and gaze at it at your own leisure in order to be able to understand it." (182) What is more, by writing about it all Ignacio writes his own fiction of Cuba; Blanca (from the English "blank") is "a blank narrative that he can write, that he must write" (183), just as he fills a blank space in the natural history of the island.

Of the two sisters, Reina is the one who most resembles her mother in her physical strength and her life force. Having left the island that would not let her sleep, she is cured of her chronic insomnia, begins a new life and becomes financially independent and, at the end of the novel, she is more sexually vibrant than ever, thrilled to realise that there is a new life growing inside her. Through this pregnancy, Reina will symbolically reconnect with her mother; the unborn child she feels in her womb is described as a hummingbird, recalling Blanca's association with that bird, which Reina feels "fluttering in its net of blood, fluttering its steady work toward eternity." (*The Agüero Sisters* 294) At peace with herself and her past now, Reina carries her Cubanidad as a prize into her new life in North America.

Less comforted by her discovery of the truth about her father, Constancia is, at the end of the novel, more at peace with her mother than she had ever been. Still suffering from the trauma of having been abandoned by her, Constancia at least knows that Blanca did not know how to be a good

mother to her daughters, though she did try to be a mother to Reina. A mulata of Haitian origin, Blanca's mother had died in a stampede at the pig farm, her mutilated body being deposited on the porch, right where little Blanca was playing. The only intact parts of the body were her mother's hands, and though Ignacio's story is not explicit, we understand that Blanca is carrying with her a little bone from her mother's wrist, a legacy that Constancia will retrieve from the Mestre ranch together with her father's diary (together with her father's diary, in a symbolic reconciliation with both) on her return to Cuba at the end of the novel.

Constancia has always had ambivalent feelings for her mother. After hating her for almost fifty years for having rejected her and (she thinks) for committing suicide, depriving her of the motherly love and female bonding that she has always missed, she wakes up one morning after a premonitory dream to discover that her face is now her mother's face and her body is as full of energy as her 34-year-old mother's body would have been. Caught in a strange relationship with Blanca's face her mother's face, now her own, Constancia slowly develops a curiosity for things that are even indirectly connected with her mother. She launches her own line of facial cream *Cuerpo de Cuba*, little blue bottles (reminding us of Pilar's fascination with Cuba's shades of blue) with Blanca's her mother's (now her own) face on the label. She wants to launch a full range of face and body products for every part of Cuban womanhood: *Cuello de Cuba*, *Senos de Cuba*, *Codos de Cuba*, *Muslos de Cuba* and so on, a glorification of female beauty and sensuality that recalls the influence of *Ochún/Oshún* on Cuban women, teaching them to celebrate their beauty and use the elements of nature to enhance it. She even has a catch line for each, exploiting the positive image Cuban women already have of themselves: as passionate, self-sacrificing, and deserving of every luxury. Constancia's way of coping with her painful past is both scientific, pragmatic and economically viable, using her mother's face and the natural ingredients of the tropics as incentives for purchase. Blanca's face on the bottle and in Constancia's reflection in the mirror becomes a metaphor for Cuba's presence in this Cuban-American's life, an aspect of her identity she tried to ignore, believing it disappeared at the same time her mother did.

Through all the associations with various aspects of Cuba that Blanca evokes, natural, spiritual, magical, mystical, Constancia will finally be able to reconnect with her country and culture though living outside Cuba, but, equally important, she will be able to reach out to a sister she could not understand or love until now, for the same reason that she considers her an important part of her life: her Cubanidad as revealed in the multiple ways in which she brings Blanca's legacy into Constancia's life.

Conclusion

Both *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Agüero Sisters* interrogate the complex working of past wounds in present minds and souls through the agency of memory, imagination and nostalgia. A divided nation has no other choice but create a literature of the hyphen, a body of texts attempting to bring together the multiplicity of voices that stand on each side of the hyphen, for the answer, as García knows only too well, cannot be reduced to traditional binary pairs. A hyphenated existence as her own has guided Cristina García, as exemplified here, towards a more profound analysis of the various aspects that come into play in identity formation as a process that involves more than a culture and at least two types of history: personal (including the histories of one's family) and communal, involving various aspects of a country's political, social, economic and cultural systems.

The two novels share the author's concern with traumas of displacement, physical and emotional wounds that take too long in healing, a nostalgia for a former self and a homeland that are now beyond reach, reconstructed as they are by the characters' memories and fragile and unstable as only recollections and dreams can be. What makes their stories so compelling and so enchanting is the stream of magical realism of Kafka, Borges, García Marquez, Carpentier or Anaya, so "natural" in the literature of the Americas, pervading the stories of exotic lands – half remembered and half imagined – where intriguing or charismatic characters undergo profound transformations, have unexpected epiphanies and confront a past that always catches up with them. One of García's greatest merits, apart from the poetry and flowing rhythms of her prose, is the fact that she goes beyond the obvious and tries to define the hyphenated identity of Cuban-Americans on in her own terms, bridging souls, cultures, languages, experiences of the world, histories in a fiction that shares with its Latin American sources an interest in revealing the magical in the reality of her fictional worlds.

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REVERSING ABSENCE. THE EXPLORATIONS OF MEMORY IN *THE YELLOW BIRDS* BY KEVIN POWERS

AMELIA PRECUP¹

ABSTRACT. *Reversing absence. The Exploration of Memory in The Yellow Birds by Kevin Powers.* *The Yellow Birds* has been acclaimed as one of the best contemporary novels on war. It builds on the recollections of John Bartle, a soldier who strives to cope with the death of Murph, his comrade-in-arms, by revisiting episodes that took place during deployment and by probing his own level of culpability, of moral and psychological weariness, after the return home. Remembrance is central to the narrative, and therefore the main concern of this paper is to look into the multifaceted exploration of memory as a means of creating a space for reconciliation with the past and of coming to terms with traumatic events.

Keywords: *war literature, Kevin Powers, The Yellow Birds, Iraq War, memory, meaning, representation, grief, culpability.*

REZUMAT. *Explorarea memoriei în Păsările galbene de Kevin Powers.* *Păsările galbene* de Kevin Powers este considerat printre cele mai bine scrise romane contemporane de război. Romanul se conturează în jurul amintirilor lui John Bartle, soldat care caută strategii de acceptare a morții lui Murph, camaradul său de arme, atât prin reexaminarea unor episoade ce s-au petrecut pe front, cât și prin sondarea nivelului propriu de culpabilitate, de oboseală psihică și morală, după întoarcerea acasă. Rememorarea este centrală întregului proces și, în consecință, preocuparea principală a acestei lucrări este de a analiza explorarea multilaterală a memoriei ca strategie de creare a unui spațiu de reconciliere cu trecutul și de gestionare a evenimentelor traumatice.

Cuvinte cheie: *literatură de război, Kevin Powers, Păsările galbene, războiul din Irak, memorie, sens, reprezentare, suferință, culpabilitate.*

“... all wars are fought twice, the first time on
the battlefield, the second time in memory.”
(Vieth Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*)

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A 2012 National Book Award finalist and the winner of several important literary awards (the 2013 PEN/Hemingway Award for first fiction, Prix littéraire du Monde for foreign novel, or The Guardian First Book Award), *The Yellow Birds*, Kevin Powers' first novel, was welcome as "brilliantly observed and deeply affecting" (Kakutani), "a novel that can stand beside *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *The Red Badge of Courage*" (Burnside), "a startling and angry rant against a country that celebrates its soldiers without understanding the viciousness of the war" (Tobar), and highly acclaimed for the lyrical quality of the prose. The novel undoubtedly contributes to the emergence of what has recently been called "a new 'golden age' of war fiction" (Turrentine). Indeed, in recent years, American literature seems to have broken the silence on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan², both through the work of reputable professional authors and through the writing of war veterans making their debut on the literary stage.

The impetus that drives combatant writers seems to stem from a common need to share the experience of war, to find a way to tell those "uncomfortable stories", as Michael Pitre calls them, that would otherwise remain untold. Combatant writer Phil Klay strongly argues that writing about war answers a moral imperative: "Believing war is beyond words is an abrogation of responsibility — it lets civilians off the hook from trying to understand, and veterans off the hook from needing to explain." Kevin Powers confessed to a similar need to find a way to share and explain, but also admitted to a sense of failure in this regard:

The Yellow Birds began as an attempt to reckon with one question: What was it like over there? Sometime in 2007 I thought I might be able to find an answer to that question, not only for the many people who had asked me, but also for myself. As soon as the first words of the book were put down on the page, I realized I was unequal to the task of answering, that if there is any true thing in this world is that war is only like itself. (Author's note, 2).

A similar sense of failure reverberates throughout *The Yellow Birds*, but it is precisely this inability to explain, to provide answers, to grasp meaning that allows the novel the specific tone and the vocabulary it needs for the narrative re-figuration of the war experience.

The Yellow Birds tells the story of John Bartle, a soldier who served in Iraq in 2004, and who strives to find a way to cope with the death of Daniel Murphy, his comrade-in-arms. Although Murphy's death is announced as early

² Brian Castner noted that there are far more works of fiction tackling the Iraq War, while very few authors wrote about the Afghanistan War. In Castner's words, "If World War II is the Good War, Korea the Forgotten War, Vietnam the Bad War, and Iraq the New Bad War, then Afghanistan, it would seem, is the Lonely War. Or maybe the Ignored War. It is, at least, the Undescribed War."

as page fourteen³, the novel builds towards the recollection of the moment when Private Bartle and Sergeant Sterling find Murph's mutilated body, thrown from the window of a minaret and covered with dead hyacinths. Bartle and Sterling decide to lay the body in the Tigris rather than send it home, lest anyone should ever find out the complete set of circumstances that had led to Murph's death: his breakdown, his running away naked from the outpost, and his having been tortured. It is the image of Murph's dead body and of his improvised funeral, together with the guilt of the broken promise to Murph's mother to keep her son safe, and with the responsibility of deceit after having sent her a letter in Murph's name that haunt John Bartle, triggering all his recollections and fuelling his malaise.

The novel alternates chapters recollecting Bartle's experience during his tour in Iraq and chapters describing his inability to readjust to American everydayness after the return home, all of them told retrospectively. Thus, central to the novel is, in my opinion, the way in which it probes the potentialities of memory by exploring various modes of remembrance. The novel's character-narrator accesses memory content through narrative reconstruction and reenactment in an attempt to assess the potential of remembrance to provide some sense of redemption, some feeling of coherence and meaning. If the sense of failure mentioned above clouds the quest for meaning, revisiting the past does, however, have the effect of reversing absence: it answers the ethical imperative of keeping Murph present in Bart's life by inscribing past events on the record of a very personal history, and, more importantly, it probes and reverses the absence of humanity.

Memory⁴ as epistemological and identity-(re)construction mediator has long drawn the attention of philosophers and psychologists. Modern approaches to the exploration of memory owe much to the ancient models proposed by Plato and Aristotle, which tackle memory and imagination as coterminous, even if from competing standpoints⁵. As Paul Ricoeur explains,

Socratic philosophy bequeathed to us two rival and complementary *topoi* on this subject, one Platonic, the other Aristotelian. The first, centered on the theme of the *eikōn*, speaks of the present representation of an absent thing; it argues implicitly for enclosing the problematic of memory within that of imagination. The second, centered on the theme of the representation of a thing formerly perceived, acquired, or learned, argues for including the problematic of the image within that of remembering. (7)

³ The edition used here.

⁴ Memory is taken here to refer to the categories of episodic and autobiographical memory. This paper is less concerned with procedural memory and propositional memory. See John Sutton, "Memory".

⁵ See Paul Ricoeur, "The Greek Heritage" in *Memory, History, Forgetting*.

The legacy of the Greek models passed on the interconnectedness of memory and image/ imagination, stemming from what is seen as their common trait: “the presence of the absent” (Ricoeur 44). The mnemonic phenomenon, situated at the intersection between imaginative acts and cognitive processes, becomes a mediator in the representation of the past, of “an absent something that once happened” (136). Evolving from the interrogation of the relation of memory to perception, reflection, recognition, and imagination proposed by the ancient models, the conceptualization of memory is closely linked to the notions of *representation* (images, narratives) and *trace*⁶.

It is within the dialectic of trace and representation that the role of memory as a major contributor to a coherent epistemology of the past is generally addressed. This affects the truth claim of memory – or, in Ricoeur’s words, memory’s ambition “of being faithful to the past” (21). The presumption of veridicality is embedded in the vocabulary of memory: one cannot remember/ recollect or have memories of something that has never happened/ existed. On the other hand, the assessment of this truth claim needs responsible adjustment since modern models of conceptualizing memory favor a reconstructive approach, which accounts for the psychological complexity of remembrance, and tend to refuse the archival model of memory based on the simple dynamics of storage and retrieval⁷. The reconstructive model assumes memory’s dependence on representation and on activating traces⁸, and consequently requires a sensible effort to recalibrate the question of accuracy in the representation of what has been remembered. This, however, does not mean that “accuracy in memory has suddenly been shown by science to be impossible or unlikely” (Sutton 3.1). The veracity claim is not necessarily effaced, but rendered more malleable, adjusted to accommodate the subjective dimension of revisiting one’s past. In Ian Hacking’s words,

It is tempting to say that a new past comes into being once events are recalled and described within a new structure of causation and explanation. It need not be a false past, in the sense that it is at odds with, inconsistent with, what would have been recorded if everything had been overseen by a great camcorder in the sky. But the permanent videotape thus imagined gives pictures of events, not descriptions of them. The past becomes rewritten in memory, with new kinds of descriptions, new words, new ways of feeling.(94)

⁶ Ricoeur explains the trifold nature of the notion of trace: “trace written on a material support; affection-impression ‘in the soul’; corporeal, cerebral, cortical imprint” (15).

⁷ See John Sutton 3.1., “Constructive Remembering” and Campbell, part I, “Our Faithfulness to the Past”.

⁸ As John Sutton explains, cognitive and developmental approaches to memory work with the notion of trace, but within a “dynamic vision of traces, [that rejects] the idea of permanent storage of independent items” (2.2).

As a cognitive function, the process of revisiting stored memories, of re-tracing the 'absent something' of the past is responsible for generating a sense of coherence that, on the individual level, functions as a mechanism of constructing a sense of self, of understanding personal identity. As Marya Schechtman puts it, "Our knowledge of what we have done is, however, at the same time knowledge of who we are and what we are like. Memory of what we have done and felt and experienced is one of the most important sources of self-knowledge we have" (8). To this, Schechtman adds essential nuances when she explains the role of memory and recollection within the epistemology of the self: "we interpret and reconstruct our experiences to create a coherent life story" (8). Thus, the emphasis is placed on achieving a sense of coherence, on finding a structural logic of continuity that would make "one's past more smooth and comprehensible" (8). The coherence of personal history is not created through the accumulation of memory content, but through a complex process of selection, revision, abridging, comingling, reconstruction, and interpretation (10). This intricate process remains at the core of the reconstructive models of memory even when coherence is not the guiding principle of the integrated whole. Ian Hacking, for instance, describes the process in similar terms for both coherent and incoherent outcomes:

We do not reproduce in memory a sequence of events that we have experienced. Instead we rearrange and modify elements that we remember into something that makes sense, or, sometimes, that has just enough structure to be puzzling or even incoherent. (Even incoherence demands enough organization for elements to be discordant.) We touch up, supplement, delete, combine, interpret, shade. (247)

The role of memory in the construction of personal identity is generally articulated using a vocabulary that reveals the narrative structure of memory representation: memory is seen as instrumental in creating a life *story* that underlies personhood. The narrative seems to have become the preferred mode of conceptualizing the organization and reconstruction of past experience, and is seen as subject to an ongoing process of revisiting, reinterpreting, and rewriting its own experiential content. Jerome Bruner explains the appeal:

It begins to be clear why narrative is such a natural vehicle for folk psychology. It deals with the stuff of human action and human intentionality. It mediates between the canonical world of culture and the more idiosyncratic world of beliefs, desires, and hopes. It renders the exceptional comprehensible and keeps the uncanny at bay – save as the uncanny is needed as a trope. It reiterates the norms of the society without being didactic. And it provides a basis for rhetoric without confrontation. It can even teach, conserve memory, or alter the past. (52)

To return to the intricate process of translating the past into memories, it should be noted that it cannot not be understood exclusively within the restrictive boundaries of the individual self. As Astrid Erll explains, interdisciplinary studies on collective memory reveal the social and present-bound nature of recollection:

no memory is ever purely individual, but always inherently shaped by collective contexts: from the people we live with and from the media we use, we gather (or “collect”) schemata which help us recall the past and encode new experience. Our memories are often triggered as well as shaped by external factors – ranging from conversation among friends to books and to places. (29)

After briefly discussing Endel Tulving’s concept of “ecphory” and the context-bound “retrieval cues” meant to activate memory traces, Erll concludes that “Memories are syntheses of engrams and cues, of past and present” (32). Present social, cultural, and historical factors are thus acknowledged as essential contributors to shaping individual memory, to providing the narrative schemata for the representation of an otherwise inaccessible past. The process, however, is bidirectional: the narrative of individual memory flows into collective memory and social discourse, and personal history assists in the formation of the public historical narrative. The interconnectedness of individual memory and collective history legitimates Ricoeur’s invitation to a critical and sensible evaluation of history’s attempt “to represent the past just as it happened—whatever meaning may be assigned to this ‘just as’” (136), since history is seen as “the learned heir of memory and its foundational aporia” of making an absent thing present (236).

Memory and recollection often gain ethical nuances, both on an individual level, in the spirit of a Kantian construction of self, and in the communal space, as contributors to the reconstruction of the collective historical narrative. Ricoeur endorses the ethical nature of memory by using the notion of ‘justice’ and a positive approach to the past:

The duty of memory is *the duty to do justice*, through memories, to an Other than the self.

The duty of memory is not restricted to preserving the material trace, whether scriptural or other, of past events, but maintains the feeling of being obligated with respect to these others, of whom we shall later say, *not that they are no more, but that they were*. Pay the debt, I shall say, but also inventory the heritage. (89, emphasis added)

In a partially related vein, Avishai Margalit restricts the duty to remember to what he calls “thick relations”⁹, namely relations “grounded in attributes such

⁹ Different from “thin relations ... backed by the attribute of being human” (Margalit 7) and regulated by morality (8).

as parent, friend, lover, fellow-countryman” (7) and regulated by ethics, i.e. by questions of “loyalty and betrayal” (8). Thick relations, Margalit argues, depend on shared/sharing past experiences, thus creating “communities of memory” and providing a sense of belonging (82). They are different from “thin relations”, which are “backed by the attribute of being human” (7) and regulated by morality (8). In Margalit’s view, the ethical duty to remember and share memories works both as a therapeutic strategy in dealing with past (collective) trauma and as a protective strategy against distorting the past by means of controlling and manipulating collective memory (83). To this Margalit adds a nuanced discussion on forgetting and forgiveness that partially reminds of Ricoeur’s perspective on the different modes of forgetting: from the positively connoted right to forget to the abolition of the past.

Sue Campbell takes things even further in her emphasis on the responsibility to remember. In her attempt to renegotiate the interplay between individual memory and official history, Campbell insists on reconsidering the norms of faithfulness to the past and allowing a higher degree of accuracy to recollection, by proposing a merger of archival and reconstructive models of memory. She defends the thesis of “the compatibility of truth and interpretation in memory” (66) with a view to consolidating self-construction memory narratives and validating the input of personal memory to the public discourse of history.

Reconstructing the war experience is arguably one of the most illustrative examples for the interplay of individual memory, communal memory, and official history. Its scope includes all of the aspects of memory discussed above, from the aporia of re-presenting the absent, from self-constitution and self-perception, from coherence, meaning, and accuracy, to therapeutic strategies, collective memory, history, and to questions regarding the ethical dimension of remembrance. In his exploration of the memory of war Viet Thanh Nguyen starts from a conventional understanding of the ethics of recollection: “The problem of war and memory is therefore first and foremost about how to remember the dead, who cannot speak for themselves” (4). Indeed, the responsibility to re-present the absent is essential, but the nuances Nguyen adds as he develops his argumentation become fundamental to a broad understanding of the workings of memory and recollection in such a specific context. Nguyen writes:

When it comes to war, the basic dialectic of memory and amnesia is thus not only about remembering and forgetting certain events or people. The basic dialectic of memory and amnesia is instead more fundamentally about remembering our humanity and forgetting our inhumanity, while conversely remembering the inhumanity of others and forgetting their humanity. *A just memory* demands instead a final step in the dialectics of ethical memory—not

just the movement between an ethics of remembering one's own and remembering others, but also a shift toward an ethics of recognition, of seeing and *remembering how the inhuman inhabits the human*. (19, emphasis added)

Thus, Nguyen's notion of "just memory" extends to encompass all the layers of war memory narratives, ranging from political propaganda to the very act of redefining humanity, both ideologically and individually. It is within this complex framework that Powers' novel *The Yellow Birds* addresses the potentialities of memory.

In *The Yellow Birds*, the exploration of memory stems from a deeply rooted sense of comradeship, and seems to answer the ethical imperative that federates what Avishai Margalit calls "thick relations", while simultaneously endorsing Nguyen's "ethics of recognition". Comradeship is, indeed, the thickest relation people form in the theatre of war and is impossible to develop in other circumstances¹⁰. In *The Yellow Birds*, the stream of memories springs and flows backward and forward from the moment of Murph's death, and is guided by the fundamental need to find a way to make sense of what had happened. Told retrospectively, from 2012¹¹, Private Bartle's war story conjoins two temporally successive stages, the deployment (2004) and the period following his discharge (2005), including part of his imprisonment in a Regional Confinement Facility in Fort Knox (2009) for writing a letter to Murph's mother, in her son's name, after his death. The series of deployment episodes offer the chronography of what happened in Al Tafari¹², and consists of an arrangement of powerful and subjectively relevant war scenes, filtered through Bartle's reflections, interpretations, and desperate attempts to understand. The post-discharge episodes insist on Bartle's inability to readjust to civilian life, on his callous indifference to human interaction. The exploration of the workings and the potentialities of memory shapes the narrative of all the episodes in the novel and revolves around one particular scene that Bartle seems to be simultaneously trying to reconstruct and avoid, namely the moment in which he and Sergeant Sterling found Murph's dead body, under a pile of dead hyacinths:

¹⁰ As Nigel C. Hunt explains, "Comradeship is seen as deeper than ordinary friendship, the depth of the relationship arising because of the shared hardships, the shared personal lives, and the sense of dependency for one's life on others" (157).

¹¹ The 2003 episode, when John Bartle meets Daniel Murphy in Fort Dix, New Jersey, right before deployment, allows the temporal estimation of the moment of narration: "And now, as I remember it, I can feel how young I was. I can feel my body before it was scarred. . . . 'Twenty-one,' I'd said, and I was as full of time as my body would allow. *But looking back from where I am, almost thirty*, old enough, I can see myself for what I was. Barely a man. Not a man. Life was in me, but it splashed as if at the bottom of a nearly empty bowl" (38-39, emphasis added).

¹² A fictional town the name of which derives from Tal Afar. As Daniel O'Gorman argues, choosing to change the name "is a clear attempt on Powers' part to create a degree of distance between Bartle's experiences in Iraq and his own." (550)

We pulled Murph free from the tangle of brush and laid him out in some shadow of respectability. We stood and looked him over. He was broken and bruised and cut and still pale except for his face and hands, and now his eyes had been gouged out, the two hollow sockets looking like red angry passages to his mind. His throat had been cut nearly through, his head hung limply and lolled from side to side, attached only by the barely intact vertebrae. We dragged him like a shot deer out of a wood line, trying but failing to keep his naked body from banging against the hard ground and bouncing in a way that would be forever burned into our memories. His ears were cut off. His nose cut off, too. He had been imprecisely castrated. (206)

Murph's death was anything but heroic or meaningful. He had a nervous breakdown, he ran away naked from the outpost, and was presumably captured, tortured, and killed. These are, however, circumstances that Private Bartle and Sergeant Sterling decide to conceal and consequently resolve to dispose of Murph's body in the Tigris. The memory of the improvised funeral is just as vivid and disturbing as the image of Murph's mutilated body: instead of a solemn funeral cortege, two American soldiers, an Iraqi hermit, a lame mule, a dog, a cart to carry the body; instead of candles, a minaret in flames; instead of a funeral floral arrangement, a pile of dead hyacinths, symbolic of mourning and remembrance¹³. Instead of a eulogy, a curse: "Fuck 'em, man. Fuck everyone on earth. Amen." (210); instead of the three-volley salute, Sterling's shot in the hermit's face. This episode is the key to Bartle's recollection process: it is always there, indelible and elusive at the same time, tormenting, haunting him, always intruding on other memory fragments: "Perhaps that is how it was: a field full of hyacinth" (14); "Still, there went Murph, floating down toward that bend in the Tigris, where he passed beneath the shadow of the mount where Jonah was buried, his eyes just cups now for the water that he floated in, the fish having begun to tear his flesh already" (61); "perhaps one beat of his heart remaining as they threw his tortured body from the window of the minaret" (80). Bartle's memory seems to simultaneously provoke and resist the full articulation of this particular episode, until he feels he has achieved some sort of coherence in the organization of his past. The process is, however, long and complicated and involves a desperate, albeit doomed to fail, attempt to make sense of what had happened.

After his return home, Bartle is completely estranged from the present, desensitized and unresponsive to American everydayness, drowned by waves of bitterness, anger, guilt, and an acute sense of failure that make him compulsively revisit past events¹⁴:

¹³ See the legend of Hyacinthus in Greek mythology.

¹⁴ The symptoms John Bartle exhibits are consistent with the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. See Hunt, 52-53.

Back home, everything had begun to remind me of something else. Every thought I had blossomed outward and backward until it attached itself to some other memory, that one leading to another, impermanent, until I was lost to whatever present moment I was in. (134)

From the temporal vantage point of the moment of narration, when all the pieces of the puzzle are available, Bartle remembers his struggle to overcome the elusiveness of memory when he left Iraq. Not enough memory content and no logical principle to guide the organization of events were then the main sources of his torment:

I hadn't known what I was doing then, but my memories of Murph were a kind of misguided archaeology. Sifting through the remains of what I remembered about him was a denial of the fact that a hole was really all that was left, *an absence I had attempted to reverse* but found that I could not. There was simply not enough material to account for what had been removed. The closer I got to reconstructing him in my mind, the more the picture I was trying to recreate receded. For every memory I was able to pull up, another seemed to fall away forever. There was some proportion about it all, though. It was like putting a puzzle together from behind: the shapes familiar, the picture quickly fading, the muted tan of the cardboard backing a tease at wholeness and completion. (138-139, emphasis added)

The numbing of the ability to remember as well as the (in)voluntary avoidance to recollect as a form of self-anesthesia count among the diagnosis criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder. This 'misguided archeology' of incomplete and likely distorted memories on which Bartle attempts to build his own "misremembered history" (125) reminds of the above-discussed aporetic presence of the absence. It also addresses the role of memory in gaining a sense of coherence in the process of self-construction. Bartle's desperate and apparently unachievable attempt to re-present the absent by reconstructing Murph from memory only fuels his agony, and his inability to articulate a coherent version of his past experiences removes him from the continuous temporal sequence of his own personal history: "I had less and less control over my own history each day. I realized, as I stood there in the church, that there was a sharp distinction between what was remembered, what was told, and what was true" (59-60).

The difficulty of recalling followed by the impossibility to make sense of the little memory content he could retrieve make him blame memory's kinship to imagination: "I think maybe it was my fault, fuck, I did it, no it didn't happen, well, not like that, but it's hard to say sometimes: half of memory is imagination anyway" (186). Thus, questions of accuracy and veridicality emerge to fuel Bartle's anger towards the past and instigate his distrust in

absolutes. History seems too definitive to accept and too unreliable to trust, so he replaces its mechanisms with those of imagination:

The rest is history, they say. Bullshit, I say. It's imagination or it's nothing, and must be, because what is created in this world, or made, can be undone, unmade; the threads of a rope can be unwoven. And if that rope is needed as a guideline for a ferry to a farther shore, then one must invent a way to weave it back, or there will be drownings in the streams that cross our paths. (100)

Questions regarding the reliability of remembrance become irrelevant when confronted with the imperative of weaving back the rope of time, of reversing absence. Temporal distance, however, seems to offer Bartle the tools he needs; it helps him regain access to his past, to his repressed memories: "my memories would seem closer the farther I got from the circumstances that gave birth to them" (51).

On the other hand, even when he gathers enough memory content, the sense of failure is still present. The simple retrieval and listing of the events stored in the memory archive is insubstantial; hence the stringency of understanding which haunts Bartle's entire effort to re-collect and reprocess memory content. The awareness of his incapability of producing a meaningful version of the past, beyond simple causality and chronology, only fuels his rant:

What happened? What fucking happened? That's not even the question, I thought. How is that the question? How do you answer the unanswerable? To say what happened, the mere facts, the disposition of events in time, would come to seem like a kind of treachery. The dominoes of moments, lined up symmetrically, then tumbling backward against the hazy and unsure push of cause, showed only that a fall is every object's destiny. It is not enough to say what happened. Everything happened. Everything fell. (148)

Simply chronicling past events, without distilling their meaning is tantamount to desecration, hence the imperative of exploring alternative, seemingly more substantial modes of remembrance. The combined strategy of engaging memory content through narrativization and reflecting on the narrated episodes extends to include the experience of reenactment. An unpremeditated and involuntary form of reenactment, an active reconstruction of a past event: this is the reading I propose for the near-drowning episode.

The acute manifestation of Bartle's chronic culpability informs the stream of consciousness episode that culminates with his wading into the James River, where he would have drowned if it had not been for his friend Luke. "The river had a dream in it" (146), he recalls, and the dream was of a wounded palomino, bleeding in the river, its eyes "black and soft" (147). A

naked body in a bloodied river and a bruised old horse form an image that alludes to the burial ritual of Murph's body. Moreover, for Bartle, all rivers are Charonian; they all remind him of death. If Murph's improvised funeral seals forever the association between rivers and death, another memory of another dog and of another beheaded body, stuffed with a bomb, on a bridge over the same Tigris that would become Murph's grave, leads to its articulation:

I moved to the edge of the bridge and began firing at anything moving. I saw one man fall in a heap near the bank of the river among the bulrushes and green fields on its edges. In that moment, I disowned the waters of my youth. My memories of them became a useless luxury, their names as foreign as any that could be found in Nineveh: the Tigris or the Chesapeake, the James or the Shatt al Arab farther to the south, all belonged to someone else, and perhaps had never really been my own. (125)

This association makes it clear for Bartle that the ultimate understanding of the world is reserved for the moment of death: "I might realize that to understand the world, one's place in it, is to be always at the risk of drowning" (125). Thus, the near-drowning scene reveals itself as a connective gesture meant to enhance the process of recollection and bring it closer to the moment of ultimate revelation.

Probing memory for some redemptive justification only takes Bartle to the point in which he has to face the absurdity and pointlessness of his entire war experience:

It's impossible to identify the cause of anything, and I began to see *the war as a big joke*, for how cruel it was, for how desperately I wanted to measure the particulars of Murph's new, strange behavior and trace it back to one moment, to one cause, to one thing I would not be guilty of. And I realized very suddenly one afternoon while throwing rocks into a bucket in a daze that the joke was in fact on me. Because how can you measure deviation if you don't know the mean? There was no center in the world. *The curves of all our bells were cracked.* (155, emphasis added)

In Bartle's articulation of the absurdity and nonsense of the war I read a subtle intertextual reference to Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls* denouncing Bartle's mounting distrust in the cause he was fighting for. The lack of ideological support for the war in Iraq is thus set against the sense of righteousness that used to drive the soldiers of the past wars. Bartle's disenchanting attitude is echoed throughout the novel and informs his acute sense of meaninglessness: "I thought of my grandfather's war. How they had destinations and purpose" (91), Bartle remembers thinking. The ideological

void shakes Bartle's notion of patriotism, heroism, and purpose. Knowing the war intimately, Bartle cannot accept the justifications offered by the public discourse, and whatever story history might tell about this war, he will always have his own take on what he came to see as an "ordered war" (12). Knowing war intimately has made him realize that war is only interested in taking its death toll on all the parties involved, and that there is no grand discourse that could ever justify it:

I couldn't have articulated it then, but I'd been trained to think war was the great unifier, that it brought people closer together than any other activity on earth. Bullshit. War is the great maker of solipsists: how are you going to save my life today? Dying would be one way. If you die, it becomes more likely that I will not. (12)

Instead of heroes fighting for the good cause, he comes to see himself and his comrades-in-arms as anonymous, disposable pawns of history: "I didn't die. Murph did. And though I wasn't there when it happened, I believe unswervingly that when Murph was killed, the dirty knives that stabbed him were addressed 'To whom it may concern.' Nothing made us special. Not living. Not dying. Not even being ordinary" (14). The randomness and purposelessness of Murph's death cancels any attempt to mythicize it as heroic sacrifice. In Iraq, the war was clearly pointless: they were engaging in inertial yearly fights over a city they would afterwards give back to those they had taken it from; they would kill enemy soldiers they might have gotten to know as children:

We'd go back into a city that had fought this battle yearly; a slow, bloody parade in fall to mark the change of season. We'd drive them out. We always had. We'd kill them. They'd shoot us and blow off our limbs and run into the hills and wadis, back into the alleys and dusty villages. Then they'd come back, and we'd start over by waving to them as they leaned against lampposts and unfurled green awnings while drinking tea in front of their shops. While we patrolled the streets, we'd throw candy to their children with whom we'd fight in the fall a few more years from now.
 "Maybe they'll make it an annual thing," Murph snapped. (91)

No echo of the official justification of the military invasion of Iraq is to be found in Bartle's mnemonic process: no weapons of mass destruction, no word on protecting the homeland. Moreover, the episode in which the outpost was visited by a reporter and a cameraman only widens the gap between the motivational discourse of war propaganda and the harrowing first-hand experience of war, a gap completely effacing the ideology of sacrifice for a higher cause.

With no justification whatsoever for the war mission he and Murph were involved in, Bartle finally understands the futility of probing memory content in the hope of finding meaningful answers and explanations. He comes to understand this when imprisoned in a Regional Confinement Facility in Fort Knox. Private Bartle's literal imprisonment in Fort Knox is only the materialization of his having been thrown in the prison of memories by the traumatic circumstances of the death of his comrade-in-arms: "memories themselves aspired to be the walls in which I was imprisoned" (218). At first he believes that he cannot escape from the prison of the past unless he begins to make sense of Murph's death, to assess his degree of culpability, and transform the entire war experience into a coherent whole: "My first few months inside, I spent a lot of time trying to piece the war into a pattern. I developed the habit of making a mark on my cell wall when I remembered a particular event, thinking that at some later date I could refer to it and assemble all the marks into a story that made sense" (216). A coherent story, indeed, the translation of harrowing experiences into narrative episodes in an attempt to piece together the fragments of traumatic events into a coherent, meaningful whole is what he is looking for. The sense of failure, however, reasserts its position of power over Bartle's quest:

Eventually, I realized that the marks could not be assembled into any kind of pattern. They were fixed in place. Connecting them would be wrong. They fell where they had fallen. Marks representing the randomness of the war were made at whatever moment I remembered them: disorder predominated. Entropy increased in the six-by-eight-foot universe of my single cell. I eventually accepted the fact that the only equality that lasts is the fact that everything falls away from everything else. (217)

The process of probing memory for meaning is disrupted by the impossibility of finding any kind of justification for war itself. However, Bartle's exploration of the past achieves something that goes beyond finding reasonable explanations. The narrative he constructs by piecing together and reflecting on the memory fragments he retrieves becomes a form of commemoration, a redemptive gesture that fulfills an ethical duty and subtly extends to address a moral imperative. Bartle's remembrance performs the "ethical duty" in Margalit's understanding of the notion. Through recollection, he reverses Murph's absence, by inscribing their common war experience and the secret circumstances of Murph's death in the record of a very personal history. Moreover, Bartle's retrospective interrogation tackles aspects beyond the ethical dimension of memory: it explores the morality of Margalit's "thin relations", and maps the territory of Nguyen's understanding of "just memory"

by exploring the dynamics of humanizing and de-humanizing and by pointing out what Nguyen sees as the inhuman inhabiting the human (Nguyen 19).

Bartle's recollection often prompts thoughts about the de-humanization of the other, the enemy. Malik the interpreter is the only Iraqi mentioned by name. When he is killed, Bartle and Murph feel absolutely nothing, even though Malik's blood is all over their uniforms. The case can be made that Malik was not exactly one of them. Indeed, the traditional demonization of the enemy is there, articulated in the most pejorative of words and Bartle is very much aware of its mechanisms. He embraces it because he finds in it an easy justification for killing other human beings, but he simultaneously hates himself for this immoral entitlement:

I felt like a coward until he [Sterling] screamed into my ear, "Shoot these hajji fucks!" I hated the way I loved him when I inched up out of the terror and returned fire, seeing him shooting too, smiling the whole time, screaming, the whole rage and hate of these few acres, alive and spreading, in and through him. (Powers 19)

On the other hand, de-humanization and anonymity envelops everyone, both the "hajji fucks" (17, 19) and the American soldiers who become mere numbers on limitless list of kills. Death cancels everyone, erases their identity, and paralyzes their humanity. Retrospectively, Bartle becomes aware of the depth of his chronic moral weariness: "I was not surprised by the cruelty of my ambivalence then. Nothing seemed more natural than someone getting killed" (11). Barbarism and dehumanization is the dominant condition of everyone directly involved in the war. The disintegration of humanity manifests itself in a very selective empathy: "Grief is a practical mechanism, and we only grieved those we knew. All others who died in Al Tafari were part of the landscape". (124).

Desensitized, emotionally numb, Bartle looks into his past for some semblance of humanity. He needs to find signs that compassion, kindness, and mercy still exist in the world. It is the same thing that Murph was looking for at the medic's station. A few days before Murph's breakdown, Bartle found him staring at a female medic, not because of her looks, but because she was the only one capable of showing real human emotions, the only one who still cried when someone died, even people she did not know. Murph was becoming aware of his emotional numbness, so he kept on staring at the medic's display of feelings, as if hoping they were transmissible: "He wanted to choose. He wanted to want. He wanted to replace the dullness growing inside him with anything else" (164). The moment the medic was killed, Murph's hope seems to have died with her. This symbolical annihilation of humanity is the most likely trigger of his nervous breakdown, resulting in his running away naked from the outpost.

Murph and Bartle are very similar in their awareness of the emotional and moral void caused by the war. Bartle's mnemonic process is often guided towards retracing signs of humanity, feelings and emotions other than fear, anger, hatred and helplessness. Bartle's self-flagellation in stream of consciousness preceding the near-drowning episode is the best articulation of his exploration of the dehumanizing effect of the war experience:

Or should I have said that I wanted to die, not in the sense of wanting to throw myself off of that train bridge over there, but more like wanting to be asleep forever because there isn't any making up for killing women or even watching women get killed, or for that matter killing men and shooting them in the back and shooting them more times than necessary to actually kill them and it was like just trying to kill everything you saw sometimes because it felt like there was acid seeping down into your soul and then your soul is gone the one person you promised would live is dead, and you have seen all things die in more manners than you'd like to recall and for a while the whole thing fucking ravaged your spirit like some deep-down shit, man, that you didn't even realize you had until only the animals made you sad, the husks of dogs filled with explosives (144-145)

Bartle's guilt is an omnipresent shadow, continuously fuelled and potentiated by the awareness of his emotional numbness, of the disintegration of any trace of humanity. What Bartle seems to need is something to reassert the possibility of human connectedness against the brutishness of the war. The exploration of his ability to feel starts with Murph, with the compassion and love that Bartle might have felt for his comrade: "Still, I like to think there was a ghost of compassion in me then, and that if I'd had a chance to see those hyacinths I would have noticed them" (14), "It makes me love him a little, even now, to remember him sitting beneath the hawthorn tree, sad that his girl had left him, but without anger or resentment, despite being only a few hours removed from all the killing of the night before" (79-80). Through the reconstruction of the circumstances of Murph's death, however, Bartle's quest extends to encompass grander aspects pertaining to the polarizing dynamic of the human and the inhuman. It is in this aspect that Bartle's mnemonic quest is successful. Although it might not compensate for the loss of humanity, it recollects the inhumanity of war and succeeds in re-presenting the absence of humanity.

In *The Yellow Birds*, the exploration of memory ranges from hypomnetic difficulty to reenactment and eidetic representations, and touches upon a series of aspects that concern contemporary theoretical approaches to the workings and potentialities of memory, from the strategies of self-construction through coherent narratives of personal history and from the role of memory in the assignation of meaning, to questions regarding the

reliability of memory and its kinship to imagination, the collision of memory and history, and the ethical and moral imperatives of remembrance. Most importantly, in *The Yellow Birds*, the strategies and purposes of revisiting and actively engaging memory content extend to address the question of the danger of forgetting humanity. By reconstructing Murph's image and representing his absence, Bartle implicitly probes and recollects the process of emotional deterioration and the disintegration of humanity. The very attempt to address this question shows a type of awareness that empowers a reversal of the absence of humanity.

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THE OLD PATTERN AND THE CREATION OF THE NEW MASCULINE IDENTITY IN JULIE WU'S NOVEL

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ABSTRACT. *The Old Pattern and the Creation of the New Masculine Identity in Julie Wu's Novel.* This paper analyses the way in which Julie Wu transforms Saburo or Tong Chia-lin, the main character of her novel, into a true man. Unlike the great Chinese American author and critic Frank Chin, Julie Wu does not turn her character into a militant hero by developing his *wu* nature, but transforms him into a Taiwanese American scholar after developing his *wen* nature, through many years of studying and numerous sacrifices both in Taiwan and the United States of America.

Keywords: *Julie Wu, Frank Chin, wen, masculine identity, third son.*

REZUMAT. *Vechiul model și crearea noii identități masculine în romanul lui Julie Wu.* Lucrarea de față analizează modul în care Julie Wu reușește să-și transforme personajul central al romanului ei, Saburo sau Tong Chia-lin, într-un bărbat adevărat. Spre deosebire de marele critic și scriitor sino-american Frank Chin, Julie Wu nu apelează la transformarea personajului ei într-un erou combatant prin dezvoltarea naturii *wu*, ci își transformă personajul într-un remarcabil învățat taiwanezo-american care și-a dezvoltat natura *wen*, după mulți ani de studiu și sacrificii în Taiwan și Statele Unite ale Americii.

Cuvinte cheie: *Julie Wu, Frank Chin, wen, identitate masculină, al treilea fiu.*

Often readers will pick up a book that has won numerous literary awards from the bookstore or library with the expectation that these prizes guarantee the quality of that book, and that its subject matter will be contemporary and interesting. Unfortunately, this type of selection eschews

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less famous novels written by authors who are part of minority groups in their society, because they describe scenes in which that ethnic group behave differently from the rest of society, demonstrating traits less appealing to the general public, due to the fact that the public needs additional historical and cultural information in order to understand why minority groups are acting differently from the majority, and this extraneous information usually makes the reader disengage.

Although novels written by authors from a minority group are harder to understand and take a bit longer to read, due to the additional information that a reader must know, they also offer more satisfaction than reading a novel about a well-known historical event or culture, because the reading will reveal an unknown perspective of the world with each new page.

The novels written by authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan made the Chinese American culture well known in the world, in general, and in the United States, in particular, because the writers have won numerous prizes for their works. Unfortunately, there are numerous other novels written by Chinese Americans that are not taken into account based not on lack of information or poor writing, but because their authors did not win renowned prizes for their books. At least Chinese American ethnic literature has two important and well known representatives who are part of the canon of universal literature, due to the prizes they have won and the audience they have acquired. However, Taiwanese American ethnic literature exists in a quasi-anonymous state and still struggles to be recognized by a larger audience.

When starting to read Taiwanese American novels, one can see that although their authors did not win numerous prizes, these works depict extraordinary and deeply moving scenes either from the hard lives of the Taiwanese as citizens of the Japanese Empire or the Republic of China, or from their lives as immigrants in the United States. Among these lesser known Taiwanese American authors, Julie Wu is the most appreciated writer in academic circles, due to her complex storytelling and intricate historical and cultural background.

For example, in the novel *The Third Son* she not only depicts all the possible situations through which a Taiwanese man from 1940 could have lived through before emigrating to America, but she also emphasizes the possible identity crisis of a Taiwanese third son, caused by the influence of Chinese culture and Confucian ethics. This influence enforces the importance of the first son, who should be the son who inherits everything and has the chance to realize himself due to the education that his family must invest in, as he is to be, traditionally, the pillar of the new family and the person who will take care of his parents.

In Julie Wu's aforementioned novel the reader will discover the transformation of Saburo, or Tong Chia-lin, the third son of a Taiwanese political

leader, from an ignored son into a successful professor and researcher in the United States. His father strives to keep himself in power during the Japanese occupation and after the occupation of Taiwan by the forces of Chiang Kai-Shek, under the banner of the Republic of China, as well as preserve the values of the traditional family, while ignoring his third son based on his birth order.

The Third Son is not an exotic novel about a mysterious stranger, the main character here is a Taiwanese immigrant, who lives as an expatriate in the United States of America, and it is not a novel about the conversion to Christianity of that immigrant either. Julie Wu constructed a complex novel in which she makes the social hardships that a younger son has to endure known to the world by following Frank Chin's advice from the *Preface of Aiiieeee! An Anthology of Asian American Writers* (xii). She also illustrates how hard it is for a Taiwanese immigrant to live like an American man, because he is still tied to his family in Taiwan even long after he left for America, due to the fact that social Confucian ethics is profoundly imprinted in his way of being.

The opening scene takes place during World War II when Taiwan was under Japanese rule, because after more than two centuries in which the Chinese were the true rulers of the land, the weakened Chinese Empire had to offer the territories of Taiwan, Penghu and Liaodong Peninsula to the new superior regional power, the Japanese Empire, after the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) at the Treaty of Shimonoseki (1868-1947) (Roy 17- 33). In this context, Julie Wu illustrates the harsh life of Taiwanese citizens under this new regime, because although they had given up their Chinese names and language and adopted the Japanese names and language, they were still considered as inferior to Japanese citizens and they were only allowed little autonomy (3-4).

At the beginning of the novel, the main character has a Japanese name, Saburo, because his father wanted to preserve his status as an accepted leader and have a good job in a society ruled by the Japanese, although he had ancestors from Mainland China (3). But Saburo was not an ordinary third son who was predestined by the Gods to have a normal life as a second-rate Japanese citizen. He recognized that "I was different, somehow, from my brothers. I was different from these children all around me in their neat rows, filling their kanji into little boxes" (4-5). But at this stage he only perceives his differences, but could not manifest his identity, as his parents punish him for each deviation from the life of an ordinary third son.

Saburo grew up in a community where "favoritism of the oldest son (*lao da*) was common throughout [Chinese] Han society" (Brown 203), because parents believed that the oldest son would grow faster, get a good position in society and a decent job more quickly, and would be able to take care of them in their old age in exchange for their wealth. Therefore, being the third son

meant that Saburo would be discriminated against by the other family members, because his family considered that his older brother was meant to be the one who would become successful and take care of the parents. It is of no surprise that his brother and sisters received the best treatment, received the best food and would be permitted the expense of learning at home with a private tutor during their time in isolation, with no access to schools, while he was eating only steam bread, and was not permitted to learn alongside his brother, for fear that he would hold his older brother back.

Moreover, he could not protest his parents' traditionalist attitude since Confucian ethics imposed upon him the virtue of filial piety, i.e. to recognize his parents' effort to raise him and to be grateful, as well as the second tenet, which says that a son should obey his father in all regards (Ng 25).

Due to the social norms of that time and place, Saburo is the obedient third son, who accepts to be beaten by his parents for no apparent reason. Therefore, he might be compared to an effeminate man, who lost his manliness, like the Indians, who were perceived by the British colonials as womanly because they were "physically, intellectually, and morally, soft, frail, weak or cowardly" (Krishnaswamy 295), but in this particular case Saburo is not perceived as a woman by a colonial force, but by his own parents, due to the social conventions.

Fortunately, Saburo's luck will change the day a snake bites him, because the snake, a symbol of wisdom, made him need his cousin Toru's help. Toru offered him the treatment for the bite, but he also offered him advice to study hard, as this could get him anywhere, and respect the rules, because the teachers and people would see in him an honest and wise man (24-25). Moreover, because Saburo intuitively knew when it was going to rain, his cousin offered him a Japanese book entitled *The Earth* to encourage Saburo to develop his knowledge of the science of geography. Therefore, one can state that this encounter between Toru and Saburo is a key point in the latter's journey to change his luck and become a true man, as his cousin deduced from the knowledge he showed that Saburo was not an unintelligent boy, but a neglected and unmotivated child, and he provided the necessary advice to prompt Saburo's change.

Toru's guidance of Saburo on the path of learning and respecting his teachers in order to become a scholar, is one of the two possible initiation paths through which Chinese men in Imperial China had to pass to be acknowledged as true adult men. The great Chinese theoretician Kam Louie points out that men, in ancient and medieval patriarchal China, had to cultivate the *wen* nature, which meant they had to have high literary, philosophical and cultural achievements, or the *wu* nature, which meant they had to practice martial arts perfectly, have a good physical condition and be capable of abstinence, in order to become extraordinary individuals of the upper echelons on the social scale (10-11).

While “the macho hero represented in terms such as *yingxiong* (outstanding male) and *haohan* (good fellow) is counterbalanced by softer, cerebral made tradition – the *caizi* (the talented scholar) and the *wenren* (the cultured man)” (Kam 8).

American authors of Chinese origin like Frank Chin, Gus Lee and Louis Chu have preferred to portray the adventures of characters who develop their wu nature, as this type of character is seen by the white community as being more masculine than a character that becomes an intellectual. Therefore, these authors take into consideration Frank Chin’s advice to rehabilitate the old model presented in *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *Art of War* and *The Water Margins*, a model which proposes a hero who is loyal to his family, friends or king and has to fight to avenge them, to return home or in order to keep a promise to them (xxxvi-xxxix), and distance themselves from the white masculine model presented in movies, where the hero has a built body and his dominance is asserted through his looks or physical strength, but does not have a higher reason to fight for, such as a promise of loyalty to someone or a Confucian duty of loyalty (Dyer 262-263).

Unlike authors who presented images of the new Chinese hero in American society, Julie Wu has preferred, like Gish Jen in *Typical American*, to represent the evolution of an effeminate man who transforms himself through learning and the American experience into a true scholar, a member of the high society, similar to the scholar in the Chinese Empire. This preference may be explained through the idea that this type of character demonstrates that the Chinese and Taiwanese can become men without the need of becoming violent or use physical force, because “if Chinese American men use the Asian heroic dispensation to promote male aggression, they may risk remaking themselves in the image of their oppressors” (Cheung 182), but if they are depicted as intellectuals who respect women, are smart and have money, they may show that they have adapted to American society without leaving behind their manhood or without becoming violent men.

Although his mother only hired a teacher for his older brother and sister, the teacher, Sato, realized Saburo was intelligent although previous teachers categorized him as mediocre in the best case, because he had been reaching the solutions of complicated problems in an intuitive manner (28). Therefore, Sato asked Saburo’s mother to make her youngest son attend classes. In the beginning, she agreed, but the older brother became jealous and told the mother that Saburo was slowing him down, which made her withdraw Saburo from Sato’s courses arguing that “some sons are more deserving than others” (29) and that Kazuo, the older brother, is the one who should get a better education than Saburo. This was not the only instance where Saburo had to suffer because of his older brother, as

he was condemned to be humiliated by his older brother as a third son. Although the older brother, Kazuo, had received a better education and more help from his family so as to follow his dream, he was jealous of his little brother because he was smarter than him.

Unfortunately, after World War II the tense political situation in China degenerated into the continuation of the Chinese Civil War (1927-1950) where the armies of the government formed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (*Zhōngguó Guómíndǎng*), led by Chiang Kai-shek, fought against the armies of the Communist Party of China (*Zhōngguó Gòngchǎndǎng*), led by Mao Zedong, even though they had collaborated to defeat the Japanese invaders during the war (Chaurasia 165). This new break out of the civil war after World War II came as no surprise because the national government who obtained the power in the 1911 revolution excluded the Communist from the government by massacring communist party leaders and supporters in 1927 and continued doing so after the war as well (Chaurasia 131-136, 162). This faction was the League of Common Alliance (*Tóngménghuì*) founded by Sun Yat-sen in 1905 with the help of military forces and the support of regional governors, and in 1911 they forced the Qing emperor and government to resign. Furthermore, by 1949 the Communists managed to take control of mainland China and the government formed by the *Zhōngguó Guómíndǎng* was forced to retreat in the groups of islands situated in the South China Sea (Taiwan, Penghu, Kinme and Matsu) where they continued to govern the small territory of the Republic of China, a state with limited recognition in the world (Chaurasia 165).

Despite the change of regime, almost everything remained the same, because the Chinese from the mainland went about the tasks of governing in the same authoritarian manner as the Japanese. The only change was that they used Mandarin Chinese and everyone had to have a Chinese name. Therefore, Saburo became Tong Chia-lin, the third son of a mainlander's family, who still had to endure discrimination.

Although Tong Chia-lin's family discriminated against him, he took Toru's advice to follow the rules and make a better life for himself by learning and becoming an educated person who could visit the world. Unfortunately, in an act of rebellion, Chia-lin, makes a caricature of his mainlander teacher and is caught, which leads to his expulsion from a select middle school. Fortunately, his cousin Toru managed to convince the principal of the school that the punishment was too harsh and that the teacher was influenced by the riots of the locals against mainlanders. However, Chia-lin was too disappointed to continue and follow his dream and chose to further his education not at an upper-level high school, which could have granted him access to the Taiwanese University, but at the Provincial Taipei Institute of Technology in order to study science. Moreover, his disappointment increases after his older brother starts to date

his childhood girlfriend and after he burns an English textbook he had borrowed from his cousin's room.

Tong Chia-lin was disappointed and desperate, because he thought he could make something of himself by learning, but he failed because he was a rebel and a third son, who did not deserve a home teacher and encouragement, as per social norms. Moreover, his precious secret love from childhood was stolen by his older brother, whom he had to respect, because Kazuo was the hope of the family. At such a crucial moment, his cousin steps in again and tells him that "limits can be surpassed" (79), which gives Chia-lin hope to survive his military service and to continue his path of building a beautiful life.

Chia-lin takes Toru's advice and when he returns after completing his time in the military, he finds out that his brother's girlfriend had left him. He rushes to the girl's side and asks her to marry him, arguing that he hopes he will take the exam for an American study scholarship, which could grant him the opportunity of becoming important. She accepts not because he could improve his social status in the future, but because she loves him.

In this case, even as a married man with a wife expecting a child, Chia-lin is not yet considered a true man, because he is the third son of the family in which solely the first son is important and therefore has to endure his parents' harsh judgment of him. Another reason for not being considered a true man is due to his low-income job at Taikong, which paid ten times less than what his wife, Yoshiko, had earned at the bank before quitting and marrying him. Fortunately, he had listened to his cousin's suggestion of developing through learning, because "limits can be surpassed" (79) and after a harsh program of study, he presented himself at the examination. He manages to pass it and he is put on the list of persons eligible to go to America and study.

Tong Chia-lin does not go to America to become the fearless hero, who survives numerous adventures in order to return to Taiwan a man, instead his purpose is to study and become a true American man and scholar in order to bring his wife to him and live a beautiful life together. When he departs for America he is unsure he will be able to become an American and have his wife emigrate as well and continue to live there. His other option is to study in America and return to Taiwan and live there for the rest of his life, because unlike other students, his father had given him money to study pharmacy for only a year, so that he would come back to Taiwan, become a pharmacist and repay his debt, because he is still considered the third son and not worthy of money for study like his older brother, and his parents offered it to him as a loan.

After Tong Chia-lin arrives in America, he decides to study Electronic Science, and not Pharmacy, due to his inclination towards machines and his intuition that space programs will be further developed in the future. Because he chose to focus on his *wen* nature, becoming a scholar, and his field of study,

he was recognized as a valuable individual, even if he had to prove himself. He was tested twice before being accepted to work on Professor John Gleason's project, first when he came to give something to Professor Ni Wen-Chong at Michigan University (158) and later, when he came to see Professor Gleason in order to get hired (229). Unfortunately, he did not get hired at Michigan University because all the available positions had been taken in the meantime, but professor Gleason offered him the chance to work on a rocket project through an unpaid internship and get his name on the paper being written about the project and he accepted, as he wanted to remain in America and be an American.

Tong Chia-lin is not portrayed as a usual Taiwanese immigrant who goes to university in order to listen and mechanically repeat what they are told, or to talk to his male peers only, because he speaks up and talks about his problems to the department head from the South Dakota University School of Mines, which none of the other Chinese students did, as they only "sit in the corner talking among themselves" (174). Moreover, he does not take traditionally female jobs as washing dishes or laundry work like other Taiwanese immigrants. Therefore, he is not effeminizing himself, but he applies for a job in a factory, where he is hired to repair radios, traditionally considered a man's job, and this small aspect makes him different from others in the same situation, by showing he wants to be an American man, not a Taiwanese effeminized man.

After Chia-lin receives the unique opportunity to teach a course on electromagnetism, because "the teaching fellow has had to leave suddenly" (Wu 240), he starts to teach differently from what his professor instructed, because he does not want to be a common professor, as other Taiwanese immigrants would be, but desires to be a true scholar who showcases the breadth of his knowledge. Therefore, he consults several textbooks and tries to teach by showing the applicability of each theory.

Although Chia-lin continued to encounter problems, like his brother's friends mingling in his life and trying to stop his advancement by lying that he had plagiarized his lab work, that he is subversive to the Taiwanese government, and maybe by telling the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service that his wife is sick with tuberculosis, he managed to survive and find a solution each time, like a true disciple of Sun Tzu. He defeated his older brother by sending his father the letter in which Kazuo thanks his friend for making Chia-lin's life harder.

In the final chapters, after his wife comes to America and he becomes a PhD student, his true Taiwanese American manliness becomes evident when he confronts his father and tells him to let his wife sleep because his pregnant wife is tired. Unfortunately, it was too late, because his second son died at birth soon after, probably because of this episode when his father bothered his wife. Moreover, his first son had to pass through a couple of traumatic years

before coming to America, in which he was probably deprived of food and his aunts treated him badly because he was the son of the third son. Nevertheless, he did become a true Taiwanese American man, standing up to his father and showing him that he is not a third son anymore, but the true head of a family, a scholar and a self-made man. Therefore, he had abandoned the path of the Old World in which everything is decided by social ethics, described as "thoughtless repetition, relieving a person of the burden of reflection, self-examination, and free will" (Wu 296) and embraced the belief that everybody can be an accomplished man, even the third son, not only the oldest son.

Finally, but not least important, when analyzing Chai-lin's wish to bring his wife to the United States to enjoy freedom from social ethics, a reader may assume this is a woman's way of thinking, because only she or a soft man would be sentimental enough to bring his spouse to the new country, whereas a true Asian man would have sent her the money to survive alongside his birth family. However, a closer reader would see that Chai-lin behaves like an American man, who buys his woman's freedom through his influence, which common poor Asian men cannot (Shimizu 50). Chia-lin brings Yoshiko to America in order to escape the social problems of Taiwan and to build a traditional America family of that period, where the father is the bread-winner and the mother is a home-maker. This is the final step towards becoming a truly accomplished man.

In conclusion, it may be said that Julie Wu's novel is not only about the transformation of the hero from a Taiwanese immigrant, who is a third son forever neglected and set aside by his family, into a good looking and dominating American man, but also about the evolution of Tong Chia-lin/Saburo from his status as a helpless Taiwanese third son who can only fail to the status of successful son and scholar, which was achieved by developing one of the two fundamental natures of man in traditional China, the *wen* nature, i.e. the scholarly nature of the man.

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A DEFIANT AND CRITICAL FEMALE VOICE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: MARY HAYS AND THE *MEMOIRS OF EMMA COURTNEY*

HAKAN YILMAZ¹

ABSTRACT. *A Defiant and Critical Female Voice in the Eighteenth Century: Mary Hays and the Memoirs of Emma Courtney.* Mary Hays was heavily engaged in examining the position of woman in the patriarchal society of the Age of Enlightenment. The eponymous heroine in Hays' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* becomes the embodiment of female defiance against patriarchal constraints by expressing explicitly her sexual desires and emotions. This article aims at investigating Hays's critique of the social and sexual restrictions and oppressions exerted on women in the late eighteenth century.

Keywords: *Mary Hays, Memoirs of Emma Courtney, gender, the Enlightenment, patriarchy, female defiance, the eighteenth-century novel.*

REZUMAT. *O voce feminină sfidătoare și critică în secolul al XVIII-lea: Mary Hays și Memoriile Emmei Courtney.* Mary Hays a fost extrem de interesată să prezinte poziția femeii în societatea patriarhală din Secolul Luminilor. Eroina principală a lui Hays din *Memoriile Emmei Courtney* devine întruchiparea sfidării feminine a constrângerilor patriarhale prin exprimarea explicită a dorințelor sale sexuale și a emoțiilor sale. Prezentul articol analizează modul în care Hays critică oprimarea și restricțiile sociale și sexuale exercitate asupra femeilor din secolul al XVIII-lea.

Cuvinte cheie: *Mary Hays, Memoriile Emmei Courtney, gender, iluminism, patriarhie, sfidarea feminină, romanul secolului al XVIII-lea.*

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The literary scene of almost all ages except for the last century or so had been canonically monopolized by the male writers. The emergence of the novel genre in the early eighteenth century was no exception. Even after almost three centuries, in 1957, when Ian Watt published his ground-breaking work, *The Rise of the Novel*, there was still not much space allotted to the eighteenth-century women novelists. Ian Watt basically examined the works of Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding and attributed the birth and development of the novel genre to these writers, thereby epitomizing them as the fathers of the English novel. However, Aphra Behn had tried her hand at the genre with her *Oroonoko: or, The Royal Slave. A True History* (1688) much earlier than the alleged fathers of the English novel. Furthermore, Eliza Haywood wrote in the same period as Defoe. She published her *Love in Excess* in 1719-20 the same year when Defoe's highly venerated *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) came out. There were many other women novelists who tried their hand at writing novels before Richardson and Fielding. However, all these attempts of women writers were ignored by the male supremacy over the literary arena. More significantly - and unfortunately - not until the 1980s had there been any extensive research on eighteenth-century women novelists. The two most prominent works which brought the long forgotten women novelists to our attention were Jane Spencer's *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (1986) and Dale Spender's *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers before Jane Austen* (1986). These books, and many others like them, helped reshape the domain of the eighteenth-century novel studies which had been by far domineered by the studies made mainly on the male writers.

Mary Hays (1760-1843) was one of the late eighteenth-century women novelists and she suffered the same fate of oblivion as the other women novelists. She produced much of her major work in the 1790s and was heavily engaged in exploring and examining the position of woman in a patriarchal society. The bulk of her work essentially provides "the most articulate and detailed expressions of the yearnings and frustrations of a woman living in the late-eighteenth-century English society" (Ty vii). Hays was quite conscious of the oppressing mechanisms of the patriarchal society which imposed certain gender roles on women and confined them to the domestic sphere. She was mainly frustrated by the restrictions placed on women in terms of education and intellectual pursuits to which only men had access. In *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796), Hays lays bare the constraints exercised upon women, explores the difficulties women encounter in their lives, and develops, what Jane Spencer calls, "a feminist analysis of social institutions" (130). In *Emma Courtney*, we witness the eponymous heroine live through many obstacles with regard to education,

marriage, and intellectual pursuits. This paper, therefore, aims at investigating Hays's critique of the social institutions and their restrictions on women in relation to female education, marriage, and intellectual pursuits, and also at exploring how Hays manages to defy the limitations placed on women through her character Emma.

Mary Hays was born into a middle-class family of Rational Dissenters in Southwark, London in 1760. Her Dissenting background helped shape her ideas in relation to religion, politics, and society. In her youth, she attended many local Dissenting meetings where she came to know John Eccles, another Dissenter, with whom she had an affair. However, their parents did not consent to their marriage, yet they continued to correspond in secrecy. At last, the families had to give permission to their marriage but, unfortunately, Eccles became ill and died before the marriage. The death of Eccles, according to Dale Spender, "represented for Mary Hays the loss of a way of life and the end of her dream of being 'taught' much of what she wanted to know" (264) since Eccles was both a lover and also a mentor to Hays. To overcome her grief, she turned to reading and scholarly pursuits. In 1792, when Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Mary Hays was very much affected by its ideas and wrote to Wollstonecraft. This sowed the seeds of a friendship that would last until the death of Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft. As Pamela Bentley states, Wollstonecraft "was a member of an intellectual circle which cantered around the liberal publisher, Joseph Johnson, who published her and William Godwin, as well as many of the other radicals of the period" and thus Hays, as a friend of Wollstonecraft, "soon became part of this select group and so was steeped in the political and social revolution in thought" (Bentley 2-3). In the meantime, Hays also corresponded with William Godwin and exchanged her ideas with him. She had another affair with William Frend, a Cambridge Dissenter, but this time it was not reciprocal. He was not interested in Hays; therefore, Hays turned to Godwin again for his advice. As Dale Spender puts it, "[b]ecause [Hays] was so concerned about the void in her own life, because she was concerned with her personal frustration in John Eccles and William Frend, and with the public frustration of the denial of women's sexual autonomy, William Godwin suggested that she explore this issue in fiction" (266) which resulted in the writing of *Emma Courtney*. On the other hand, Hays lived by her pen. She wrote reviews and articles for magazines and periodicals. She wrote a number of works concerning the position of woman in society and also two novels *Emma Courtney* and *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799). Her fervent attitude with regard to the woman issue got subdued after the death of Wollstonecraft who had supported Hays. After the turn of the century, Hays's ties with these intellectual circles

loosened and she withdrew from writing. Consequently, we do not have much information about Hays' later years.

Emma Courtney is mostly regarded as a sentimental novel; however, it owes much to other genres ranging from autobiography to the epistolary and the philosophical essay. The novel is framed by the letters written by Emma to young Augustus. Yet, as Eleanor Ty argues, it is “not a sustained epistolary work, [because] it is framed by letters to the young Augustus Harley [only] in crucial moments: at the beginning, middle, and end” (xxi). This epistolary frame is structured in such a translucent way that the reader more frequently than not fails to recall its frame. At the beginning of the novel, Emma reveals her intention of narrating her story to the young Augustus: “Learn, then, from the incidents of my life, entangled with those of his to whom you owe your existence, a more striking and affecting lesson than abstract philosophy can ever afford” (*Memoirs* 9). Her main aim in relating her story is to give the young Augustus some advice and instruction because the young Augustus suffers because of his love for a woman who does not return his love and marries someone else. Thus, Emma tries to teach the young Augustus to regulate and subdue his uncontrollable passion and fervent emotions. At the beginning of Volume II, we have a very succinct letter to the young Augustus in which the reader learns that Augustus is interested in Emma's story. The last letter to the young person comes at the very end of the novel where Emma hopes that the unfolding of the errors of her past life will be beneficial to the young Augustus. Emma's letters to the young Augustus are only three out of the whole novel. Therefore, as Pamela Bentley asserts, “it is relatively easy for the reader to forget this [framed] structure and feel as though he or she is being addressed directly. The use of the first person narrative throughout also strengthens this impression” (19-20). There is no other reference to the young Augustus throughout the novel except these three letters. Nevertheless, apart from this epistolary frame of the novel, Emma includes many of the letters that she wrote to her lover Augustus Harley (the father of the young Augustus) as well as to Mr. Francis who guides and reasons with her. Many of these letters were directly taken from Hays's own letters to William Godwin, John Eccles, and William Friend. In this respect, the novel's “genesis as actual letters by Hays and its use of these letters also locate it as a kind of epistolary fiction [. . .]” (TY XXI).

Emma starts to relate her story from the very beginning of the novel. Her mother dies during her birth and she is given to her aunt Mrs Melmoth who recently lost her child. Consequently, Mrs Melmoth adopts Emma as her own child. The latter enjoys a real family life with the Melmoths. Then, her father, Mr. Courtney, takes on the responsibility to educate Emma. By the time

she is nineteen, both her aunt and father die. Then she stays with the family of her father's brother, the Mortons. She makes friends with an older man, Mr. Francis, who acts as her counsel and guide and with whom she exchanges philosophical ideas through letters. Emma is acquainted with a Mr. Montagu who is attracted to her and whom she marries during the latter half of the novel. Emma develops a close friendship with Mrs. Harley with whose son (Augustus Harley) she falls in love. However, "[a]fter meeting Harley and gaining his friendship, she confesses her love for him and actively urges him to love her, to no avail. As it turns out, in a mysterious gothic fashion, Harley is already married to a West Indian" (Pari 61) woman. Emma leaves for London and looks for the means to support herself. She tries her hand at teaching as a governess, yet she cannot find a constant job. She puts all her money into an annuity investment in a bank which goes bankrupt and leaves Emma penniless. Therefore, she is forced to accede to Mr. Montagu's proposal. But Montagu violates Rachel, the eighteen-year old nanny, in a fit of jealousy after Augustus Harley's return to Emma's life. Rachel conceives a child whom Montagu tries to abort with pills, to no avail. When the child is born, Montagu kills the baby with his hands. Grief-stricken, he shoots himself. Emma reconstitutes her family with little Emma, her daughter, Rachel, the violated nanny, and the young Augustus Harley (the son of Augustus Harley) whom she adopts after the death of her lover as she promised him she would do.

One of the issues Hays constantly addresses throughout the narrative is the problem of female education and its dichotomous separation from male education. In the first half of the novel, Hays emphasizes the question of female education, especially its efficacy. Emma reveals that she grew up, listening to her aunt Mrs Melmoth who would relate "the stories from the Arabian Nights, Turkish Tales, and other works of like marvelous import" which "produced, in [her] young mind, a strong desire of learning to read the books which contained such enchanting stores of entertainment" (*Memoirs* 14). She learns to recite many passages from "Pope's Homer and Thomson's Seasons" at the age of six (*Memoirs* 14). Reading becomes her passion and, at the age of fourteen, she subscribes to a circulating library and "devour[s] – little careful in the selection – from ten to fourteen novels in a week" (*Memoirs* 18). However, as Eleanor Ty rightly asserts, "[t]he freedom with which Emma pursues literature is contrasted with the restrictive nature of her formal education" (XXIV). At boarding school, the formal education Emma receives is in a stark contrast to what she is used to: "Ah! never shall I forget the contrast I experienced. [. . .] my actions were all constrained; - I was obliged to sit poring over needle-work, and forbidden to prate; - my body was tortured into forms, my mind coerced, and tasks imposed upon me, grammar and French,

mere words, that conveyed to me no ideas" (*Memoirs* 15). Moreover, the books and novels that she procured to read during the intervals between classes "were often wantonly taken from [her]" (*Memoirs* 16) because novels "were, in the eighteenth century, believed to foster dangerous sentiments in young women [. . .]" (Fisk 48). In this regard, the restrictions Emma encounters at boarding-school anticipate the further limitations of the society exercised upon women. The female education provided at such boarding-schools aims "to create the male fantasy of a feminine and sexualized woman with superficial ornamental skills" (TY XXIV). For instance, while Emma lives with the Mortons (Emma's brother's family), she, "being ever desirous of active and useful employment" offers to teach the young Mortons "music, drawing, French or any other accomplishment" (*Memoirs* 35). However, Mrs. Morton retorts by stating that "[her children's] expectations are not great, and [Emma's] *elegant* accomplishments might unfit them for their future, probable, stations" (*Memoirs* 35 italics in the original). As Mary Ann Tobin rightly argues, "Mrs. Morton's emphasis on the elegance of Emma's accomplishments connotes their unsuitability in her particular middle-class social sphere [. . .]. Once again, Hays emphasizes the enforced passivity and utter uselessness of female intellectualism in her upper-middle-class society" (49). The case of the Mortons is no exception: Mrs. Morton turns down Emma's offer merely because she wants to establish her daughters by marriage, and more significantly, such knowledge or teaching might spoil the minds of her daughters which, Mrs. Morton fears, would fail them in their prospective marriages. In this regard, Hays laments the fact that women are adorned with superficial skills and external attractions as if they were up for sale in a marriage market.

Dale Spender states that "[i]n general Hays wrote about women's position inside and outside marriage" (265). Indeed, since Hays is quite engaged in defending and improving the position of women in society, she could not help exploring – and also being critical of – the idea, or rather, understanding of the marriage institution within the late-eighteenth century context. Hays argues following in the footsteps of Wollstonecraft. She condemns Swift, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Sterne for their courtly morality which supports regulating and civilizing desire (especially female desire), and believes that "such ideas have produced 'two classes of victims:' those for whom marriage is merely a form of prostitution in which sexual favours are exchanged for material security and those who reject marriage and are forced by social convention to remain celibate and deny their natural sexual desires" (Kelly 92). In either case, Hays sees women as victims because marriages were made mainly for financial purposes which Hays finds degrading for women

and goes further to think of such arranged marriages as prostitution. As Emma's father, Mr. Courtney, asserts in the novel: "Marriage, generally speaking, in the existing state of things, must of necessity be an affair of *finance*" (*Memoirs* 50 italics original). Mr. Courtney's intention was to establish Emma by marriage because Emma will inherit no fortune from his father after his death. Yet, Emma, just like Hays, believes in the power of desire and love which would bring happiness to a marriage when these feelings are reciprocal. In shaping her ideas about marriage, there are two significant marriage examples: the Melmoths and Emma's own parents. Emma tells of her parents: "My father was a man [. . .] of superior rank in life, but dissipated, extravagant, and profligate. My mother, the daughter of a rich trader, and the sole heiress of his fortunes, was allured by the specious address and fashionable manners of my father [. . .]. My father courted her hand to make himself master of her ample possessions [. . .]" (*Memoirs* 10). In this regard, the example of Emma's parents is simply a union between rank and money made exclusively for securing material gain. On the other hand, since Emma grows up in the Melmoths' household and witnesses the marriage of her maternal aunt and uncle which is shaped by love and tenderness in a cosy atmosphere, she wants to have a marriage and family like that of the Melmoths. However, Emma's revolutionary character lies not in her advocacy of love and passion in a marriage, but in her belief in the possibility of such reciprocal and healthy desires *outside* marriage. She says to Augustus Harley: "*My friend – I would give myself to you*" (*Memoirs* 124 italics original). As Jane Spencer puts it, "Emma Courtney's offer (never accepted) to live with Augustus Harley outside marriage, because, she tells him, '*the individuality of an affection constitutes its chastity,*' made the novel and its author bywords for immorality [. . .]" (*Memoirs* 98). Such a suggestion on a woman's side exceeded the boundaries of the idea of propriety prevalent in the eighteenth century, thereby making Hays be severely criticized. Emma's aspirations for such a reciprocal love and desire in a relationship are shattered by Augustus Harley who does not return her love. Emma, having no fortune at all to support herself, is ironically made to marry Mr. Montagu for mere financial purposes at the end of the novel. This undermines the whole argumentation put forward by Hays with regard to marriage. Yet, as Caroline Pari puts it, "[m]arriage is presented as the only choice left when [Emma]'s options run out [. . .]" (61) which, in a sense, justifies her marriage for finance in the latter half of the novel.

On a wider scale, all the issues explored above can be put down to Hay's main aim to criticize the patriarchal society and its designation of women to whoever male authority finds suitable. For Hays, "society does not

allow women enough scope to exercise their talents constructively" (TY XV). In her letters to Godwin and in other writings, Hays lamented heavily the restriction of women to domestic sphere and the total banishment of women from intellectual pursuits, in the novel she gives voice to these issues through the character Emma. This strategy is simply because novels were widely read by women at the time and were more accessible. In a letter to Godwin, Hays voices and bemoans what is valid for all the women who yearned for intellectuality but were denied the access in the eighteenth century: "I'm not a mere fine lady, a domestic drudge, or a doll of fashion. I can think, write, reason, converse with men and scholars, and despise many pretty, feminine, prejudices. But I have not the talents for a legislator or a reformer of the world, I have still many shrinking delicacies and female foibles, that unfit me for rising to arduous heights [. . .]" (Hays "Appendix A" 248). By stepping outside the norms attributed to women and into the male sphere with her thoughts, writings, and reasoning, Hays defies the gendered spaces of the society which are also strictly observed in the society's values and mores – especially in their designating "proper" behaviour for both men and women. Just like Hays, Emma "is aware of the restrictions placed upon her and spends much of the novel lamenting and rebelling against these established moral values" (Bentley 21). Emma converses with Mr. Francis, has breakfast with him and attends him through a walk in the garden. However, when these are revealed, Mr. Morton, her paternal uncle, becomes the ultimate voice of the society in what he says to Emma: "You are but little acquainted [. . .] with the customs of society; [. . .]. This, with your late walk yesterday evening, and evident emotion on your return [. . .] wears an indecorous appearance: – the world is *justly* attentive to the conduct of young women, *too apt* to be censorious" (*Memoirs* 43 italics mine). By making Emma defiant of the restrictions of the society, Hays aspires to lay bare the unequal treatment of women in society and show that "women were only inferior to men because of their lack of education and exclusion from meaningful, intellectual pursuits" (Bentley 11). Furthermore, for Hays, the problem lies at the heart of society's patriarchal foundation. Women are manipulated and the only solution the writer envisages is to change the prevailing system in the society. As Audrey Bilger contends, "[b]y scoffing at masculinist authority as the foundation for society [through her writings and stance as well as her character Emma], Hays hoped to topple the entire system. Once the principle of male superiority disappeared, social and domestic politics could perhaps be rebuilt upon an equitable foundation" (49). Hays tries to bring both men and women to equal terms, which seems improbable because the society fetters women with

“adamantine chains” and casts a very powerful “magic circle” (*Memoirs* 32) around them. This closed space stands for woman’s confinement and limited sphere and it is nearly impossible to shatter or dissolve. At the end of the novel, Emma reconstructs the idea of family by forming a family consisting of women (including herself, little Emma and Rachel), which signifies the female solidarity. As Caroline Pari remarks, “[a] healing recovery, after the tragic events of Montagu, is possible only with female solidarity. Only in the reconstituted family of women, living without marriage and patriarchy, does Emma find independence” (62). Such reconstitution is of great significance because Hays, in a way, defies the established institutions of family and marriage, and refashions and appropriates them in accord with woman’s needs which will supply her with much yearned-for independence in this patriarchal society. In this regard, the novel ends on an optimistic tone with its reshaping of the institutions of family and marriage which anticipates the improvement of the position of women in society in the future.

In conclusion, Mary Hays, one of the most fervent defenders (next to Mary Wollstonecraft) of the rights of women in the late eighteenth century, ardently opposed the patriarchal dominance over women in almost every sphere of society and its institutions. She wrote passionately about the woman issue all throughout the 1790s and, argued that excluding women from intellectual pursuits and fettering them into domestic sphere helped increase the prevailing power of patriarchy in the society – to women’s detriment. Seeing this unfair attitude towards women, Hays chose to depict, in her novels, “defiant” heroines who yearn for reading and develop passion for intellectual activities. However, these attempts came to be criticized simply because Hays’ characters did not fit with the “proper” and “decorous” lady or woman the patriarchal world wanted to see. This also explains why women novelists of the eighteenth century were marginalized. As Dale Spender rightly observes, “[t]here has been little room for plain sharp women in the heritage constructed by men – which is why the novels of Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary Hays have not found an enduring place in the cultural heritage” (268). Still, a huge surge of interest in these long-forgotten women novelists in the last two decades evinces that they have finally attracted the attention they rightfully deserve.

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AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES IN UKRAINE: ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE OR A MOVER TOWARDS SOCIAL CHANGES?

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ABSTRACT. *American Literary Studies in Ukraine: Academic Discipline or a Mover towards Social Changes?* The paper presents an overview of the past and the present of American literary studies in Ukraine since the nation's independence in 1990. We argue that American diverse experiences in finding the workable balance between an individual and the state as recorded in literature and shaped by it have been of special significance for Ukraine as potential models in its quest for new national identity. The paper discusses institutional forms of teaching and studying American Literature, recent publications in the field, as well as current theoretical trends in Ukrainian scholars' approaches to the works authored by US writers.

Keywords: *American literary studies, Ukraine, national identity, social changes, postmodernism, multiculturalism.*

REZUMAT. *Studii literare americane în Ucraina: disciplină academică sau îndemn spre schimbări sociale?* Lucrarea de față trece în revistă evoluția istorică a studiilor literare americane în Ucraina, de la câștigarea independenței naționale în 1990 și până în prezent. Susținem că varietatea de experiențe americane în ce privește atingerea unui echilibru funcțional între individ și stat, așa cum se regăsesc în literatură, au o semnificație deosebită pentru Ucraina, în sensul că oferă modele ce pot ghida în demersul formării unei noi identități naționale. Lucrarea discută forme instituționalizate de predare și studiere a literaturii americane, publicații recente în domeniu, precum și tendințele teoretice actuale, așa cum se reflectă ele în modul de abordare a operei scriitorilor americani de către specialiști ucrainieni.

Cuvinte cheie: *studii literare americane, Ucraina, identitate națională, schimbări sociale, postmodernism, multiculturalism.*

Dana Heller remarked in her introduction to a special edition of *American Studies International* featuring papers on post-Soviet American Studies, "as post-Soviet scholars, teachers, and intellectuals engage day-to-day with changing forms of local and

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regional life, American Studies may provide a border space for the representation of a people to itself by way of a detour through the ‘other’” (2003, p. 7). Indeed, the culture of the Other inevitably turns out to be a mirror giving back, in the course of its perception, features, contours, and shadows of both the sender and the recipient of the message. Therefore, the ultimate image staying with us contains not one, but two overlaying silhouettes – the Other’s and one’s own. Speaking of literature, this dual reflection is further multiplied by difference in language always implying, in addition to linguistic translation, the need to translate cultural matrices and national mental settings.

The Ukrainians were first exposed to American literature in the second half of the nineteenth century. Since then they have expanded and refined their knowledge in this realm, often against heavy odds caused by Ukraine’s dependent status. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the narratives telling this story differed for Western and Central Ukraine due to their being parts of different empires; suffice it to mention that for Central and Eastern regions ruled by Russia the ban on book publishing in the Ukrainian language was not lifted until 1907. The Soviet period saw a boost in translations of American authors and in related scholarship, but the selection of writers and texts was very much guided by political and ideological considerations. The fateful socio-political shifts that took place in early 1990s radically changed both the mode and the nature of American literary studies in Ukraine. The declaration of independence urged each and every citizen to revise his or her position vis-à-vis the *socium* and the *universum*, and here diverse American experiences recorded in fiction could be of special value since Americans were confronted with the problem of self-identification right at the dawn of their existence as a nation.

Studies in American literature across the post-Soviet space have all evolved from common roots in the Soviet ground. In the past teachers and scholars from these countries were all subject to nearly identical ideological and censorship pressures, while presently they are all suffering from similar economic and institutional constraints. Nevertheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the once monolithic “tree trunk” was split and since then its “branches” have been growing in a variety of directions indicated by national traditions and general intellectual climate in their respective societies. The quest for harmonious relationships between an individual human being and the state power has always been among the crucial concerns of literature. Historically, the emphasis on individual merit, achievement, and opportunity constituted one of the cornerstones of the American national ethos while, ideally, liberal democracy is about guaranteeing the protection of the basic rights for all individuals. Therefore, much of American literature explores the problem from the perspective of an individual.

In contrast, communist ideology as practiced in the Soviet Union (and spread, among other channels, through literature) tended to prioritize “we” over “I”, the collective over the personal inculcating into the minds of its citizens the belief that the state was much more important than an individual. After the independence, Ukrainians faced the task of changing this pattern radically and exposure to American literature

could provide models for doing so. Therefore, books by American writers were regarded by many scholars, teachers, and readers in Ukraine as something more than “literature”, rather as a kind of “democracy”. Consequently, American studies were seen as a step towards social changes. This fact explains the interest in American literature both for research and teaching purposes, as well as the principal lines along which its study has proceeded. Even though one cannot be so naïve as to expect literary discourse to have immediate social impact, its long-term consequences must not be disregarded.

Another distinguishing feature of American literary studies in Ukraine is their openness to novel Western methodologies predetermined by the country’s geographical location, its geopolitical goals, and its European aspirations. In this respect, the best possible research practices would seem to combine the opportunities offered by new analytical instruments with rich national philological traditions. Also, mutual “pollination” between different national versions within the same disciplinary field is productive in terms of both generating new insights about their object of inquiry and forging the common language of cultural diplomacy so much in demand in today’s gruesome political situation. It can be argued that over the past decades Ukrainian, Russian, and Byelorussian scholars have formed a kind of “tripartite alliance” closely collaborating in their academic pursuits. Today our collaboration with Polish colleagues is rapidly expanding via publications, conference participation, and holding joint events, such as seminars and round tables.

The above-mentioned issue of *American Studies International* (2003) included a paper coauthored by Prof. Denisova and myself which analyzed the status of American Literary Studies in Ukraine as of that moment. This study has summed up some important developments in the field that have transpired since the years of independence. The authors mention, in particular, the lifting of external ideological (and to a certain extent internal-ized) censorship in selecting problems, texts, and individual writers for in-depth study; the institutionalization of teaching American literature in primary, secondary, and tertiary education; the expansion and modernization of the methodological approaches, etc.

It is also my duty and pleasure to mention the huge role played by the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Ukraine, as well as the academic exchange programs active in Ukraine² in reshaping the discipline under discussion in independent Ukraine. These bodies provided comprehensive organizational, financial and personnel support in building up the capacities of American Literary Studies (providing books, giving a helping hand in organizing and funding conferences, facilitating the participation of American scholars in our events etc.). This support was especially intensive at the early stages; at that time this assistance was mostly provided through the English Language Resource Center and the American Library affiliated to the Kyiv–Mohyla Academy, one of the most progressive Ukrainian universities in the early years of independence. Due thanks should also be given to American officials and

² The Fulbright Program and the Kennan Institute at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars.

Fulbrighters, such as Jeannette Demiray, Ann Colley and Irving Massey, Hortense Simmons, and many others for their generous donations of books of fiction, as well as theory and literary history. The American Embassy in Kyiv supported three big international conferences followed by the publication of their materials (*20th Century American Literature after Mid-Century*, 2000; *American Literature at the Turn of the 20th -21st Centuries*, 2004; *Mainstream – Heterogeneity – Canon in Current American Literature*, 2006)). They also supported summer and winter schools of American Studies in Mykolaiv, as well as three issues of *Window into the World*, a journal that dealt exclusively with various aspects of studying and teaching American literature in Ukraine (1999). No less important is the fact that many Ukrainian Americanists of different generations participated in several academic exchange programs – the experience was instrumental in enhancing their professional competence and plunging them, even if for a short period, into the midst of academic life in the US. Some of these scholars are: Tamara Denysova, Tetiana Mykhed, Maria Shymchyshyn, Olexander Hon, Natalia Bidasiuk, Olesia Bondarenko, Oksana Starshova, Anna Haidash, and myself.

The rest of this paper briefly summarizes major developments and trends in American Literary Studies in Ukraine over the past decade and a half.

1) Institutionally speaking, the setting up of the Center of American Literary Studies in Ukraine affiliated to the “T.H.Shevchenko” Institute of Literature of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in 2005 became a landmark. Actually, the Center had operated long before its official opening. The inspiration behind the Center, its soul, and its unchallenged president until her much lamented demise in May last year, was Tamara Denysova, an illustrious scholar, the dean of American Literary Studies in Ukraine. According to its Bylaws, the Center aims at conducting sessions of the informal School of American Literature, organizing conferences, symposia, and round tables, publishing the yearbook *American Literary Studies in Ukraine* (nine issues have been published up to the present), designing courses in American literature, collaborating with publishers in translating, editing, commenting upon works by American authors published in Ukraine; delivering academic and popular lectures to various audiences etc.

2) Under the aegis of the Center systematic seminars of Ukrainian researchers of US literature were initiated and attended by participants from every region of Ukraine. While the first set of seminars focused on contemporary literature (first of all, in the context of postmodernism and multiculturalism), the next one was historically oriented, offering the revision of the main stages in the development of American literature from new theoretical angles (the colonial Puritan period, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, critical realism, modernism). It was followed by discussions about genre modifications in US literature (poetry, short story, drama), as well as seminars on various works by individual authors. Bimonthly discussions traditionally ended in a symposium resulting in a publication, that is, a collection of scholarly papers. As teachers, undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral students keep telling us, these volumes have become much-

treasured sources for those who are engaged in research or simply interested in American Literature. The most recent issue (2016) addresses various aspects of Henry James' legacy and it is the last collection edited by Professor Denysova.

Due to current financial constraints limiting the number of academic publications in Ukraine, every book-length study in American Literature becomes an event. A real milestone in the Ukrainian development of American Studies was the publication in 2002 of Professor Denysova's book *The History of the 20th c. American Literature* (re-edited in 2012) (Denysova 2012). This publication was supported by the Fulbright Program in Ukraine and it was the first book-length American literary history published in Ukraine. The long and complicated literary history of the previous century, with its array of trends, schools, titles and persons, is presented as a system, in accordance with the authorial vision guided by the difficult task of selecting from the multitude of literary facts the most relevant ones for the Ukraine of today. Denysova's last book – *On American Literature* – was published in 2014. Some other recent book-length publications include Mariya Shymchyshyn's study of African American identity as shaped in the Harlem Renaissance writings (2010); Tetyana Mykhed's examination of the Puritan roots of American renaissance (2006); a research into Frank Chin's transcultural aesthetics authored by Victoria Lipina and Volodymyr Seligey (2013); Olena Dubinina's book on Styron (2011), as well as my own discussion of various facets of cultural plurality in American letters (2010).

3) A significant part in promoting American literature in Ukraine has been and is still played by the *Vsesvit (The Universe)*, a magazine specialized in presenting world literature in Ukrainian translations to the nation-wide readership. Under the Soviet rule it used to act as a pioneer in making many resonant books by American writers available to Ukrainian-speaking audiences (Mario Puzo's *Godfather*, Eric Segal's *Love Story*, E. Doctorow's *Ragtime*). Curiously, they were sometimes translated by Ukrainian diplomats who at that time were among the happy few enjoying access to American culture. It was in the pages of *Vsesvit* that Faulkner and Hemingway first spoke Ukrainian, their collected works coming out later. A cohort of outstanding translators (such as Iryna Steshenko, Rostyslav Dotsenko, Volodymyr Mitrofanov, Mar Pinchevsky, and others) were instrumental in bringing these and other American authors within the orb of Ukrainian readers. At present, with Ukraine subscribing to copyright laws, the magazine faces grave financial problems, but its editor-in-chief, Dmytro Drozdovsky, still entertains the idea of putting together a special American issue of *Vsesvit*. In 2012, another Ukrainian magazine, the influential *Krivbass Courier*, implemented an ambitious project. It published fragments from American fiction in Ukrainian translations accompanied by essays about the translated writers authored by Ukrainian scholars.

4) For Ukrainian professionals in the field of American literature, the main directions of their scholarly quest over the past decades have included philosophical and aesthetic innovations caused first by postmodernism and later by its twilight. Main areas of research included the turn towards cultural pluralism, and the

development of ethnic literatures followed by the transcultural vision of American literature; the increasing porosity of boundaries between literary and cultural studies; imagological and intermedial studies; New Historicism; biographical and autofiction. The appropriation of current theoretical approaches and analytical tools formerly inaccessible to the Ukrainian literary scholars due to the Iron Curtain resulted in the diversification of research methodologies. The scholarly discourse, therefore, is freed from the necessity to conform to one “correct” interpretation of literary phenomena, which had been a trademark of the Soviet period. Earlier periods in American literary history, such as American Renaissance or modernism, are subject re-conceptualizations from new perspectives. Popular (genre) literature, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, also attracts a lot of attention, especially detective and fantasy fiction. The generic palette is expanded, too, with Ukrainian scholarship moving from a traditional novel-centered approach in the direction of other genres, such as poetry, drama, documentary writings, (auto)biography, short fiction, and technogenic literature (hyperfiction).

On the whole, it can be argued that the years of Ukraine’s independence have succeeded, to a considerable extent, in bringing the potential of national American literary studies to fruition in spite of economic and institutional obstacles that have, by no means, become a thing of the past. The fact that universities, as well as research centers, are permanently submitted to ill-considered reforms and downsizing damages continuity in the normal development of American literary studies. No less detrimental is the constant shortage of operational funding holding back the scholars’ academic mobility and their performance on the international arena.

Nevertheless, in spite of all adversity, our finest experts in American literature seem to meet the world competence standards in the field as testified by their successful participation in international conferences, exchange programs, and scholarly publications. For better or for worse, today, as always, *studia humanitatis*, including American Literary Studies, involve not only the intellect, but the heart as well; the engagement with American Literature is a destiny, rather than a career, being pre-ordained not so much by mercenary considerations, as by the urges of one’s soul.

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ALICE VOINESCU: CONSTRUCTING FEMININE IDENTITY

CRISTINA DIAMANT¹

ABSTRACT. *Alice Voinescu: Constructing Feminine Identity.* One of the most promising intellectual figures of her time, Alice Voinescu fell into obscurity and sadly never managed to impact Romanian society as much as she could have. Her diary entries reveal a complex figure often at odds with traditional gender roles. She had high confidence in Christian values and also kept under close scrutiny the rise and fall of important cultural icons shaping the age: from Queen Maria, much respected by her, to her Communist oppressors. Always concerned with the possibility of authenticity against the background of injustice, she left behind a diary that is both an enlightening and a puzzling text.

Keywords: *aristocratic, authenticity, dignity, ethics, gender, scholar.*

REZUMAT. *Alice Voinescu: construcția identității feminine.* Una dintre cele mai promițătoare figuri intelectuale ale timpului său, Alice Voinescu a căzut în uitare și nu a reușit, din păcate, să aibă impactul promis asupra societății românești. Însemnările din jurnalul ei ne indică o figură complexă, adeseori în conflict cu rolurile tradiționale de gen. Ea își punea speranțele în valorile creștinismului și urmărea, totodată, cu mare interes și luciditate personalitățile culturale ale epocii, de la Regina Maria, pe care o stima enorm, la opresorii ei comuniști. Preocupată permanent de posibilitatea autenticității în contextul nedreptății, jurnalul lui Alice este, în același timp, un text revelator și derutant.

Cuvinte cheie: *aristocratic, autenticitate, demnitate, etică, gen, intelectual.*

*Motto: Am I objective by any chance? I don't know.
I'm honest*² (Alice Voinescu: 167)

In order to achieve a certain energy and authority nowadays, female writing needed to be legitimized throughout time by the authorial experiments of women who, as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, faced the

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² "Oare sunt obiectivă? Nu știu. Sunt sinceră". 23rd November 1939.

isolation, alienation, and obscurity usually associated with a subculture, an experience challenging enough on its own even without mentioning the ever present, yet more intense in their case, anxiety of influence (Harold Bloom's concept as developed in his 1973 study, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*). When it comes to Romania there is a certain delay in this process so that female authorship is even more problematic at the beginning of the twentieth century. A relevant case study could be Alice Voinescu's self-portrait as it emerges in her diary entries since she was not seen as a leading intellectual of her time, but instead was consistently judged for not complying with the gender role she was expected to live up to.

Fortunate enough to have studied in the West (Philosophy in France at that!), Alice returned to a country that was clearly unprepared to accept her voice as it lacked the appropriate symbolic structures to accept her as a cultural icon. Indeed, we may notice a certain double standard at the time when it came to the reaction of the masses to her return: "The country had not seen a woman teach at university level, so much the more when the subject was Philosophy!"³ (Voinescu VII), and Paleologu adds that, looking back, "luckily for Romanian culture and society, she had to accept a job at the Music Academy in Bucharest and the Department of History of Dramatic Literature, where until 1948 she gave talks that were greatly influential at their time"⁴ (Voinescu VII). Although her training far exceeded the requirements of the job, this was the best medium Romanian culture could offer to have her voice heard as a female scholar. The very same audience outraged by the idea of a woman publicly associating herself with Philosophy, the elitist social science reigning supreme over all the others, readily accepted her as a spokesperson for dramatic literature. The hierarchy is implicit. Up to that moment, she had already refused the proposal of an American university impressed by her PhD thesis, *L'interprétation de la doctrine de Kant par l'école de Marburg* (Paris, 1913). She motivated her choice by referring to her social status: "I can't accept, my fiancé is waiting for me back home in Romania"⁵ (Voinescu: VII). One can only speculate now what her career path might have been if her fiancé, Stelu/Stello, had accepted to accompany her to the United States.

If feminism is to be seen as a new type of literarity used not only when texts are read, but also when daily life is seen and reinterpreted from a certain

³ „În țară nu se mai pomenise o femeie profesoară la universitate, și încă filozofie!” (All quotations have been translated by Cristina Diamant.)

⁴ „spre norocul culturii și societății românești, a trebuit să primească la Conservatorul din București și catedra de istoria literaturii dramatice, la care a ținut până în 1948 prelegerile care au făcut epocă”.

⁵ „Nu pot accepta, în România mă așteaptă logodnicul meu”.

perspective, we will now “read” the figure of the woman as it is reflected in her diary entries, taking into account Voinescu’s own attitude towards her gender and its importance in constructing a coherent sense of the self. What we must keep in mind at all times, however, is that there is no simple transfer of the person and the *persona* into the text in question. This is a two-way process, as it creates an opening that makes the unconscious editing of one’s own memories possible while trying to streamline events so as to have a structured narrative account of what was lived. As Jankélévitch puts it, there is a metaphysics of the *je-ne-sais-quoi* and *presque-rien*. Nothing is lost and nothing is gained: the self in a diary is much like the Argonauts’ ship: having all pieces replaced during its journey, but going by the same name, nevertheless.

Drawing strictly upon biographical data, it would seem that the claims of Joanna Russ in *How To Suppress Women’s Writing* (1984) are justified: the assumptions that women do, indeed, objectively write less and...worse are only supported by the “loss” of their works, sometimes even at the hands of their very authors who do not handle carefully what they have written and underestimate the value of their own writings. Female writing is rarely preserved and appreciated for its potential to inspire and motivate despite its great diversity. Alice Voinescu, although not present in textbooks, reveals herself in the diary to have been an active figure in Romanian cultural life, demonstrating remarkable awareness and impressive critical thinking both regarding her personal efforts and those of other contemporary cultural personalities. An issue she continuously comes against is the double standard at the socio-cultural level. Authorship is positively valued when it is the recognizable trademark of one’s uniqueness, an idiosyncratic manner of seeing the world yet, at the same time, there is a certain social pressure for women to accept the spirit of an ideology that promotes self-sacrifice and delayed rewards, always associating their selves with those of the others. Consequently, to be a woman then means not having a self-sufficient self. How to be a writer autonomous in both life and thought, even to ostentatiously mark this difference without being accused that you break the rules of your gender and fail as a woman?

The language itself is not particularly “friendly” towards women as cultural figures as it raises the issue of the *paternity* of the work, its literary *filliation* or *disseminating* ideas. Alice internalizes a complex in relation to the canonical, established texts, as well as an intimidating distance from them. What she writes on Monologue II from *Faust* becomes, in her own eyes, a sum of “empty comments”⁶ for “such a text”⁷, and even this effort in itself is justified

⁶ „sarbede comentarii”

⁷ „astfel de text”

in the diary by her need to look after others and fictionalized as “the growing crowd of youngsters which will never come into contact with *Faust* otherwise”⁸ (Voinescu: 535). Inevitably, following this logic, her position is that of a subaltern: “I play the *temptress* or, better put, that of a middleman”⁹ (Voinescu: 535). She appreciates Petre Manoliu’s qualities that she already demonstrated, namely his “remarkable precision of thought and deep feeling, great vocabulary, with intellectual embellishments”¹⁰ (Voinescu: 566), all the while adding that she hopes that he might have “the courage to start writing”¹¹. Self-reflexive enough to notice the paradox of the situation, she quickly adds, “Why don’t I write?” and her answer highlights the impossibility of independence, “Because the world is tearing me apart. I need to create my own routine so that I may work”¹² (Voinescu: 566). In her diary, her intellectual side appears to have always been “broken apart”, “interrupted”, “absent”¹³ even due to the active presence that the woman Alice Voinescu assumed according to what society expected to be her gender role. While she diligently worked on educating the masses and society proved to be very accepting of such a quasi-motherly attitude, Alice hesitated when it came to foregrounding her own original thinking and involuntarily cursed her work to the level of immanence, of the now and here. Although appreciated for her conferences, she came to see them first and foremost as a duty, not as a way to achieve self-fulfillment: “The lectures are over, good thing I got out of it, they had to be given, but, once given, I can no longer muster up the courage to write them down. Laziness or perhaps something else? Perhaps lack of faith in myself? Once again, I am absent”¹⁴ (Voinescu: 387). Her thought patterns were not egocentric, always turned towards the self, but “dissipated”, not permitting the formation of a lasting *opus*, and Alice thought of herself as being “so *somewhere else*, exceedingly impersonal”¹⁵ (Voinescu: 13). The distance that she took from her own desires and needs significantly decreased her work motivation when she tried “to work on past conferences. But they are the fruit of a dreamy idealism. They were good and beautiful because they were true. I can no longer speak like that”¹⁶ (Voinescu: 7), the woman’s

⁸ „mulțimea crescândă de tineret, care altfel nu se va apropia niciodată de Faust”. 20th October 1948.

⁹ „Fac oficiul de ‘ademenitoare’ sau mai bine zis de samsar!”. 20th October 1948.

¹⁰ „Gândește ascuțit și simte dramatic, vocabular bogat, înflorit intelectual”. 11th February 1950.

¹¹ „curajul să se pună pe scris”

¹² „Că mă destramă lumea. Trebuie să-mi fac un program așa încât să pot lucra”. 11th February 1950.

¹³ „destrămat”, „înterupt”, „absent”

¹⁴ „Conferințele au trecut, bine că am scăpat, trebuiau spuse, dar, o dată spuse, nu mai am curajul să le scriu. Lene sau altceva? Oare neîncredere în mine? Iar sunt absentă”. 21st May 1942.

¹⁵ „așa de *dincolo*, prea impersonală”. 4th November 1929.

¹⁶ „[î]ncerc să lucrez la conferințe trecute. Dar ele sunt rodul unui idealism visător. Erau bune și frumoase fiindcă erau adevărate. Acum nu mai pot vorbi așa”. 4th October 1929.

discourse started undermining that of the intellectual who felt this lack of authenticity and independence and wished "to live a few more years, so that I may grow in accordance with what I am living right now!"¹⁷ (Voinescu: 7). Always suffering from an impostor syndrome, Alice preferred to teach and–translate rather than write works of her own. At times, however, certain circumstances also limited her freedom to choose the texts. For instance, in 1961, she hesitated for quite a long about translating Feuerbach. Financial issues urged her to accept the offer, yet her principles pointed in a different direction: "What am I to do with such a sensualist and heretic?"¹⁸ (Voinescu: 803). To maintain her sense of self-coherence, she used the Christian rhetoric of necessary humility and accepted "only the challenge to have to admit that everybody makes compromises when needed"¹⁹ (Voinescu: 803). Turning her knowledge towards others, the image that she cultivated and which was also accepted by the others through a certain understanding of gender is codified as a motherly one. One of her closest friends, Maria Ana Murnu, recalled that, for her students, she was *Madam (Doamna)*. Alice "with her slightly springy gait, as if always ready to fly away, holding under her arm the books she had just explained to us, with her flaxen hair waving around the hat quite coquettishly lop-sided, she listened to her *children*, as she called them"²⁰ (Voinescu: X).

Even if she challenged certain social customs, Alice was not completely free from the constrains of her gender. Control is, just as Foucault observed, implicit and invisible, so that "docile bodies" are normalized by the gaze of the others and one's own desire to be accepted, integrated within the system. In this Panopticon, an all-seeing prison (Jeremy Bentham), coercion is replaced by cooperation, and power relations are supported by the pretense of an "expertise": knowledge is power, but not all people benefit from knowledge. Alice herself often lamented that she lacked the necessary "expertise". Never condescending or dominating the other, she left her loved ones with a lasting memory of "her kindness that overshadowed her great intelligence, [which] was, indeed, one of the heart but originated from an immense power to understand (matters one may otherwise not question)"²¹ (Voinescu: V), as well as for her "tendency [...] to *submit herself* to the needs of others, to reality, to truth. And especially to God."²² (Voinescu: VII). Socialized as a woman, she

¹⁷ „să mai trăiesc câțiva ani, să mă pot coace în sensul celor ce trăiesc acum!”. 4th October 1929.

¹⁸ „Ce legătură am eu cu acest senzualist și necreștin?”, 18th June 1958.

¹⁹ „doar încercarea de a trebui să recunosc că tot omul face compromisuri la nevoie”, 18th June 1958.

²⁰ „Cu mersul puțin săltat, parcă mereu pregătită de zbor, purtând sub braț cărțile al căror înțeles ni-l tălmăcise, cu părul auriu fluturând în jurul pălăriei cochet aplecată, își asculta *copiii* (așa îi numea)”.

²¹ „Bunătatea aceasta, care-i eclipsa marea inteligență, [care] era într-adevăr a inimii dar venea dintr-o imensă putere de înțelegere (în fond lucruri indiscutabile)”.

²² „Pornirea ei (...) de a *se supune* nevoii altuia, realității, adevărului. Și mai cu seamă lui Dumnezeu”.

would motivate her decision to eliminate what she had written by following a set of values incompatible with her academic career: "At times I am unrelenting towards my own nature. I'd much rather be seen as stupid than risk being thought mean"²³ (Voinescu: 548). Because of her dramatic hesitation between her two "natures", that of the woman and that of the intellectual, although, in reality, both are cultural aspects, she left her Paris friends, Lala and Flo, the feeling that hers was a *volatile* existence. The conflict between the emotivity that she believed she was to assume and the tendency towards sharp rationality confused her, so that "I can't make out the sense of certain leftovers, images of leftovers, in me! Had this been sometime else, I might have lost my temper, now I am too self-assured, the sign of an irredeemable indifference. It might be a victory, but it's spiritual lessening."²⁴ (Voinescu: 13).

Although in the implicit hierarchy, derived from Descartes, the spirit is superior to feeling and the corporeal, getting closer to it is felt to be a "betrayal" of the gender rather than an enriching of the self in the sense of the Hegelian synthesis. With such impossible self-imposed standards, one is sure to experience a sense of failure. Even so, the "tools" associated with her gender are at times useful when reason is not enough to make a concrete reality bearable: "The day began with difficulty. My foot hurts terribly – badly swollen, no boot fits me. The despair of a small child, crying. The heroic decision to leave even if my eyes were to pop out! Pedicure. Good bandage. Bearable."²⁵ (Voinescu: 70). At other times, being outside of what is desirable for her gender offered her a new margin of freedom and the scholar could ignore the woman: "Yesterday I was happy to be ugly – at least there is nothing time can ruin. When will I return to my writing? O! How many times to start anew?"²⁶ (Voinescu: 22). Although the text discussed is difficult to be placed in the framework developed by the American critic Elaine Showalter in *Towards a Feminist Poetics* (1979), Alice makes a shy attempt at a "female" type of writing as she searches for her identity outside the constraints of the established androcentric models, but without openly protesting against them, as the protest would mean maintaining their position of power as a point of

²³ „Sunt uneori severă contra firii mele. Prefer să trec drept proastă și să nu risc să fiu rea”. 9th March 1949.

²⁴ „Nu deslușesc ce rost au anumite resturi, umbre de resturi, în mine! Altădată mi-aș fi pierdut cumpătul, acum sunt prea stăpână pe mine, semn de iremediabilă indiferență. O fi victorie, dar e sărăcie sufletească”. 4th November 1929.

²⁵ „Zi începută greu. Piciorul doare îngrozitor – inflammat, nu mă încapă nici o gheată. Disperare de copil mic, plâns. Hotărâre eroică să plec și de mi-a sări ochii! Pedichiură. Pansament bun. Suportabil”. 26th September 1932.

²⁶ „Aseară am fost fericită de a fi urâtă – măcar timpul nu are nimic de stricat. Când mă voi reîntoarce la scris? O! De câte ori să reîncep?” 28th January 1930.

reference. This type of writing exposes a preoccupation with certain issues thought to be “feminine” (the pain of others, friendship, marital conflicts, etc.) not because of a projected “feminine sensibility” (an idea that is obviously an essentialist one), but because of a framework of experience quite common for many women. To bring her self into being through language, Alice must adapt the linguistic code to her own experience, always operating a selection that would permit her a minimum of unity and stability. As such, this effort may explain the hesitations and rifts noticeable within the text.

Quite common for our society, the intellectual is construed in the masculine gender. Paleologu himself, trying to express his appreciation, carefully added a disclaimer: her diary is “mostly on the emotive side (without reducing its extreme critical awareness in any manner) and comprehensive, in both senses of the word, so that it shows an extraordinary power of understanding and an immense material breadth”²⁷ (Voinescu: V). Alice was, indeed, aware of her existence on the fringes of her gender role: “He came twice and spilled his soul unto me – he needed manly understanding, as well as womanly kindness – I gave it all to him as much as I could”²⁸ (Voinescu: 8). The identity constructed in such a type of discourse about the self is, even when tacitly protesting, an “aristocratic” one, cultivating a type of sensibility that is not dramatic, but delicate and elitist. Society granted women the right to be aware of their own superiority if motivated by social standing. As such, when she attempted this “reversed gymnastics”²⁹ (Voinescu: 548), in which she only submitted to herself to avoid “moral death in this conformist stew”³⁰ (Voinescu: 548), the social class argument made a not so subtle presence “You have to lead a royal lifestyle if you descend from a king! [...] I’ll take the following decision: I’ll begin *da capo* from healthy selfishness. I will try. I will dare!”³¹ (Voinescu: 548). In a conversation about a woman’s reaction to lying in a marriage, she admits that “today’s woman – the mature one and living in the now, not dolls living outside of reality”³² (Voinescu: 3), was an *exception* back in the day. Contrary to what men may have thought, she was dissatisfied

²⁷ „precumpănitor afectiv (ceea ce nu-i scade câtuși de puțin extrema luciditate critică) și comprehensiv, în ambele sensuri, adică de o extraordinară putere de înțelegere și de o imensă cuprindere materială”.

²⁸ „De vreo două ori a venit și și-a vărsat sufletul la mine – avea nevoie de înțelegere bărbătească și blândețe și bunătate feminină – i-o dam cât puteam”. 10th October 1929.

²⁹ „această gimnastică *à rebours*”. 9th March 1949.

³⁰ „pier moralmente într-o ciulama conformistă”. 9th March 1949.

³¹ „Trebuie să trăiești regal dacă ești de neam regesc! (...) Iau o hotărâre: încep *da capo* de la egoismul sănătos. Voi încerca. Voi îndrăzni!”. 9th March 1949.

³² „că femeia de azi – cea coaptă și a vremii, iar nu păpușă și în afară de realitate”. 30th September 1929.

with illusions, with the only exception that she accepted the “illusion [that] is the strong and true reality, not the lie-like illusion, but the illusion that may create and which is born out of knowing the truth”³³ (Voinescu: 3).

As a woman, Alice is caught between parallel mirrors that highlight her feeling of being torn apart, of being inauthentic. Therefore, the narrator’s voice always negotiates meaning between the society that asks her to be useful to others and Stello, who demands exclusivity. From the very beginning, we find out that the diary exists because of the first mirror. It was written not for herself, but for an audience, namely “you and Lala and Flo and Mad, maybe you’ll also read it to others who knew me as I was and who will benefit from one’s past experience to deal with the more difficult times in life”³⁴ (Voinescu: 1). The first motivation started from one of Roger Martin du Gard’s replies at Pontigny, because of whom Alice declared that “*I will write all that I intimately live, all the spiritual surplus left from life and – because I have never done anything without love, nothing useful, I mean – I knew that even this decision I would not follow through with unless I dedicated it to someone*”³⁵ (Voinescu: 1). The assumed honesty of the diary tends to obscure its format, characterised by a fragmentary appearance, a broken pace and by its very incompleteness. Indeed, Alice’s diary also walks the fine line between self-concealment and self-disclosure. The wish to be useful will also be reflected in matters of interpersonal relationships. When Tudor Vianu admitted that he suffered from nervous asthenia, she not only empathized with him, but also, since he “promised he would come to me as he would to Diothima. On such occasions I still feel useful”³⁶ (Voinescu: 803). The tragedy of the poor conditions in which she lived her last years stemmed mostly from the fact that the first mirroring was no longer possible: “I am no longer interesting to anyone. [...] Some people still come to visit me, but they no longer need me.”³⁷ (Voinescu: 838). Not feeling herself to be a self-sufficient subject, she was incapable of motivating herself. Her professional life no longer lended her existence any meaning: “My dear, when I give it a thought, I should wish to pass away, because the existence of an ailing elder is nothing attractive neither for the self, nor for the

³³ „iluzia [care] e realitatea cea puternică și adevărată, dar nu iluzia minciună, ci iluzia creatoare care se naște numai din cunoașterea adevărului”. 30th September 1929.

³⁴ „tu și Lala și Flo și Mad, poate îl veți citi și altora care m-au cunoscut așa cum sunt și care vor avea nevoie de o experiență pentru a se descurca în momentele grele din viață”. 28th September 1929.

³⁵ „*voi scrie tot ce trăiesc intim, tot reziduul spiritual ce-mi lasă viața și – fiindcă niciodată nu am făcut nimic fără dragoste, nimic cu folos zic - știam că și această hotărâre nu o voi putea realiza consecvent decât dedicând-o cuiva*”. 28th September 1929.

³⁶ „mi-a promis că va veni la mine ca la Diothima. În asemenea momente mă simt încă de folos”. 18th June 1958.

³⁷ „Nu mai sunt interesantă pentru nimeni. (...) Mai vine lume să mă vadă, dar nu mai au nevoie de mine”. 29th January 1961.

others. [...] I am disgusted with myself. And it has also killed my drive to talk to tragic heroes. Everything seems to me completely pointless and otherwise flat.”³⁸ (Voinescu: 839).

The need to be useful, even to attend to others, “contaminated” her thoughts of Stello, once he died. Reflecting upon the importance of Communion after Easter break, she came to blame herself because her husband had not shared her religious enthusiasm, displaying, at the same time, a kind of lenience towards him, as if it had been her personal duty to convert him and she had failed³⁹. Consequently, one may say that, despite her superior intellect, she indulged in that Sartrian *mauvaise foi*, meaning that, under the pressure of societal forces, she acted against her authentic being. Believing it was her duty to make him more “spiritual”, she ignored what others noticed: there was an excess in both and, if they failed to find a common denominator, although they had the necessary skills, it was because of pre-existing tendencies. She had a Western mindset that censored the self and led one to think that it is for the instinct to submit to the rigours of the spirit and the intellect, while he (Stello) had a Balkan temperament. Drawing on the definition given by Meaghan Morris to “nagging” in *The Pirate’s Fiancée* (1988), which is simply the unsuccessful repetition of the same sentences (Gamble: 140), Alice can be truly said to continuously “nag” Stello, but not out of some sort of “feminine malice”. The reason is that her attempts to “re-educate” him failed systematically. Defying, on the one hand, the usual feminine typology of “the woman of a great man” as Stello, jealous of her students, complained about his “Prince consort”-like quality, she kept thinking of him as a pillar of her life. His envy seemed to be the sign that she could not display knowledge or desire without, implicitly, hurting him. Writing to her deceased husband in the second part of her diary, she kept cultivating a connection that she felt to be essential for the construction of her identity. A year after his death, Alice felt the disappearance of the associated status signs to be a loss because “the veil

³⁸ „Dragul meu, când mă gândesc serios, ar trebui să doresc să mă duc, căci existența unui bătrân bolnav nu e o atracție nici pentru sine, nici pentru ceilalți. (...) Îmi e silă de mine. Și mi-a secat și inspirația pentru conversațiile mele cu eroii tragici. Totul mi se pare zadarnic și, de altfel, plat”. 18th February 1961. To be noted that she uses the word „bătrân” for „elder”, not „bătrână”, so as not to mark the gender and limit the universality of experience.

³⁹ „The break passed without any spiritual gain, except for the happiness of Communion. [...] I’m hurt by the thought that you, Stello, didn’t have the courage or, better put, you were too modest and shy to do it. I have the feeling that I was terribly selfish in my discreet attitude by not insisting enough.”, „A trecut vacanța fără nici un folos sufletesc, afară de fericirea Împărtășaniei. [...] Sufăr la gândul că tu, Stello drag, n-ai avut curajul, sau, mai bine zis, ai fost prea modest și pudic pentru a îndrăzni să o faci. Am impresia că am fost groaznic de egoistă în discreția cu care te-am tratat, nu am insistat destul.” (Voinescu: 223). 25th April 1941.

and all that ritual that kept me socially tied to you gave me an integrity I no longer have, I am but a fragment. Gradually, I have to rebuild my singular unity, but I feel that this has to include a connection with you. I could stand being *your widow*, but 'a widow' has something humiliating in it."⁴⁰ (Voinescu: 341). The more the distance from this second mirror increases, the idealization factor is intensified. If, during his lifetime, "I often had a motherly feeling towards you"⁴¹ (Voinescu: 836) and felt the need to re-educate him, "Now I have the feeling that you are high above me, as you otherwise were sometimes when alive. You were living on a very high and authentic spiritual level, not only in thought, like Ionel. You, men, know of heights we, women, can only reach if supported by our instinct."⁴² (Voinescu: 836-7). A strange change of perspective, indeed, when even Maria Ana Murnu noticed that she was the more "spiritual" and rational of the two. Gender creates further contrasts between such judgements and this is why, as Deborah Cameron would have it, "gender is a problem, not a solution" (Gamble: 145). Idealizing her dead husband also affects the way she thinks of the frequency of her diary entries. If, in the early beginning, rarely and with great care "I write these pages, afraid to be caught by Stello"⁴³ (Voinescu: 75), during her last years she projected all her guilt on herself: "Stello, dearest, I'm writing on loose sheets because I no longer have a notebook. Carelessness, perpetual lack of money."⁴⁴ (Voinescu: 813). Poverty is, however, just another external limit, like his jealousy used to be. It quickly becomes apparent how a diary is a metonymy of one's life: it is this incompleteness and fascination with meagre aspects that makes the text diary-like and not similar to biographic fiction, as only the death of the speaking "I" completes the perspective, offering definite answers and meanings. The same process is mimicked when Stello is concerned, as if his death suddenly reveals the full picture by bringing to light hidden meanings, previously out of reach. During his lifetime, his portrait is less flattering. When, after an absence of two days, Stello "turns the weapon

⁴⁰ „voalul și tot ceremonialul care mă legau social de tine îmi dădeau o integritate pe care acum nu o mai am, sunt doar un fragment. Treptat trebuie să îmi refac unitatea singulară, dar simt că aceasta trebuie să includă o legătură cu tine. Suportam să fiu *văduva ta*, dar o 'văduvă' are ceva umilitor". 14th January 1942.

⁴¹ „aveam adesea un sentiment matern pentru tine". 3rd January 1961.

⁴² „Acum am impresia că ești foarte sus, cum de altfel erai uneori în viață. Tu trăiai spiritual foarte sus și autentic, nu numai cu gândul, ca și Ionel. Voi, bărbații, aveți superiorități pe care noi, femeile, dacă nu ne susține încă instinctul, nu le putem atinge decât cu greu". 3rd January 1961.

⁴³ „scriu pe aceste foi, de teamă să nu mă vadă Stello". 2nd January 1934.

⁴⁴ „Stello dragă, scriu pe foaie volantă fiindcă nu am caiet. Neglijență, lipsă de bani perpetuă". 20th February 1959.

against me: he accuses me, suspects me"⁴⁵ (Voinescu: 6), Alice noticed that this was nothing but a mechanism "to defend himself. *C'est lache*, that's what I've always told him"⁴⁶ (Voinescu: 6). Stello's jealousy towards Mișu Paleologu seems groundless in her eyes, so it may just be "not real suffering [but], as I believe, the ready-learned formula of male ego"⁴⁷ (Voinescu: 3), suggesting that she is aware of her husband's sense of entitlement. Another interesting change of perspective after his death can be found when she tries to motivate her need to focus her attention on him. If his need for exclusive attention was previously seen as "a child-like spiritual quality, a lack of maturity"⁴⁸ (Voinescu: 169), and she answered it with tacit indignation rather than any other kind of reaction, once he is no longer by her side, Alice promised him to lead the life of a nun: "It is not just that you need to know me separated from the world, but this is how I can come closer to you and your world"⁴⁹ (Voinescu: 221). Without him, she felt like a fragment, *unfinished/callow*. Comparing herself to other scholars is related to the same self-deprecating tendency, wishing to become a "mature", "whole", self-sufficient human. Although appreciated on a national and international level for her brilliant mind, her self-image was distorted. Alice thought that "My spirit has emancipated itself only as of late, only last year reaching fullness. May God help Gide! I am very much behind, a sheep in the herd"⁵⁰ (Voinescu: 23). She believed the arguments of others to be sophisticated, while her adapted-for-a-target-group discourse was severely depreciated: "I have noticed how weak I am when superior arguments are brought to my attention! I cannot help but go to school and tell the girls, even make propaganda!"⁵¹ (Voinescu: 5). When Iorga cried out to a student "Girl, don't be upset, I didn't mean to upset you!"⁵² (Voinescu: 79), Alice projected the kindness perceived in Iorga's tone upon his whole personality so that "I may have heard he's torn Titulescu apart and many more – but for me, even if a poor ugly kitten would make him show his nails, I know he's good!"⁵³ (Voinescu: 79). She would never, however, make

⁴⁵ „Întoarce arma: acuză, mă bănuiește”. 4th October 1929.

⁴⁶ „doar pentru a se apăra pe el. *C'est lache*, asta i-am reproșat întotdeauna”. 4th October 1929.

⁴⁷ „adevărată suferință [ci], cum cred, formula învățată a orgoliului bărbătesc?”. 30th September 1929.

⁴⁸ „o calitate spirituală copilărească, nematură”. 19th January 1940.

⁴⁹ „Nu doar că tu ai nevoie să mă știi ruptă de lume, dar pentru că așa mă apropii mai mult de tine și lumea ta”. 15th February 1941.

⁵⁰ „Spiritul meu s-a emancipata abia târziu, cu totul abia anul trecut. Dumnezeu să-l răsplătească pe Gide! Sunt foarte înapoiată, o oaie în turmă”. 4th February 1930.

⁵¹ „Am constatat cât sunt de slabă când mi se invocă argumente de ordin superior! Nu o să pot rezista să nu mă duc la școală să vorbesc elevelor, ba chiar să fac propagandă!”. 2nd October 1929.

⁵² „Fato, nu fi mâhnită, n-am vrut să te mâhnesc!”. 5th February 1934.

⁵³ „Pot afla că a sfâșiat în bucăți pe Titulescu sau pe oricine – pentru mine, chiar dacă un biet pisoi urât i-ar tenta ghearele, știu că e bun!”. 5th February 1934.

the opposite assumption, assuming an intellectual superiority in case of her own professional endeavours.

Compared to others, Alice strived not to display that “ambition and need of *fla fla* found in some women”⁵⁴ (Voinescu: 205). Let us keep in mind that objects in the mirror are closer than they appear, so that any premeditated self-portrait is bound to fail because it interprets rather than represent. What a reader must look for in this text, as well, is the authentic self which appears through the act of questioning. Fortunately for us, the speaking “I” of the diary does this often enough. She was not interested in gossip: although Petre Manoliu was seen as an “abnormal”, she preferred to make up her own mind about him. Once she started looking down on Elena Văcărescu for her dramatic discourse style and concluded that “*She is not a real intellectual*, she demonstrates no respectful love for truth! I’m sorry I have to write it here, I would be lying to myself if I hid this feeling!”⁵⁵ (Voinescu: 100), she turned this reflection back on herself applying the same criteria, wondering “how inauthentic I might seem to my students when I get excited about Aeschylus!”⁵⁶ (Voinescu: 80). A certain ambiguity in her relation to gender can also be noticed. “I was counting on her [Anișoara] as I would on a man, that is why I spent my time with her, as the woman in her has nothing in common with me. For me, she was a nice person.”⁵⁷ (Voinescu: 2); she forgave her, however, out of a sense of aristocratic mercy that replaces the fury of being betrayed. When Christiana P., the very image of “resigned wisdom”, opened herself up to her, Alice suffered because she saw “such a soul full of potential being eaten away”⁵⁸ (Voinescu: 5), crying out, accusingly, “Men are so stupid!”⁵⁹ (Voinescu: 5). The indignation that Radu Sihireanu married “a whore to be bought and sold”, combined with her empathy for his mother, protected the image projected upon a social class that associated itself with certain values to stand apart.

Her “aristocratic” image justifies an elitism otherwise seen as incompatible with her gender role. Instead of “womanly narcissism” or boundless opulence, her students found “the harmony of an interior where nothing seems superfluous, all objects lining up as a necessary support for

⁵⁴ „ambiiție și nevoie de *fla fla* [di]n unele femei”. 7th September 1940.

⁵⁵ „*Nu e om adevărat de cultură*, nu are dragostea respectuoasă față de adevăr! Îmi pare rău că trebuie să o scriu aci, m-aș minți dacă aș ascunde acest simțământ!”. 5th February 1934.

⁵⁶ „cât de neveridică le apar eu elevilor mei când mă pasionez pentru Eschil!”. 5th February 1934.

⁵⁷ „Contam pe ea [Anișoara] ca pe un bărbat, de aceea freiam cu ea, căci femeia din ea n-are nimic comun cu mine. Era pentru mine un om de treabă”. 30th September 1929.

⁵⁸ „se anchilozează un suflet așa plin de posibilități”. 2nd October 1929.

⁵⁹ „Proști sunt bărbații!”. 2nd October 1929.

people dedicated to the spirit⁶⁰ (Voinescu: 21). Books and music “fulfilled” her as warrants of authenticity and, oftentimes, reminded her of personal needs that separated her from the world and from Stello: “Today during music class: *Siegfrieds Tod*. An irresistible grief seized me, I’m crying unable to help myself. I need to focus on my work, I need work of the best quality”⁶¹ (Voinescu: 431). Her “aristocratic” elitism made her reject what she felt to be “thesisism” and protect the autonomy of the aesthetic while claiming that “This is not art, this is protest. What is true is that this is a direct, unfalsified vision of the ‘people’ and the upper classes. But this is observation and social protest, not art. Just like *Moromeții*”⁶² (Voinescu: 801). The same “aristocratic” sensibility rendered her woefully unprepared for a changing political climate and she eventually grew to notice that it was because of her “too solid an education, namely too strict under the disguise of grace, [that] stilted my vitality, making it a slave to moral principles. A hybrid product of a formalist era, condemned to live throughout an anarchic period! Absolute rubbish”⁶³ (Voinescu: 494). This is how she attempted to rationalise her intense disgust at the revolting news that the Communists won the election through less than honourable methods. Despite her general Christian outlook, she could not help but turn to Nietzsche and regret her previous meekness in the face of evil as she was forced to look on while the winners redefined what was right and what was wrong. Already feeling old and decrepit in 1946, she regretted not being “male and young” so that she might have her voice heard loud and clear against such abuse of power. Interestingly enough, she admitted that it was not their ideas *per se* that she fought against, but the spirit of those bringing them to life in Romanian society. Her objection is mainly against what is perceived as a betrayal of one’s own motherland, to which she adds time and time again her utter disgust when seeing people do anything for profit and forsaking the ideal of authenticity. As a social praxis, she cannot excuse the superficial assimilation of ideals that are turned into means to serve one’s selfish purpose.

This deep understanding of ethics permeated all aspects of her life. After being released from prison, during her house arrest, Alice still felt responsible

⁶⁰ „armonia unui interior unde nimic nu părea de prisos, obiectele ordonându-se ca un suport firesc și necesar unor oameni dedicați spiritului”.

⁶¹ „Azi la muzică: *Siegfrieds Tod*. M-a apucat o jale irezistibilă, plâng fără puterea de a mă stăpâni. Am nevoie de o concentrare în lucru, am nevoie de lucru de primă calitate”. 9th December 1948.

⁶² „Nu e artă, e protest. (...) Ce e drept că e o viziune directă, nefalsificată a „poporului” ca și a claselor de sus. Dar asta e observație și protest social, nu e artă. Ca și *Moromeții*”. 18th June 1958.

⁶³ „O creștere prea solidă, adică prea severă sub aparențe grațioase, mi-a frânt vitalitatea, aservind-o principiilor morale. Un hibrid produs al unei epoci formaliste și condamnat să trăiască într-o epocă anarhică! Deplasare absolută”. 24th November 1946.

for the well-being of those less fortunate than her because of her status as part of the former elite. Although oppressed on political grounds, she still thought herself to be privileged compared to others as she only had herself to look after. Her attitude is nothing short of complex, as Alice never entertained an idealised image of her own social class, but actually looked into its habits and mores for the conditions that made Communist abuse possible and she even went as far as to understand the plight of families working for the new regime. Honest and committed to the truth, she delved into scrutinizing analysis that spared no one. Her entry on 11th May 1953 highlights her deepest regret about her forced home arrest which, not surprisingly, was the feeling that she was wasting precious time instead of being of some use to others. Not allowed to practice her faith, she reminisced bitterly about one occasion when she could only receive several blessed pears from the local priest by reaching over the fence as she was not permitted access to the premises. Longing for something other than what she felt to be the broken community she was placed in, she wished for a monastic one. Denied the opportunity, she managed to gain a distance from her own oppression by using her aesthetic sense and musing that, with glasses, she might even enjoy the landscape enough to ignore her confinement. Given all this, her suffering owes much not just to her illness, but also to her wounded dignity, as when she revealed her shock at the two youngsters taunting her for her meager possessions on the way to Costești, especially considering that prior to the journey she had been imprisoned for one year and a half. Retrieving her dignity was her most ardent desire and her greatest wish was to be allowed to work for others. She made this apparent in the entry on 25th November 1946, where she admitted that her ambition was never for her own sake, but for “noble causes” she believed in at the time.

Disappointed by the way art “descends” unto the streets after the rise of Communism, “I was overwhelmed by a feeling that all’s for nothing. Now all illiterates in the Music Academy, all harp girls that can’t properly read abuse me, but that’s none of my concern!”⁶⁴ (Voinescu: 563). Although she gently approached those that needed protection, she, in turn, protected her own sensibility through a refusal of the masses⁶⁵. Her personal role model was

⁶⁴ „m-a năpădit o simțire că totul e zadarnic. Acum mă beștelesc și toți analfabeții de la Conservator, toate harponistele care nu știu bine să citească, treaba lor!”. 21st December 1948.

⁶⁵ It’s not that I have no sympathy for the simple, too, but I find the vulgar repulsive! And the lack of education of those who called me! I felt it is painfully true that those who treat us like Vallachs are right. There are Balkanic nuances, we trick ourselves when we think ourselves Western”, „Nu că n-am simpatie și față de cei simpli, dar mitocanul îmi repugnă! Și lipsa de creștere a celor ce m-au chemat! Am simțit dureros adevărul sufletesc al celor ce ne tratează ca valahi. Sunt nuanțe balcanice, ne facem iluzii când ne credem occidentali” (Voinescu: 13). 4th November 1929.

Queen Maria, whom she appreciated as a “whole person” and her passing away marked the moment when “it appears that gone is that elegant detachment, that was neither carelessness, nor a selfish indifference, but the decent grace in which all inner wounds were draped out of a politeness towards the world, perhaps even a missing sense of solidarity”⁶⁶ (Voinescu: 122). It is not so much the “womanly decency” not to suffer in the sight of others, but an aristocratic concept of dignity coming from “a joy of the quality of her being, more than a state of mind”⁶⁷ (Voinescu: 122). The last look over her own life to reach for a *telos* shows Alice to be just as dramatically divided and self-critical: “I’m dying and I’m still not fully equipped. [...] Enough with lamentations”⁶⁸ (Voinescu: 842). Although selling a ring could clear her debts, her eyes turned to the first mirror: she could leave it to Maricica, thus making herself useful even from beyond the grave and preserving her dignity in spite of the regime that humiliated her as an intellectual. Striving for a transcendental meaning, she placed great value on bodily humility as a necessary experience and, through discourse, she left behind the social stigma of poverty, constructing her own authenticity.

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⁶⁶ „se duce parcă acea detașare elegantă, care nu era nici ușurință, nici indiferență egoistă, ci era grația decentă cu care se învăluiau amarurile lăuntrice, din politeță pentru lume, poate și din nesolidaritate”. 19th July 1938.

⁶⁷ „bucurie a calității ființei ei, mai mult decât o stare de conștiință”. 19th July 1938.

⁶⁸ „Mor și tot nu sunt utilată. [...] Gata cu văicărerile.”. 30th May 1961.

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À QUI LA DERNIÈRE BALLE? ENTRE FÉMINITÉ ET FÉMINISME, NANCY HUSTON ET MARTINE DELVAUX PARLENT DU DÉSIR

Laura T. Ilea¹

ABSTRACT. *Who Has the Last Bullet? Between Femininity and Feminism, Nancy Huston and Martine Delvaux Talk about Desire.* In this paper I will analyze the workings of desire, as it appears in Nancy Huston's *Reflexes in a Man's Eye* and *Infrared* as well as in Martine Delvaux's *The Last Bullet is for You*, highlighting the paradoxes between femininity and feminism. On one hand, for Delvaux, feminine desire defies feminism through its phantasm of abandon; it also implies the dogma of masculine desire, equivalent to cruelty. Thus, desire stands in for trepanation, lobotomy, and excision. On the other hand, Huston probes into the paradoxes of feminism, into its schizophrenic nature: women cannot detach themselves from the masculine gaze, internalized by a dictatorial self-hate through cinema and photography – extensions, in her view, of the masculine gaze. In order to reverse this order, Huston advances a controversial feminine model – Rena Greenblatt – and her disquieting photographic exhibitions, "Men's Mysteries," through which desire could be metamorphosed into love. For Delvaux, desire is non-metamorphic.

Keywords: *feminism, femininity, desire, photography, cinema, masculine gaze.*

REZUMAT. *Al cui va fi ultimul glonț? Între feminitate și feminism: Nancy Huston și Martine Delvaux vorbesc despre dorință.* În acest text voi analiza câteva avataruri ale dorinței, așa cum apar ele în *Reflexii într-un ochi de bărbat* și *Infraroșu* ale lui Nancy Huston, precum și în *Ultimul glonț e pentru tine* (în fr. *Cascadorii iubirii nu au drept la dublaj*) de Martine Delvaux, care pun în evidență paradoxurile create între noțiunile de feminitate și feminism. Pentru

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Delvaux, dorința feminină desfide feminismul prin fantasma abandonului, implicând în același timp dogma dorinței masculine, echivalente cruzimii. Astfel, dorința semnifică trepanație, lobotomie, excizie. Pe de altă parte, Huston analizează paradoxurile feminismului, natura lui schizofrenică: femeile nu se pot detașa de privirea masculină, internalizată în cinema și fotografie printr-o ură de sine dictatorială – extensii, în opinia ei, ale privirii masculine. Pentru a contracara această ordine, Huston propune un model feminin controversat – Rena Greenblatt – și expozițiile ei insidioase de fotografie, „Mistere ale bărbaților”, prin care dorința poate fi metamorfozată în iubire. Pentru Delvaux însă, dorința este non-metamorfică.

Cuvinte cheie: *feminism, feminitate, dorință, fotografie, cinema, privire masculină.*

Accompagné ou non d’amour, le désir est une balle aux capacités rédemptrices réduites. Il a une toute autre dynamique que celle de l’amour. La plupart du temps, il est destructif ou autodestructif. Les grands romans de la passion en témoignent. Le désir est le mécanisme qui garde en vie, qui s’oppose au grand Thanatos – de ce point de vue, les choses semblent faciles. Et pourtant, il pousse vers tout un labyrinthe de la captivité, soit à l’échelle individuelle, soit à l’échelle de l’espèce.

À ce propos, j’ai choisi de parler dans ce texte de deux auteures, Nancy Huston, écrivaine d’origine canadienne vivant en France, et Martine Delvaux, écrivaine québécoise, et de trois livres, *Reflets dans un œil d’homme*² et *Infrarouge*³ de Nancy Huston d’un côté et *Les cascadeurs de l’amour n’ont pas droit au doublage*⁴ de Martine Delvaux de l’autre.

Commençons par Martine Delvaux et *Les cascadeurs de l’amour n’ont pas droit au doublage*: dans ce livre d’une intensité obsédante, Martine Delvaux raconte les allers retours d’une histoire d’amour échouée et recule vers le point de départ, là où la narratrice pourrait trouver sa libération. L’image la plus percutante du livre est celle de la violence du désir charnel, la cruauté de l’amour. Dans ce contexte, l’auteure parle souvent d’un lavage du cerveau, d’une amputation, d’une lobotomie, d’une trépanation, d’une rupture chirurgicale et d’une psychose. Dans l’amour fou dont elle parle, il s’agirait ainsi d’un enlèvement par les extraterrestres. En contrepois, afin de se libérer, elle se rend à Rome, une ville « érigée sur le sperme et le sang »⁵. C’est comme si, pour contrecarrer la violence du désir, elle avait besoin de la violence masculine.

² Nancy Huston, *Reflets dans un œil d’homme*, Actes Sud/Leméac, 2012.

³ Nancy Huston, *Infrarouge*, Actes Sud, 2010.

⁴ Martine Delvaux, *Les cascadeurs de l’amour n’ont pas droit au doublage*, Hélio trope, 2015.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

On sent bien qu'il s'agit ici de la rage de la femme qui se trouve sous l'emprise d'un maître conquéreur, de l'ironie vis-à-vis son désir de conquête, mais en même temps de la nostalgie immémoriale d'une femme qui souhaite prendre les reins du pouvoir, guider le désir de l'homme : « rager à ne pas savoir comment réussir un bon coup d'État parce que je n'étais pas Brutus et que j'étais seule, je n'avais pas tout un sénat derrière moi. »⁶

On peut dire que le personnage féminin se trouve pris dans une attitude ambiguë devant la cruauté masculine, devant le cannibalisme de l'acte amoureux – le cannibalisme de l'érotisme en fin de compte.

Martine Delvaux parle ainsi d'une relation d'amour effilochée mais dont les revirements passionnels s'étendent, comme dans un acte d'exorcisme, tout au long du livre. Il est évident que, si la mort de l'amour est constaté dans un acte de décès clinique, chirurgical, le désir est bien plus difficile à être tué, d'où son caractère carcéral. Tous les sauts dans le vide que la narratrice pratique ont comme unique but celui d'exorciser le désir sur un terrain où il n'existe plus que les vestiges d'une grande passion mais où il y a encore assez de place pour qu'il renaisse indéfiniment.

Le geste d'écrire le livre relève de l'invocation du désir, sans lequel il ne pourrait pas exister. Et la délivrance vient de la même invocation qui reliait les deux protagonistes : « Il a fallu attendre avant de jeter les premières lignes, comme on attend avant de faire l'amour avec l'être qu'on désire et qu'on n'a pas encore touché... Parce que cette suspension est un plaisir, charmant et douloureux à la fois. »⁷

Il s'agit ici du moment originaire d'hypnotisation dans lequel le désir est encore lié au plaisir. À la suite duquel, la femme se sentira piégée : « On aurait dit que j'avais été droguée, enlevée par des extraterrestres, où que j'étais devenue membre d'une secte. »⁸

C'est une lutte à la vie, à la mort à laquelle la femme succombera sans faute. Une lutte qu'elle perdra parce que le désir la pousse inévitablement vers l'anéantissement : « La combattante en moi refuse toujours de désert. Je m'en veux d'avoir tenté le diable. Superstitieuse, je me dis que si je demande la mort, on va finir par me la donner. »⁹

Ce qui est peut-être tout aussi important à mentionner ici c'est le fait que le désir devient plus fort plus il se bâtit sur un sentiment de déracinement, d'incompatibilité, de scission de deux univers différents : « Une fille d'un nouveau monde dont tu disais qu'il était trop jeune pour véritablement compter sur

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

l'échiquier de la planète, cet univers de déracinés, d'immigrants, de réfugiés, d'abandonnés, ce monde de bâtards acculturés qui ne parlaient que les langues des autres, ce monde qui avait vidé les églises et expulsé Dieu. »¹⁰

L'homme ressent l'amour et surtout la violence du désir comme un goulag : « Ce continent immense et vide était un goulag dans lequel l'amour t'avait envoyé »¹¹. La perspective féminine est tout aussi claustrophobe : « Répondre à l'injonction, mon nom sur la liste qui m'envoie au goulag de l'amour »¹². Romantisme : rester fidèle à l'amour. Érotisme : désert. « J'ai tant de fois eu l'impression que j'allais mourir si je ne sentais pas tout de suite, maintenant, tes mains sur moi. Et aujourd'hui, c'est de te revoir que je mourrais, de ne pas laisser le temps et l'espace se creuser entre nous comme une cuirasse contre cet amour fou. »¹³

Entre le féminisme et la féminité, la bataille menée est d'une violence extrême. Le désir qui la tient captive; l'amour qui fait pousser des ailes : « Jeanne d'Arc, à la proue de son armée, la liberté guidant le peuple, je me rêve en éclaireur ou en justicière. Mais c'est bien sûr un rêve, une construction de mon esprit. »¹⁴

La femme décrite par Delvaux n'est pas une séductrice. Elle ne se fait pas piéger dans le phantasme oriental de la séduction fatale, n'embarque pas dans le jeu du voilement et du dévoilement. Elle n'est pas une Salomé ou une Shéhérazade, qui fait durer l'amour en le rendant insupportable. Elle passe à l'attaque, est une femme occidentale au sens propre du terme, une femme qui assume son statut. Une femme qui assume son nouveau monde – le monde des nouvelles règles amoureuses, consciente de l'inconsistance et de la non-permanence des jeux de séduction : « Tu étais celui qu'on pouvait désirer mais sur qui on ne pourrait jamais compter, avec qui il fallait marcher sur des œufs pour épargner sa grande sensibilité, comme si tu étais une chose précieuse qu'il fallait à tout prix ménager. God's gift to occidental women. »¹⁵

La narratrice est ainsi en permanence tiraillée entre des contraires; les sauts dans le vide qu'elle pratique sont d'un masochisme féroce. Elle revient au moment initial de l'histoire, là où le désir est pur plaisir, à la suite duquel se met en marche le carrousel d'un amour écrasé, dont les miettes traînent encore imperceptiblement. La beauté n'est donc possible qu'au début, lors d'un moment subversif ou peut-être, ce qui n'est pas le cas dans le roman, là

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

où l'amour persiste après le moment où l'autre avait déposé les armes devant l'objet du désir. La beauté est liée à la vulnérabilité.

« Les Grecs disaient que la santé vient des contraires, quand l'amour mutuel remplace le conflit entre des éléments ennemis. Ils disaient aussi que la preuve qu'on aime l'autre, c'est qu'on aime quand il nous voit jetant nos armes à ses pieds. »¹⁶

À part ce court moment d'armistice de l'amour, la narratrice fait en permanence de l'équilibrisme autour de la cruauté envers soi-même et envers les autres.

Le problème posé par ce désir irrépressible c'est qu'il nous plonge dans un royaume d'une beauté qui devient insupportable, une fois qu'on l'a perdue. Il peut rendre le monde un espace non-habitable, un espace dévasté.

Ce qui me semble en égale mesure fascinant dans ce livre qui parle de la violence, de la lobotomie, de la trépanation, de l'insupportable beauté et du *clash* entre deux mondes – dont chacun est le goulag de l'autre – c'est la manière dont est traitée la violence masculine, qui est la plupart du temps reliée au désir :

Jules César multipliait les maîtresses, les gestes politiques d'Antoine s'agençaient aux élans de son désir, la femme d'Auguste lui amenait régulièrement des jeunes filles vierges qu'il prenait grand plaisir à déflorer. J'avais connu plus d'un César dans ma vie. César le gladiateur pour qui les filles n'étaient que des poupées. César le barde pour qui la vie était un concert de percussions dans un champ de mines. César le poète qui rédigeait incognito des lettres pour dissimuler le fait qu'il était un Narcisse cherchant éperdument son écho.¹⁷

On a l'impression que le mariage entre le désir et l'amour est impossible, dans les conditions dans lesquelles un coup de foudre équivaut à une déclaration de guerre. Mais en même temps à un acte de foi. Parce que ce moment où le désir fait disparaître les frontières de l'être semble inexistant, un saut dans le néant. Mais en même temps dévorant, impossible d'arrêter, malgré tous les obstacles apparents.

Quand je me suis laissée aller, comme un soldat qui expire après un long combat, le désir que je sentais pour toi m'avait fait pleurer par son intensité. Déjà, il me dévorait. J'étais amoureuse de toi, et tout faisait entrave à cet amour, nos vies installées, le temps qui avançait, la géographie qui nous séparait, tant d'obstacles à surmonter. Mais je te désirais tellement que j'en oubliais de respirer.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

C'est un point qu'il faudrait peut-être souligner davantage concernant le roman de Martine Delvaux : « le fait qu'elle parle de manière tellement percutante du désir féminin, tout aussi impérieux et obsessionnel que le désir masculin ». Mais si le désir masculin est la plupart du temps lié à la cruauté, le désir féminin, surtout quand il exprime le point de vue d'une féministe déclarée, se trouve en continuelle scission: le besoin d'abandon et la peur de la perte absolue. La femme n'est pas une séductrice. Elle est une perdante, abandonnée par tout ange qui pourrait la protéger :

À partir de ce moment, plus rien ne pourra m'arrêter, rien ni personne, pas un mot, pas une phrase, plus un signe que je pourrais recevoir comme un mauvais présage, je fonce vers cet amour tête baissée. Aujourd'hui, je me dis qu'un ange est venu cette nuit-là me donner une dernière chance, et qu'au moment où je me suis abandonnée, il m'abandonnait lui aussi, il levait les bras au ciel et s'éloignait à grands coups d'ailes. Entre Cupidon et lui, c'est Cupidon qui l'a emporté.¹⁹

Le désir fabrique des toxicomanes, des alcooliques, des illuminés, parce que l'occupant est sans regrets et sans remords. On souffre le martyr parce qu'on ne peut pas ressusciter l'amour perdu, on ne peut pas faire renaître les morts à la vie.

Et surtout, dans le cas du personnage féminin de ce livre, le désir est caractérisé par un manque permanent, une balle qui n'atteint jamais sa cible. L'homme ne s'abandonnera jamais à elle, il se retirera à tout jamais dans une mystique slave éloignée, une mystique des hommes qui ont appris à manger et à dormir avec la mort. La femme se heurtera en permanence à une chimère. Malgré le fait qu'elle souhaitera, tout au long du roman, que l'homme s'abandonne à elle, ne serait-ce qu'une seule fois: « Une seule fois, un soir, après beaucoup de vin, tu t'es donné à ma bouche sur ton cou, et mes lèvres, mes dents, ma langue, avides, insatiables sur la douceur infinie de ta peau. Je t'aurais rendu alcoolique pour faire l'amour avec toi, pour que tu t'abandonnes à moi. »²⁰

Chose impossible. Le livre en entier est une longue lamentation, une longue épitaphe qui essaie de récupérer ce moment évanescent où le désir pourrait signifier beauté. Où la balle de la cruauté, du cannibalisme et des trépanations n'avait pas encore été tirée.

En ce qui concerne la deuxième auteure que nous analyserons par la suite, Nancy Huston, ses balles sont sans pitié. Mais elles sont dirigées moins contre l'homme que contre une anomalie ou une ambiguïté qui tient les

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

femmes captives dans la dictature de leur beauté. Il est au moins bizarre, affirme-t-elle, que dans le monde occidental, où le féminisme est tenu en grand honneur, les femmes déboursent plus d'argent sur des produits cosmétiques qui entretiennent leur image physique, les scénarios de la séduction et du désir que sur leur éducation. Elles se meuvent ainsi dans une schizophrénie mortelle.

Quelle est la généalogie de cette schizophrénie, du scénario dictatorial de l'entretien du désir comme une prison de l'égo féminin, comme une impossibilité de se considérer en dehors du regard masculin et, par la suite, en dehors du regard féminin? La femme se voit toujours comme étant regardée du dehors, semble dire Nancy Huston. Cette tyrannie du regard lui crée un état permanent d'inquiétude. Suivons donc les méandres de la démonstration de cette thèse, en parcourant ses différentes étapes et connotations.

Tout d'abord, dès le début, la beauté féminine est une agression :

Un des effets de la beauté féminine, c'est cela. Elle suscite intérêt, fascination, étonnement, sidération... et hostilité. Une très belle jeune femme, très très jeune et très très belle, c'est une sorte de violence. On la « reçoit » de façon aussi immédiate qu'une gifle; ça coupe le souffle et provoque une sorte de douleur. « La beauté est une promesse de bonheur », comme dit Stendhal; les hommes savent que cette promesse a toutes les chances de n'être pas tenue, et ça les fait souffrir. Même quand la belle femme ne fait pas exprès de susciter leur désir, ils la vivent souvent – de nombreux mythes, contes, légendes, textes de l'Église et autres fables l'attestent – comme une provocation. Consciemment ou inconsciemment, ils peuvent l'estimer « coupable » d'être belle.²¹

Le courage de l'auteure dans ce réquisitoire de la condition féminine, captive dans le reflet de l'œil masculin, est celui de contrecarrer avec un grand naturel plusieurs thèses féministes, extrêmement percutantes dans le domaine de l'idéologie mais parfois inopérantes dans le quotidien féminin. Tout au long de l'histoire humaine, dans la prostitution et dans le mariage, la copulation a été perçue comme un service rendu à l'homme par la femme, avec une prestation en contrepartie, en nature ou en argent. Son opinion est que, malgré l'entier fond féministe qui constitue notre éducation, la nature prend sa revanche : aucune femme, affirme Nancy Huston, quoi que féministe elle se veuille, ne peut dire ne s'être jamais servie de son charme pour obtenir de l'homme n'importe quel service.

Cette tyrannie de la séduction ou du désir fait en sorte que l'homme se sente agressé, contrôlé, manipulé. À ce moment, Nancy Huston trace une autre conjecture, qui nous est d'ailleurs connue à travers son livre, *Professeurs de*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

*désespoir*²², en lien avec la crainte de manipulation et le fait d'être né de la chair d'une femme, d'être fabriqué à l'intérieur d'un corps féminin. De manière subjective, par extrapolation, la nature charnelle de l'homme est la faute de la mère. Le ressentiment des hommes devant ce péché originaire, celui d'être nés du corps d'une femme et plus tard, d'être soumis au pouvoir que le corps féminin exerce sur eux, éclate souvent dans leurs écrits. Huston cite Kundera et Sartre mais elle avait élaboré une liste encore plus longue dans *Professeurs de désespoir*, en citant Houellebecq, Schopenhauer, Kertész, etc. Paradoxalement, le désir déclenche chez les hommes des comportements inquiétants, violents. Les statistiques sont suggestives au plus haut degré, parce qu'inattendues. Huston fait référence à la France où les statistiques montrent qu'« une femme meurt tous les trois jours sous les coups de son compagnon. »²³

Nancy Huston analyse par la suite le cas d'Anaïs Nin et sa transformation d'une puritaine américaine notoire en une exploratrice du plaisir sensuel et de l'érotisme féminin. Le contexte : le libertinage parisien, la rencontre d'Henry Miller, la rencontre d'une quantité infinie de désir masculin anonyme, qui suscite le danger. Un autre cas : celui de Jean Seberg, le modèle de beauté américaine ingénue, qui souhaite en même temps se dédier aux grandes causes planétaires. Le problème c'est que, étant mariée à Romain Gary, elle devient en quelque sorte la victime de son propre militantisme. Seberg devient le personnage ridicule d'un des romans de Gary, *Les mangeurs d'étoiles* (1966), dans lequel l'auteur nous présente l'histoire d'une « petite idiote idéaliste américaine »²⁴, qui tombe amoureuse d'un révolutionnaire latino-américain qui l'exploite et la manipule. De surcroît, dans un film fait après un livre de Gary, *Les oiseaux vont mourir au Pérou*, Seberg est présentée comme une nymphomane frigide. La beauté féminine suscite une fois de plus le sadisme, conclut Huston.

Est-ce une conclusion précipitée? D'où vient cet instinct atavique de punir ce qui nous fait mal? De la beauté qui suscite le désir? Une jeune femme qui souhaite se dédier à des causes planétaires doit avoir en vue le fait que les idéaux politiques ne flottent pas, neutres et indépendants, dans l'éther mais ils s'incarnent dans les figures de certains leaders. Dans le cas des hommes, érotisme et pouvoir sont intimement liés l'un à l'autre. Non pour les femmes. Pour celles-ci, il y a l'explosion d'une multiplicité de rôles qui s'annulent de façon antagoniste. Roman Gary mettra à contribution les contradictions de Seberg, en écrivant des romans en série. Par contre, Seberg plongera de plus en plus bas, dans maintes tentatives de suicide, d'hospitalisation, d'électrochocs et de délires.

²² Nancy Huston, *Professeurs de désespoir*, Actes Sud/Leméac, 2004.

²³ Nancy Huston, *Reflets dans un œil d'homme, o.c.*, note p. 101.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Ce désir d'agression appartient, dit Huston, moins au passé individuel qu'à celui de l'espèce. Qu'elles le désirent ou non, les femmes sont scrutées, regardées. Elles deviennent l'image même qui s'ajuste à ce regard. On ne connaît pas précisément la nature ou l'intensité du désir d'une femme, tant qu'on est soumises à la pression du désir de l'autre. De plus, il est

difficile de s'oublier, de réfléchir, de rêvasser, difficile de flâner, de regarder, d'observer, d'analyser ce qui se passe dans les rues, quand vous êtes objet de regards en permanence et devez constamment prendre des décisions par rapport à cela... Comme le dit la comédienne Christine Boisson dans le beau livre d'Emil Breton, *Femmes d'images*, « Quand on est regardé on ne peut plus regarder » (143).²⁵

Dans les conditions d'un déterminisme physique différent, la métaphysique des femmes est elle aussi différente. D'autant plus que l'ère de la photographie a définitivement bouleversé le rapport de la femme avec son propre corps. Moins celui de l'homme. La cause de cette asymétrie : l'asymétrie dans l'exploit du désir. À cause de l'invasion des images qui imposent des standards de beauté de plus en plus exigeants, pour la plupart des femmes « le plaisir d'être vue est plus important que la caresse »²⁶, cite Huston un professeur de chirurgie plastique. Voici donc une mutation ontologique de proportions, qui change inévitablement la perception féminine. Et la perception masculine par conséquent : « ... nous appartenons à l'une des premières cultures de l'espèce humaine à trouver que le maquillage quotidien des femmes va de soi »²⁷. Le dédoublement classique de la femme sera ainsi encore une fois dédoublé parce que les images du corps des femmes seront reproduites à l'infini, en imposant ainsi un régime de réalité dans lequel les femmes se verront continuellement comparées à des femmes réelles. Le cinéma pousse davantage cette confrontation par sa fascination douloureuse. Si pour un homme le cinéma continue le regard désirant qui flâne au-dessus des corps des femmes, les femmes seront une fois de plus scindées, en leur défaveur. « Le dédoublement classique des femmes entre « moi » et « mon image » s'en trouvera ... dédoublé; désormais leur regard sur leur corps passera *et* par les yeux de l'homme *et* par l'objectif de la caméra. »²⁸

L'asymétrie vient donc du fait que l'appareil photo et la caméra représentent un prolongement de l'œil masculin, affirme Huston. Ici, deux

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

exemples sont radicaux : l'actrice Delphine Seyrig se demande pourquoi dans les films « les personnages des femmes sont isolés, n'ont jamais d'amies, qu'elles soient des enjeux ou des héroïnes mythiques. Et c'est là que d'une façon très subversive le cinéma est un agent de l'idéologie dominante »²⁹. De plus, au moment où Huston écrit son livre, les films qui parlent du désir de la femme envers l'homme sont à compter sur les doigts d'une main : *Le Piano* (Jane Campion, 1993), *Mouvements du désir* (Léa Pool, 1994), *Lady Chatterley* de Pascale Ferran (2007).³⁰ À part ces exceptions, les spectateurs présents dans les salles de cinéma ont emprunté en fait la vision du regard objectivant de l'homme sur le corps des femmes.

Les femmes ont introjecté ce regard. Et l'introjection s'est métamorphosée en critique. « Chacune de nous porte en soi dorénavant, en permanence, une paire d'yeux inquisiteurs au jugement impitoyable. »³¹

Malgré donc tous les mouvements de libération féministes (le droit de vote a été accordé aux femmes dans la Grande Bretagne, au Canada et en Russie en 1918), un petit peu plus tard aux États-Unis et en Allemagne (1919) et malgré le suffrage universel, de manière bizarre, affirme Huston, les femmes, « plus elles deviennent sujets, plus elles se font objets. »... « Aux États-Unis aujourd'hui, les concours de beauté apportent annuellement plus de cinq milliards de dollars en bénéfices. Ils constituent l'une des industries les plus florissantes de ce pays qui, par ailleurs, assume la haute tâche morale d'enseigner l'émancipation féminine au monde entier. »³²

La lutte entre le féminisme et la féminité n'est donc pas définitivement tranchée. L'hydre de la féminité ancestrale, archétypale refait continuellement surface sous forme de nouvelles et de nouvelles servitudes, de plus en plus sophistiquées. Le paradoxe devient de plus en plus schizoïde. Huston cite Lipovetzky: « D'un côté, dit Gilles Lipovetsky, le corps féminin s'est largement émancipé de ses anciennes servitudes, qu'elles soient sexuelles, procréatrices ou vestimentaires; de l'autre, le voilà soumis à des contraintes esthétiques plus régulières, plus impératives, plus anxiogènes qu'autrefois »³³. En effet, conclut Huston, « c'est une femme plus sujet qui, seule, peut se rendre plus objet; jamais les hommes dominants n'auraient pu obtenir un tel résultat massif. »³⁴

²⁹ Nancy Huston, *Reflets dans un œil d'homme*, o.c., p. 142. Huston cite Émile Breton, *Femmes d'images*, Messidor, 1984, p. 150.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

³³ *Ibid.* Huston cite Gilles Lipovetzky, *La Troisième Femme*, Gallimard, 1997, p. 136.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

Je continuerai l'analyse de ce paradoxe inquiétant, puisqu'une sociologue d'origine marocaine, Fatima Mernissi, dans un livre devenu célèbre, *Le Harem et l'Occident*, parle de cette tyrannie de l'image comme étant tout aussi puissante que celle exercée maintes fois sur la femme dans le monde islamique. Ses mots donnent à penser, quoi qu'il s'agisse bien évidemment de deux contextes complètement différents mais qui, les deux, impliquent des notions de contrôle, de domination, de surveillance et de soumission. Voici ce que dit Fatema Mernissi dans un des chapitres de son livre, « La taille 38 : le harem des femmes occidentales » : « Les Occidentaux n'ont pas besoin de payer une police pour forcer les femmes à obéir, il leur suffit de faire circuler les images pour que les femmes s'esquintent à leur ressembler »³⁵.

Conséquences: l'anorexie, qui remplace l'hystérie de l'époque de Freud. La femme occidentale devient ainsi de plus en plus une image pour soi-même, qui domine son appétit, contrôle son poids, surveille sa taille, soumet son corps à la dictature des chiffres abstraits. Les pratiques regimophiles essayent de se conformer à des modèles anorexiques, les imposer comme norme. Le désir masculin devient dans ces conditions presque inopérant. Les femmes s'exposent de plus en plus à des critiques réciproques, elles se torturent dans cet exercice d'évaluation permanent, que Nelly Arcan appelle l'anti-narcissisme féminin (p. 150), motivé moins par l'amour de soi que par la haine de soi, par la pulsion agressive contre son propre corps, représentée par l'impératif de la mode et par l'impératif de la mort. Une autre référence incontournable pour mettre en lumière ce processus est la romancière finno-estonienne Sofi Oksanen dans son roman *Les Vaches de Staline*³⁶. La narratrice de ce roman est obsédée par la nourriture qu'elle refuse de la même manière que pourrait l'être un moine par la sexualité refoulée. Dans la même logique d'un argument infaillible, l'image de la séduction a extirpé l'image de la reproduction de l'imaginaire lié à la féminité. Exit la fécondité, tandis que dans l'imaginaire lié à la masculinité, les modèles sont infaillibles : la guerre, l'aventure, la science.

Une sorte de conclusion provisoire à toutes ces considérations est celle reliée à une condition en permanente dualité. Devant l'énigme de la condition féminine, les femmes ont des réactions en égale mesure euphorisantes et effrayées. Euphorisantes, parce qu'il est impossible que les femmes soient imperméables à tout l'arsenal de séductions auquel prédispose leur sexe. De l'autre côté, parce que, en tant que femme, il est très facile de se perdre à l'intérieur de ce labyrinthe. « Devenir femme perdue », comme le dit Nancy Huston.³⁷

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148. Huston cite Fatema Mernissi, *Le Harem et l'Occident*, Albin Michel, 2001, p. 119.

³⁶ Sofi Oksanen, *Les Vaches de Staline*, Stock, 2011.

³⁷ Nancy Huston, *Reflets dans un œil d'homme*, o.c., p. 158.

Conclusion provisoire parce que j'aimerais discuter brièvement l'attitude du personnage féminin central d'un roman de Nancy Huston, *Infrarouge*. Dans ce roman l'auteure esquisse le portrait d'une femme, Rena Greenblatt, qui va contrecarrer les deux modèles du désir que j'ai décrits jusqu'ici. Rena est une femme qui capture plutôt que de se faire capturer.

C'est une femme qui capte en infrarouge les mystères de la masculinité. Une femme armée d'une caméra, qui détourne le regard masculin dans sa direction : « À la surface, les supporters du Paris Saint-Germain exhibent une virilité effrayante mais, en infrarouge, on voit qu'elle est *effrayée* aussi. Gros plans sur ces visages de jeunes gens tordus par la haine. Plus près, toujours plus près... ô doux vertige de pénétrer, par l'agrandissement, à l'intérieur même de la matière. »³⁸

La beauté de l'infrarouge est celle de pouvoir percer vers une autre réalité. Ce qui est photographié n'est pas ce qu'on voit. Au moment même de l'acte photographique, on devrait instantanément imaginer ce qui deviendra l'image captée, une fois développée. La réalité plus l'imagination dans le même geste: la couronne de l'arbre devient une explosion de dentelle blanche; les filtres intensifient le rouge : « L'infrarouge fait apparaître une lumière délicatement déformée, qui semble venir d'un passé oublié... Les yeux de certains animaux captent l'infrarouge, ceux des humains, non; mais, captés ou non, ces rayons sont bel et bien émis. »³⁹

L'intention du personnage principal Rena est de percer dans l'espace infrarouge, l'espace des premiers souvenirs, des premières fictions avant la constitution définitive de la personnalité masculine. Son attitude surpasse bien évidemment le simple voyeurisme. La caméra lui sert de tremplin vers le « théâtre » immonde du monde. Elle est une projection à l'intérieur du théâtre de la virilité, de la testostérone, du besoin d'appartenir à une collectivité, greffé sur l'insécurité primordiale. L'insécurité primordiale reliée à la dépendance maternelle. « Se glisser sous la peau... dedans, dedans... traverser les couches de souvenirs... se frayer un chemin jusqu'à l'enfance. C'est une telle émotion, quand *cela* commence à apparaître dans le bain... »⁴⁰

L'attitude profondément féministe de Rena est secondée par tendresse et curiosité. Postures, attitudes, mécaniques, angoisse, arrogance – tout cet univers capté dans son exposition, *Mystères de messieurs* – se fonde sur un constat simple : le genre masculin est plus fragile, plus « mortel » que celui des femmes. En ne pouvant pas donner vie, ses parades sont faites pour se donner du poids dans l'existence.

³⁸ Nancy Huston, *Infrarouge*, Actes Sud, 2010, p. 129.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

L'exposition de Rena remporte un tel succès qu'elle devient un livre:

Images juxtaposées des comportements virils à travers le monde : défilés militaires devant le Kremlin à Moscou, réunions de la Camorra à Naples, discours de réception à l'Académie française avec épées et uniformes verts, congrégation de motards en Californie, rites d'initiation des Indiens bororos du Brésil, proxénètes de Tel-Aviv, traders de Tokyo, supporters de foot de Manchester, miliciens d'extrême droite du Montana, sénateurs, francs-maçons, prisonniers... Oh, l'attendrissant besoin de ces primates supérieurs sans utérus de se durcir et de se décorer, de parader et de pétarader pour se donner de l'allure, du poids et du sérieux!⁴¹

Entre tendresse et furie déclenchée par l'incertitude existentielle, conduisant à des querelles, des guerres, soif de pouvoir et menaçant avec l'extinction de l'espèce humaine, Rena surprend le paradoxe de l'existence masculine : en exécrant la mortalité de l'existence humaine, « le mystère de la masculinité » crée de la vie de manière détournée, imposant le monde violent de *l'homo faber* : universités, laboratoires, bibliothèques, usines, ateliers. Pendant que l'homme cherche de temps en temps la femme générique, la prostituée, celle qui met entre parenthèses son égo et se livre à un exercice de séduction immémoriale, l'exercice pratiqué par Rena, par ses incursions photographiques dans le monde des hommes est un exercice de sens inverse : l'extraction de l'homme de la masse commune à laquelle il s'identifie – la bourse, le colloque, le stade, le costume qu'il porte – et sa singularisation. Devant la femme-photographe, les hommes pleurent, étalent leurs albums photo, tirent de l'oubli l'adolescent, l'enfant qui demande d'être caressé, consolé, aimé. La femme transperce la région résistante de la peau et se dirige vers la région de l'âme, là où les hommes redécouvrent le plaisir de la passivité, le calme et la genèse de leurs forces authentiques. Il existe donc une force authentique de l'homme de même qu'il existe une force authentique de la femme. Où l'amour est enfin possible. Nancy Huston parle de l'amour avec le même naturel avec lequel elle parle de la sexualité. Ce n'est pas tout le monde qui réussit cet exercice. Dans les livres d'Huston, l'amour est métamorphose. C'est la seule force qui peut annuler les crises historiques, qui peut délivrer du trauma, du cycle infernal de la souffrance. C'est la force qui fait défaut au désir « cannibale » du livre *Les cascadeurs de l'amour n'ont pas droit au doublage* de Martine Delvaux, où les balles du désir son non-métamorphosables.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

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Sofi Oksanen, *Les Vaches de Staline*, Stock, 2011.

CHALLENGES IN SETTING UP A DIGITAL HUMANITIES CENTRE IN ROMANIA

CORINA MOLDOVAN¹, VOICA PUȘCAȘIU²

ABSTRACT. *Challenges in Setting up a Digital Humanities Centre in Romania.* Other than the obvious and well-documented benefits of the Digital Humanities centre, now a common occurrence in western universities, this paper wishes to focus on the very specific challenges encountered by the DigiHUBB team in creating one in Romania. The very first of its kind in this country, the centre was eventually credited by the Babeș-Bolyai University, but yet still struggles due to the fact the domain itself is still not fully recognized on a national scale. Both the issues and the positive aspects, which are indeed many, will be taken into account in showing how a promising this field of research is just as long as scholars and policy-makers keep an open mind.

Keywords: *digital humanities, centre, multidisciplinary, data visualization, research, digital tools.*

REZUMAT. *Provocări în procesul de deschidere a unui centru de digital humanities în România.* În afara certelor și bine-documentatelor beneficii ale centrelor de digital humanities, acum atât de comune în universitățile vestice, această lucrare se concentrează pe problemele foarte specifice întâlnite de echipa DigiHUBB în fondarea unuia în România. Primul centru de cercetare în acest domeniu, din țară, a fost, în cele din urmă, acreditat de Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, însă întâmpină în continuare probleme datorită faptului ca domeniul în sine nu este încă recunoscut pe plan național. Atât dificultățile, cât și aspectele pozitive, care nu sunt deloc puține, au fost luate în considerare pentru a putea arăta cât de ofertant este acest domeniu atâta timp cât cercetătorii dau dovadă de deschidere.

Cuvinte cheie: *digital humanities, centru, multidisciplinaritate, vizualizare de date, cercetare, unelte digitale.*

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Digital Humanities, besides being a fairly recent domain of study, contains within its very name a dichotomy which, when first encountered, is rather uncomfortable for most traditional scholars. The joining together of two terms which were until now safely contained to their own seemingly very different spheres makes it sound like an odd hybrid and creates an apparent paradox. Only adding to the already confusing situation is the fact that Digital Humanities is not in any sense a unified field but much more an array of convergent practices (Schnapp, Presner, 2), so that the term functions like an umbrella under which a wide variety of scholarly research are nestled. What they all have in common is the fact that the roots are firmly set in the traditional fields of the Humanities such as languages, history, art history and so forth, but use digital tools and methods to reach a very specific result. It is thus clear that the juxtaposition found in the term is encountered also on a methodological level, as scholars in the Digital Humanities need to at least have a basic understanding of either the humanist field of their research or of the engineering and computing involved in order to ask the most relevant questions or offer the most feasible solutions, respectively.

Digital Humanities is quickly developing mostly due to the nature of computer science and the many rapid advances both in this field and in society's relationship to all things digital. While things have surely evolved since the days of Roberto Busa, the first visionary considered to be the father of this field, and his *Index Thomisticus* in 1948 (Moldovan, 95), the necessity for collaboration and mutual respect between the digital and the humanities has not changed in the least. This brings us to a specificity of Digital Humanities that is less frequently encountered in traditional Humanities research, which is its inclination towards teamwork.

'Interdisciplinary', 'transdisciplinary', and 'multidisciplinary' are trendy words in today's academia. They feel utterly modern and using them is seen as a guarantee of quality and usefulness of the research, especially nowadays, when the usefulness of humanities is frequently questioned. Thus they are used as a lure when seeking funding since (pretending to have) a holistic view upon a subject could eventually push the Humanities forward from the crossroads it has reached in a pragmatic society. Despite their ever more widespread use, these words continue to remain empty as they often go no further than the pages of the grant application, and are not transferred into practice. This is precisely where the Digital Humanities differs greatly from most other areas in the sense that they truly encourage or even need collaborations between scholars in various fields, each with their own expertise, working together on specific projects. This is just one of the ways through which Digital Humanities are of big help in reinvigorating

contemporary Arts and Humanities practices and expand their existing boundaries (Schnapp, Presner, 13).

Team-based research is much more common in sciences such as Chemistry, Biology, and Medicine, especially when concerning statistics or large amounts of data, where help from outside one's field of expertise is imperative. This is not the usual practice so in the case of Humanities where the lone scholar sitting in their ivory tower is still the prevalent model, so the Digital Humanities inevitably provoke a shift in both researchers' mentality and in the administration of the projects. This is not to say that the lone-scholar model is obsolete in the Digital Humanities (Schnapp, Presner, 5; Prescott, 262), but in this case need for a truly multitasking and multifaceted researcher is obvious. An individual (or individualistic) scholar may also come across certain limitations when it comes to more ample and complex projects, as this might entail detailed knowledge and experience in a variety of practices, which is time-consuming and is not always a feasible solution.

This "transformative feature" (Schnapp, Presner, 4) of Digital Humanities, which encourages (if not forces) collaboration, is sometimes hard to digest and to conduct, but is ultimately beneficial for the research, thus introducing an apparently much needed flexibility in the otherwise stiff and bureaucratic environment of the academia. However, there still are a number of reasons why Digital Humanities is not easily suited for the existing academic system and is perceived with a certain dose of suspicion. The *Digital Humanities Manifesto 2.0* cites several of the reasons for resistance against it, such as: the power of tradition, cognitive conservatism, nostalgia and the comfort scholars take in it, and institutional inertia especially when it comes to the tenure and promotions system. (Schnapp, Presner, 11).

The fact that scholarly trust in information found on the Internet is low can be explained through the lack of a proper peer review system. Because essentially anyone can have a website would suggest that there is no guarantee that the facts are correct, and thus they are disregarded. A published journal does not come under the same suspicion, and this is a problem the Digital Humanities is still very much struggling to overcome.

For now, one of the only vouchers for the quality of a Digital Humanities project are the scholars' association to a university, a library, a museum, etc., and by transition to its already established prestige. This also greatly influences the capacity to attract funding, thus confirming once again the quality of the project itself. In the spirit of teamwork and the need for institutions' vicinity and support, existing staff members have gotten into the habit of putting up the foundations for research centres. These are often interdisciplinary or loosely gathered under one disciplinary umbrella or

another in order to narrow down its activity (Prescott, 465) and besides being an idea lab they are usually prolific in securing grants. Seeing as though this proved to be a successful model, there is little wonder that their number is currently so vast and widespread.

A Digital Humanities centre is defined by Diane Zorich as “an entity where new media and technologies are used for Humanities-based research, teaching, and intellectual engagement and experimentation. The goals are to further Humanities scholarship, create new forms of knowledge, and explore technology’s impact on Humanities-based disciplines” (Zorich, 4). Most centers are involved in using digital resources and tools for Humanities work, they hold lectures and seminars as well as training in a wide variety of forms. Although there are raising questions about their possibilities for securing long-term funding (Sample) and the lack of stability that comes from this issue, the centers seem to be here to stay. Finding a loophole around the permanent pressure of working on projects, many of them now offer MA or even BAs in Digital Humanities, thus securing jobs for the members involved.

The trend towards building such a centre is encouraged by websites such as centerNET³ which offers resources, tips, and how-to guides in establishing a new centre if one does not already exist on your campus. The hardships an individual faces in networking without being part of such a centre, also creates a gravitational pull towards this type of establishment, as the opportunities are greatly extended. Organizations such as NeDiMAH (Network for Digital Methods in the Arts and Humanities)⁴ and DARIAH (Digital Research Infrastructure for Arts and Humanities)⁵ are instrumental in maintaining useful connections and help in navigating the path especially for newcomers. This being said the existence of a Romanian Digital Humanities centre is an obvious need. Its necessity however goes way beyond falling in line with an existing trend, but rather in order to share our unique history and realities with the entire world. Starting local incidentally is one of the foremost pieces of advice for new centers (Terras), since little could be of more relevance than doing just that.

The Transilvania Digital Humanities Centre (DigiHUBB) was born out of the preexisting “Henri Jaquier” Centre in the Faculty of Letters of the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, as its members were interested in geocriticism and thematic cartography. Following fortunate meetings with professors from the Technical University and the Cluj IT Cluster, a new type of

³ The centerNet website is available at <https://dhcenternet.org/>. Accessed 30 December 2015.

⁴ The NeDiMAH website is available at www.nedimah.eu. Accessed 30 December 2015.

⁵ The DARIAH website is available at www.dariah.eu. Accessed 30 December 2015.

collaboration was considered in order to engage the collaboration of different specialists that would work together in a large-scale project entitled *Next Generation Brained City* (Moldovan, 102). The specific objectives of DigiHUBB are threefold as it focuses on research by applying for projects on the Horizon 2020 platform and publishing in reputable journals in field of Digital Humanities. A second goal is an applicative approach by maintaining a permanent connection with the business environment through joint trainings and endeavours and by developing interactive maps, 3D reconstructions, creating data bases, and applications. On the educational front DigiHUBB strives to form students and young researchers in this innovative domain by offering a variety of conferences, workshops, and summer schools. At the moment this constitutes an applicative research centre and its members come from specializations such as philology, history, art history, sociology, philosophy, media culture, cartography, economics, and informatics.⁶

However if all the aforementioned issues were problematic for the development of Digital Humanities in other countries, one can imagine these difficulties were only increased in the Romanian realm. Tradition bound, Romanian academics usually pursue prestige in its classical sense which usually just means publications. The environment is also one that rarely encourages inter-departmental collaboration so the very fundamental characteristics of Digital Humanities were regarded with scepticism. More problems were encountered on the way, but it must surely be admitted that in reality the foreign advice and help was instrumental in the founding of the centre which still remains largely unknown both on a national and on a local level and within the University itself. This is one of the paradoxes observed that easily exemplify the challenges that an innovative approach faces in both the institutional environment and the investment in the research framework in Romania. The rapidity with which DigiHUBB gained international support and assistance⁷ was curbed by the resistance of the existing research infrastructure, although it is well known that Romanian research in general is less internationalized and underperforming in all major university rankings.⁸ In the second instance, although the IT industry in Romania, and especially in

⁶ The DigiHUBB website is available at dighubb.centre.ubbcluj.ro/. Accessed 30 December 2015.

⁷ Immediately after its creation DigiHUBB was put on the "Around DH" map (courtesy to Alex Gill from Columbia University Libraries), <http://www.arounddh.org/>. The response of the Digital Humanities Community to the first call for assistance launched on Humanist Discussion Group was impressive. Accessed 30 December 2015.

⁸ As reported in http://ec.europa.eu/research/horizon2020/pdf/country-profiles/ro_country_profile_and_featured_projects.pdf#view=fit&pagemode=none. Accessed 30 December 2015.

Transylvania, is productive and lucrative, it addresses the quotidian aspects of digital work and not the innovative part.⁹ Moreover, there is a visible mismatch between the skills needed by the knowledge market and the qualifications provided by the academia, result of a visible lack of a long-term vision at the political level and the absence of awareness of the added value of Research & Innovation in the economy. Although Romania has adopted a National Strategy for R&I with a strong relevance through a component of “smart” specialization (the clusters creation being underlined as a positive aspect), the under-financing has created a brain-drain effect, Romania being worldwide known as an important exporter of researchers.

The challenges that DigiHUBB faces are complex and they target several important issues that go from the generic ones (the misunderstanding of the concept, the lack of confidence in its epistemological value, the supremacy of the published paper book over electronic publications, the absence of systemised pedagogy in Digital Humanities, the minimal funding from the University or governmental institutions) to more specific ones, which are even more complex to engage with.

DigiHUBB has been involved in a variety of activities related to the Digital Humanities since its inception. For example in January of 2014 the keynote speaker for the inaugural conference of the centre was Professor Susan Schreibman of Maynooth University – a veritable pioneer in the field. This was followed by a conference held by Doctor Julyanne Nyhan, from UCL, in March 2014 as well as by many informal meetings with other key members of the international Digital Humanities community. The lobbying and promoting of Digital Humanities also included participation in national and international academic events, like Leipzig Summer School, or by publishing articles on the subject. (Moldovan, 286-294)

One of the following steps the centre took towards integration and validation was to create a training event. Thus in April-May of 2014 DigiHUBB organized a one-week workshop on TEI (Text Encoding Initiative) and data visualisation financed by NeDIMAH and the European Science Foundation, and co-organized a symposium on textual digital analysis within the Babeș-Bolyai University.¹⁰ There was a strong involvement in networking and studying the activities of other Digital Humanities centres in Europe that continued

⁹ The key challenge is, as shown in a 2015 European Commission report, the low level of competitiveness; the innovation culture is still underdeveloped in Romania.

¹⁰ “Editing texts in a digital world: text encoding and data visualization”, workshop, Cluj-Napoca, 27 April-3 May 2015, “Explorations in textual digital analysis for the humanities and social-sciences”, symposium, Cluj-Napoca, 14-15 May 2015.

through the following years. We now can strongly declare that the first and maybe the most important action in setting up such a centre is the community building exercise, both on an institutional level, and with the international organizations, private companies, and the local community. However much more remains to be done, especially in managing to reach the “stray practitioners”.

As stated before, in the process of setting up our centre we had to fight a very specific attitude that still characterizes post-revolutionary Romanian society, which we can characterize as “non-digital humanist”, as it is, in most cases, individualistic, speculative, traditional, and change-resisting, in comparison with the collaborative, hands-on, innovative and co-creative features of Digital Humanities:

The digital humanities, therefore, not only widens the scope and processes of disciplines within the university, but contributes to national innovation agendas, creating new possibilities for the traditional scholar within an increasingly competitive academic and economic context. As such, the collaborative nature of digital humanities research contributes to the innovation ecosystem, understood as the productive interaction between people, ideas, flows, processes and outputs. (Byrne, Schreibman)

Our goal is therefore to make our peers aware of the birth of a “new kind of digital humanist who combines in-depth training in a single humanistic subfield with a mix of skills drawn from design, computer science, media work, curatorial training and library science” (Burdick et. al., 12). We strongly embrace the evidence that the digital turn has changed most if not every, aspect of our lives and thus deeply modified people and scholars. The new type of scholar often has a mixed formation and proves very adapted in switching between various areas of expertise in an efficient and open-minded manner. The acceptance of the net-world in this new systemic thinking is essential. So maybe it is not by fortune that more and more Renaissance workshops can be found in cultural environments all over the world, like for example the Renaissance Workshop & Artist Salon to be found in New-York,¹¹ open to anyone who wants to learn “the craft and science of art”, a creative environment where practice and theory go hand in hand.

As for the Digital Humanities pedagogy, it was stressed out that the ideal open digital humanities certificate should have the following characteristics: open, net-worked, global, modular and flexible, community-driven, technological, and experimental. Lots of progress has been made in

¹¹ Or the Google Campus in London, the Nextspace in California but also ImpactHub in Cluj-Napoca.

designing the curriculum, organizing the content, implicating the community and re-thinking the assessment and the certification. However, the implementation of such a program requires facing several challenges, first of all at an administrative level: the resistance of the academic community to new forms of communication is obvious, especially regarding the ethos of sharing and opening the research to a wider community (through crowd sourcing for example). The Digital Humanities Centre plays a leading role in shaping the digital scholarship (with more than 200 centres on each continent, and growing). However, recent criticism underlines the danger of transforming these centres into “boutique digitization”; opening to a bigger scale is possible through importing interdisciplinary methods, for example managerial skills or by creating online/virtual platforms that aim to social-networked learning, such as DariahTeach.

If we are to follow the organization of a S.W.O.T chart we can easily identify the positive as well as the negatives aspects of DigiHUBB’s endeavours. First, it is important to recognize the undeniable strengths of the centre which mostly lay in the fact that its members are not only dedicated scholars, but also a number of them have obtained their PhDs with themes closely associated to Digital Humanities research (digital storytelling, data mining, digital mapping, linguistic analysis). All the members of this multilingual and multidisciplinary team are focused on innovation and creativity and there is ample participation on their behalf to a number of international conferences and summer schools. This of course points to a high degree of interest in networking in order to increase the centre’s opportunities. In fact, a DH centre exists because ambitious, enthusiastic and dedicated scholars exist as well as their “serendipitous” coming together.

The weaknesses must however also be acknowledged mainly due to the fact that the members lack systemic education in Digital Humanities, which in some cases renders the project ineligible for certain funding programs, as well as making it impossible for the members to further participate in a number of personal development programs, where a diploma in this field is required. As Digital Humanities in itself is not as of yet a recognized domain in Romania, this means minimal or no funding on behalf of local institutions and is a further blockage in proper development. The lack of proper equipment also constitutes an issue, but the biggest concern comes from the fact that all members are currently volunteers. If this situation is not resolved it may cause a lack of motivation and affect the time they are willing to dedicate to the centre as they focus on their day jobs. The University must recognize the opportunity to build programs of

excellence into a clear strategy of research and innovation, inter and trans-disciplinary studies. There are three trajectories that describe the value of digital humanities (Byrne, Schreibman, 10):

- The value of scholarship (the contribution of DH to the academic research by creating new innovative methods results and knowledge in a co-creative way.¹²
- The added value (by public engagement, by creating new intellectual properties, by so-called “emotional branding”).
- The cultural and social value new audiences for cultural institutes, new practices in studying, and an increased access to a “shared cultural heritage”.

The opportunities regarding DigiHUBB are numerous especially since there is an increasing interest in multimedia and interdisciplinary projects from funding organizations as well as greatly benefitting from a tight collaboration with many Digital Humanities networks especially ones from abroad. On a national level, besides the IT Cluster’s desire to collaborate, Romania is also the home to a young tech-savvy population. This inevitably points to a growing interest in Digital Humanities and the openness it provides. However most important is the presence of a large array of unexplored multicultural heritage sites which are suitable for applying method specific to this area of expertise. For example if we are only to focus on tapping into the touristic potential of the country, the possibilities for a Digital Humanities approach are already apparent and numerous: from creating thematic maps for monuments in Cluj-Napoca and around the country, to applications that involve placing QR codes all around the city. The uniqueness of some of Romania’s assets such as the wooden churches would also benefit from such an approach, which would also make them more easily available to researchers from all over the world.

Understood as a HUB, our centre has multiple possibilities of offering innovation, at all levels of the research-economic-social chain. We also consider it as a new cultural model, a real co-working space opened to all the actors of our multicultural and multilingual region. Characterized by a conflicted atmosphere of cooperation and competition, it will stimulate many of the features that have been proven so invaluable for to a modern, successful research.

¹² “Co-creation” is the key-word for most of the topics covered in the Horizon 2020 Program, especially those regarding education, policy-making, public services and the promotion of European public and cultural space.

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CONFORMISM VERSUS NON-CONFORMISM AS A QUEST FOR THE GENUINE IN ART IN GEORGE BOWERING'S "THE HAYFIELD"

JUDIT NAGY¹

ABSTRACT. *Conformism versus non-conformism as a quest for the genuine in art in George Bowering's "The Hayfield"*. Gordon Featherall, the art historian protagonist of Canadian writer George Bowering's short story, "The Hayfield" aspires to become a genuine painter through his knowledge of art. Contemplating literary and pictorial aesthetics of the twentieth century and having studied the oeuvre of famous literary figures and painters, he makes an attempt at painting his subject, the hayfield. Will he succeed in his endeavors to achieve something genuine? Building on a detailed analysis of the protagonist's painting-, and literature-related remarks, the paper aims at exploring the connection between conformism/ non-conformism in art and genuine artwork.

Keywords: *conformism, non-conformism, genuineness in art, painting and literature, literary criticism.*

REZUMAT. *Conformism versus non-conformism, mijloc de căutare a autenticului în artă, în "The Hayfield" de George Bowering.* Gordon Featherall, istoricul de artă protagonistul al povestirii "The Hayfield" de George Bowering, năzuiește să devină un pictor autentic, prin cunoștințele sale din domeniul artei. Contemplând estetica literară și picturală a secolului al XX-lea și studiind, în prealabil, opera unor autori și pictori celebri, acesta încearcă să picteze subiectul ales, o fâneată. Va reuși el în demersul de a realiza ceva autentic? Bazându-se pe o analiză detaliată a picturii protagonistului, dar și pe aspecte ce țin de analiză literară, lucrarea își propune să exploreze conexiunea dintre conformism și non-conformism în arta autentică.

Cuvinte cheie: *conformism, non-conformism, autenticitate în artă, pictură și literatură, critică literară.*

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The issue of conformism and non-conformism in art can be approached from the point of what constitutes genuine artwork, a question which has been preoccupying artist and critic alike. Gordon Featherall, the art history teacher protagonist of Canadian writer George Bowering's short story, "The Hayfield" aspires to become a painter producing genuine artwork. "Get[ting] right down to it – not only on weekends after marking papers and preparing lectures" (Bowering 193), he makes an attempt at painting his subject, the hayfield. Will he succeed in his endeavors to achieve something genuine?

Building on an analysis of the protagonist's painting-, and literature-related remarks, the paper aims at exploring the connection between genuine artwork and conformism/ non-conformism. This connection will be examined from six different perspectives: the artist's vision of the landscape, the landscape itself, the artist's schooling, audience and critic, time and, finally, place. The term 'conformism' will be understood in a general sense, as 'correspondence or similarity in form, character or mode' in order to cover all the relevant contexts of the above connection the text provides.

Images of the sun as the artist's non-conformism/ conformism

In the opening passage of the story, Gordon Featherall stands at the edge of the hayfield, catching a glimpse of the sun, which becomes the first detail of the landscape for him to observe. He proposes three different yet interconnected ways of looking at the sun. First, the sunbeams say "yes, yes, yes" in a "forceful whisper," "propelling it in beams, overpowering with great oldman wisdom," defying all human-made petty bans: "no parking, cycling, hunting, stopping, spitting, talking, fishing" (Bowering 193). This is the artist's first impression of the subject, reminiscent of the nature-as-mightier-than-man cliché (Pache 149), yet original in the employment of the actual man-made rules (no parking, hunting, spitting) in the juxtaposition.

Through references to Van Gogh and D. H. Lawrence's depiction of the sun, the initial image is extended. Thus, on the one hand, after the first impression the subject makes on the artist, images others have associated with it emerge from the back of his mind, that is, someone else's way of seeing the sun is drawn into the artist's image, which could be observed as artistic conformism. On the other hand, he uses these images to argue for his own aesthetics, that is, non-intervention.

Van Gogh's "insane sun, rings of solid orange paint around it" (Bowering 193) appears through the transitory thought of insanity triggered by the enumerated string of man-made bans. These bans also form an impediment in the artist's way of creating genuine artwork. This can be best illustrated with the artist's reference to D. H. Lawrence:

D. H. Lawrence's sun growing warm orange rings around the inside hearts of men, making them speak to one another on the streets [...] the discarded cigarette

package in the same place for months, bleaching in the sun, never stepped on or swept up. Park with no signs in it, a man can spit if he wants to, nobody to say No, only the sun in the wide prairie sky, whispering yes through the air, the warm lapping on a man's bare shoulders once he has discarded his shirt, or at least stuffed it in his bag. That was where Gordon set up his easel and little canvas-top stool (Bowering 193).

Here, the shirt is symbolic of all human-made petty rules. To create a genuine work of art, the artist needs to discard this shirt, or "at least, stuff it in [his] bag," that is, bracket it, put it aside. In addition, Nature itself whispers "Yes" in a reassuring gesture of affectionate encouragement in order for the artist to disregard what is represented by the shirt. Finally, the author's choice of the artists itself is suggestive of the aesthetics of non-intervention as both Van Gogh and D. H. Lawrence are known to have obeyed their own impulses going beyond the limitations of 'petty rule reality.' Indeed, commenting on Van Gogh, among other artists, Freeland confirms that "genius[es] obey a sort of law or inner duty" (89), while Dalal suggests that "spontaneity in art was the first principle with Lawrence, and therefore, he was impatient of art 'too much cooked in the artistic consciousness'" (59)².

Conformism/ non-conformism in depicting the landscape

From the sun, the artist's focus will shift to the hayfield and the horizon: "A man wouldn't even have to bring paint if he could dip his long-handled brushes in the colour of the yellow hay and blue horizon" (Bowering 139), he remarks. This, in the given context, implies that the artwork lies there in nature, ready-made for the artist. All he has to do is find it, and then copy it onto the canvas. This approach limits the artist's originality to seeking out the right subject and/or composition through his vision, realizing the pictorial version of the Woolfesque "moment of being."³ On the naïve-reflective axis⁴, this is closer to the naïve perceived as the perfect imitation of the real (=nature).⁵

² Additionally, Eyman reveals another way in which D. H. Lawrence did not conform to the contemporary literary tradition. He states that "in essence, Lawrence was the primary transitional figure between the literature of the 19th century -- which insisted that sex, as such, did not exist -- and that of the 20th, which insists that little else, as such, exists but sex. He was obsessed, to almost a Nietzschean degree, with primal things and the power of the individual, and with how the only complete loss of self comes in sexual communion" ("Genius...").

³ "For Woolf a moment of being is a moment when an individual is fully conscious of his experience, a moment when he is not only aware of himself but catches a glimpse of his connection to a larger pattern hidden behind the opaque surface of daily life" (Urquhart, "Moments of Being...").

⁴ Schiller's categories as put forward for poetry in his work "On Naïve and Reflective Poetry" are equally applicable to fine arts.

⁵ The naïve and the pictorial "moment[s] of being" are the theorem and the corollary behind the "art is mimesis" axiom of imitation theory, which Freeland characterizes as "one of the most persistent theories in art" (20).

To furnish painting-related examples, Freeland relies on E. H. Gombrich, who “described the history of Western art (mainly painting) as a search for progressively more vivid renderings of reality [where] [i]nnovations aimed at more perfect semblances. New theories of perspective in the Renaissance and oil painting with its greater tactility and richness enabled artists to achieve an increasingly convincing ‘copy’ of Nature” (23). The invention of the camera in the middle of the 19th century further contributed to the popularity of mimesis in visual arts: “the camera served as a new tool to present objective reality. Experimentations with photographic vision were discernible in contemporary landscape painting” (Nagy 134), manifesting in art movements such as Luminism.

As Featherall is working on his painting, however, his vision of his subject begins to change, which is first indicated through the description of the slightly altered colour scheme: “[Gordon] continued to lay paint on the canvas, thick swabs of corn-yellow, with deep orange stripes, a tiger of a hayfield” (Bowering 193), and then he “squeeze[d] horizon blue onto the palette – an old dry painting” (194). This is an attempt on his part to capture the colour scheme rather than every detail of the landscape.

The next step away from a photograph-like representation of the subject is to introduce letters in the composition: “Gordon wrote MOLTO⁶ in orange paint on top of the canvas, and painted slowly, letting his shoulders dip to the rhythm of the lines. The hayfield didn’t change, no stroke on the canvas took anything away from the yellow miles in front” (194). This implies that the essence of the subject does not lie either in its copy-like rendering or in capturing its colour scheme. Thus what we have so far approximates a neo-expressionist work with its vivid and harmonizing colours and rough, bold brushstrokes.⁷

The black-and-white Japanese footage Featherall suddenly remembers while at work on his painting induces another change in his art: it triggers an impulse to reflect the delicate nature of Asian ink paintings. This impulse does not manifest either in the artist’s altering of his subject or the colour scheme of his painting, but in his manner of handling brushwork: “[h]e had been swabbing paint onto the canvas. Now he touched it lightly, with a fine brush” (195). This influence is also symbolic of the role of the subconscious in the creation of artwork.⁸ This example, similarly to that of the artist’s observing the sun, indicates that the subconscious can serve as a receptacle and provider of others’ ideas and modes of seeing a subject, thus it can function as a source of artistic conformism.

Upon encountering a flute player at the hayfield, Featherall includes tones and hues in his painting that harmonize with his music: “Gordon painted. The

⁶ Art terminology abounds in Italian words and expressions, especially in music – hence the choice of words. ‘Molto’ means ‘a lot of,’ ‘much,’ ‘many.’

⁷ Neo-expressionism is a version of the post-modern in art (“Painting”).

⁸ Here, the subconscious works in the same manner in the artistic process as when the artist is observing the sun, and his vision is mixed with that of Van Gogh and D. H. Lawrence.

newcomer blew gently on the flute, making low hollow tones, and as he did this, Gordon lined in the darker brown surface brown shadows under the brilliant crest of the hay" (197). Featherall's reaction to the flute player's music can be considered another example of artistic conformism. Yet, paradoxically, the element triggered by the music in his composition will contribute to making the work itself unique.

Thus a gradual abstraction from the original subject can be observed in Gordon Featherall's art, his work becomes more reflective than naïve. Emblematic of this, to the flute player's comment that the hayfield "ain't that colour" (196) he responds, "No, I am not trying to make it the right colour" (196), which confirms that this is a conscious choice for him.

However, the abstraction in Featherall's artistic development is not the result of conscious planning, it seems rather random. He is certainly not in control of what emerges from the back of his mind while he is observing the landscape, just as the flute player's appearance is an unforeseen and unanticipated event. Yet, all these influences are discernible in the painting resulting from the experience. At the same time, in spite of the gradual abstraction, his work remains representational in essence.⁹

Non-conformism of the self-made artist

Gordon Featherall also contends that earnest endeavour is more important than schooling to produce genuine art: "a man doesn't have to be a painter when you get right down to it" (Bowering 139), he states. In the given context, this is to suggest that if the honest determination is there, the resulting artwork will be genuine.¹⁰ Therefore an artist does not need to be either well-trained or heroic, his insight will come from his earnest endeavour.¹¹ If schooling in art is considered as a form of conformism to a set of rules and styles, then Featherall's attitude comes across as non-conformism.

Conformism of the audience and the critic: labeling

Soon after Featherall starts painting his work, Carmen Ethiopia "pop[s] up from behind the long grass," the man "wearing the wrong kind of clothes" and "look[ing] piercingly at the canvas, expert fashion seen in movie shorts and colour advertisements" (Bowering 194). Again, clothes here may be symbolic of the audience's inappropriate attitude to art and art appreciation. What Ethiopia does first

⁹ In painting, representational art may also comprise images which depart from being true-to-life, as long as they are recognisable. ("Representational Art")

¹⁰ In Dutton, sincerity of expression is a defining feature of expressive authenticity.

¹¹ In Carlyle and Emerson, insight and the ability to penetrate into the "divine idea of the world" is the unique capacity of the hero/ poet, who personifies the unity of the ideal and the real, discovering the ideal in the real.

is to ensure Featherall of his amateur expertise, and he does so in a rather boastful manner: "I have looked at my share of paintings. Pissarro, Tintoretto, Hogarth, eh, eh?" (194). The superficial nature of his pretentious art *connaissance* is revealed in his answer to Featherall's question whether he likes Hogarth: "Well you know – Hogarth. But don't let me disturb you" (194). In all probability, Ethiopia has no in-depth knowledge of Hogarth's art, hence his inability to converse meaningfully about it. Putting on an air of an art expert bored of the subject, he tries to cover up his ignorance.

After a short time, Ethiopia re-enters into conversation with Featherall on his work by saying that "Van Gogh would have loved that hayfield," also adding that "he went insane at the end" (194). This statement reveals a response from the type of audience and critic who wish to contextualize the given work of art by placing it in a neatly labeled box through comparison to other, well-known artists' work. The phenomenon can be considered another embodiment of conformism in art. Such criticism is not based on the work's own merits but on those of the ones similar to it.

The additional remark ending Ethiopia's comment may be a demonstration of what constitutes "Van Goghness" in art for his kind of people who "[know] a lot about art [only] in a way" (197), just as it may represent another attempt of Ethiopia's at showing off with his supposed knowledge of popularized art history.

To further illustrate the conformist practice of labeling mentioned above, Ethiopia cites famous artists' names in response to Featherall's introducing himself: "the name of a painter, something to conjure with. Monet, Tiepolo, Brueghel—" (194).

Similarly, upon the flute player's remark on the differing colour scheme of the hayfield and the painting of it, Ethiopia furnishes the following explanation: "Impressionism... Renoir, Degas" (196) in the manner of "a man who was obliged to know something" (197). Again, he places the work in a category instead of making an attempt at learning about the artist's impulses behind it. Ethiopia represents the kind of art historian who wants to label and catalogue everything rather than considering the work as it is. He is "an ambassador [...] whose job entails codifying the lives and habits of other people" (197), an agent to enforce conformism in art. Hence he appears in the 'wrong clothes' on the scene.

Furthermore, Featherall realizes that locals who are regular observers of the subject at various times, who "live with it," may possess a better knowledge of it than either the critic or an artist upon a one-off visit: "[t]his man [i.e. the flute player] has the previous and preemptive knowledge of the hayfield. [...] His knowledge required many moments in how many years, of looking out over miles of hayfield" (196).

Featherall admires the flute player's depth of experience of the hayfield just as the flute player expresses his appreciation of Featherall's painting in his own simple manner: "It's pretty good" (197), which is worth more than any praise from Carmen Ethiopia because it comes from an expert of the experience, the only person in a position to verify the genuineness of Featherall's art. Their realization of a shared understanding of art is concluded with a 'business deal' – Featherall 'sells' the painting to the flute player, who turns out to be the landowner's son, for a stack of hay.

Non-conformism as the artist's resistance to his environment (time)

Along the course of painting, Featherall reveals some of his thoughts on art. An intriguing utterance is his "Do your painting in one sitting, he had decided. Don't come back to it" (Bowering 194) at the beginning of the story. In fact, painting in one sitting can be a reference to the *alla prima* painting technique, or 'direct painting,' which is confirmed by his applying dark to light colour (orange and brown on yellow), thin to thick (first thick swabs then light, fine brushstrokes), massing in the shapes (no pencil) and focus on contrasts (yellow and blue) (Currier "Alla Prima Painting – The Process"). Yet, the added "he had decided" creates the impression of the impermanence of this technique in Featherall's art, while the "Don't come back to it" that follows gives the utterance a temporal dimension, similar in manner to the 'to be read in one sitting' criterion of a short story. This dimension is further reinforced by the narrator's response, "The hayfield was the hay of today" (Bowering 194), which stresses the importance of the instantaneous in art.¹²

Conformism/ non-conformism of the artist's environment (place)

For Featherall, the greatest impediment in the artist's 'capturing the moment' appears to be the environment: "A test to do the one painting despite roar of automobile and chomp of eating neighbours, even here in the dry slope of railroad ridge between track and wire fence, to paint despite intrusion or weather" (Bowering 194).

He goes on to suggest that there has to be a match between the subject and the stimuli provided by the environment in which the artist works on his subject. For example, a busy, noisy environment does not match the subject of the Hayfield: "A man could paint a revolution that way, a violent act every day, thirty illustrations a month. [But] "the hayfield *offered another kind of instant*, one that stretched out radically, from the eye to the whole in eternity" (Bowering 194). Thus the environment has to conform to the subject for the artist's creation of genuine artwork.

Another illustration of the same principle at work is Featherall's perception of the flute player's music: "With the flute noise nearing, the painting stopped. For a while, he tried to groove the brush strokes to the music but it was wrong, because the music was wrong for that place. It was Hindustan music, Old Testament music, like the bright, wooden-looking colour prints of his old forgotten Bible" (Bowering 195). As an explanation, he adds, "in the Old Testament there are two possibilities for music, the long loud blare choruses of chornets as the walls of Jericho crashed in the sand, and the lonely soldier flute of shepherd David"¹³ (Bowering 195). As has

¹² It is not unlike the modernist interpretation of experience as put forward by Walter Pater in his "Conclusion to the Renaissance" or Virginia Woolf's 'moments of being.'

¹³ This is reminiscent of Matthew Arnold's Hellenic versus Hebraic categorization.

been illustrated before, the lonely soldier flute is the music which befits the mood of Featherall's painting. It does not feel out of place, it blends in with the landscape thus it is conducive to the artistic process. However, it is also the very embodiment of Heisenberg's principle: its presence will affect the artwork – hence the appearance of the brown shadows on the canvas.

Conclusion

In the Lyotardian sense, Gordon featherall's art displays some post-modern features. He proceeds on an ad hoc basis, the impermanence of his choices is a discernible feature of his art, his work is seemingly unstructured in this sense. His resistance to the pre-established rules reflects in his attitude to art and life, yet he cannot fully escape from these, thus he cannot become non-conformist in this sense. His subconscious, the context of the artwork including the artist's working environment, his schooling, the expectations and misinterpretations of critic and audience may all work against him. His chance to achieve genuineness in depicting the hayfield is in capturing the instantaneous and in the combination of ideas arising from his experience of the subject into a coherent whole.

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LITERATURE AND LITERARY CRITICISM ACCORDING TO AN “INCOMPLETE DISBELIEVER”, EMIL CIORAN

MAGDA WÄCHTER¹

ABSTRACT. *Literature and Literary Criticism according to an “Incomplete Disbeliever”, Emil Cioran.* The present study analyses the views of Cioran, as an “incomplete believer” upon literature and literary criticism, as he defines himself. Despite his pretended reticence about these cultural fields, the philosopher, often considered a writer, both in Romania and in France, is a passionate literature reader, as well as the author of lyrical, highly expressive essays, convinced of the ontological value of literature and arts.

Keywords: *Cioran, literature, literary criticism, lyricism, novel, philosophy, disbelief.*

REZUMAT. *Literatura și critica literară în viziunea unui „sceptic incomplet”, Emil Cioran.* Studiul de față analizează viziunea lui Cioran, ca „sceptic incomplet”, așa cum se autodefinește el, asupra literaturii și a criticii literare. În pofida reticenței declarate față de aceste domenii culturale, filosoful, adesea considerat, atât în România, cât și în Franța, un scriitor, este un cititor pasionat de literatură și autorul unor eseuri lirice de o expresivitate remarcabilă, încredințat de valoarea ontologică a literaturii și a artei.

Cuvinte cheie: *Emil Cioran, literatură, critică literară, lirism, roman, filosofie, scepticism.*

In Emil Cioran’s view, literature and literary criticism hold a paradoxical privileged place. If, according to Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica or Lucian Blaga, creation is a response to the “terror” of history, to the “tragic” human condition, as well as a possible way to overcome determinism, Cioran mainly positions himself against action of any kind. His insistent urge is towards non-manifestation and non-expression, both standing for an overall world denial. “On the edges of

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despair”, the young philosopher considers the human condition a tragedy, existence – meaningless, time – the greatest enemy of mankind, becoming – an unacceptable notion, history, culture and knowledge – real dramas. Man would thus be a mere unhappy animal, abandoned to death. Everything is called into question except vital, organic truths, springing from personal experience. And such truths are always supposed to be beyond verbal expression, in the disbeliever’s opinion.

Nevertheless, Cioran appears to be passionate about words, writing and reading at the high temperatures imposed by his restless spirit, ardently devoted to truth, even if only through this kind of seductive negations. According to his own repeatedly disclosed confessions, he writes just to avoid suicide and to endure life more easily. He describes himself as “an incomplete disbeliever” and as “an elegiac complainer over the end of the world”².

In his philosophy, which is rather an anti-philosophy, an appeal to vivid experience against conceptual thought, the initially discredited literature still gradually gains positive values. Moreover, Cioran’s non-systematic thought, predicated on negation, contradiction and paradox, is expressed in a remarkably lyrical style, noticed by most of his critics.

The philosopher of “the end of the world” constantly stands against being portrayed as a writer or as a man of letters, denying, in fact, any possible submission to specific directions or trends. In a dialogue with François Bondy, for instance, he claims to hate writing and to have written rather less³. On another occasion, he confesses his disbelief in literature and pretends to have kept apart both from literature and from philosophy in his books⁴. “No, I have neither talent, nor style”⁵, he complains in his diary, adding that, in his opinion, writers stand for the most abhorrent species⁶.

However, critics seem to share quite different opinions in this respect, from the very beginning. Commenting on his first book, entitled *On the Edges of Despair* (*Pe culmile disperării*), G. Călinescu speaks about some “vaporous philosophical essays”⁷, while Șerban Cioculescu identifies an “essentially lyrical, confessional, aggressive” author⁸. This critical portrait remains mainly the same

² Cioran, *Caiete III 1967-1972*. Translated from French by Emanoil Marcu and Vlad Russo, București, Humanitas, 2000, p. 260; p. 17.

³ *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, București, Humanitas, 1993, p. 9.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

⁵ Cioran, *Caiete II 1966-1968*. Translated from French by Emanoil Marcu and Vlad Russo, București, Humanitas, 1999, p. 15.

⁶ Id., *Caiete III 1967-1972*, ed. cit., p. 95.

⁷ G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent*. Edited and forwarded by Al. Piru, București, Minerva, 1982, p. 955.

⁸ Șerban Cioculescu, „Operele premiate ale scriitorilor tineri needitați”, in vol. *Pro și contra Emil Cioran. Între idolatrie și pamflet*. Anthology, forward and notes by Marin Diaconu, București, Humanitas, 1998, p. 34.

even after his next books, reviewed rather by literary critics than by philosophers, both in Romania and in France. Quite relevant is Eugen Simion's remark, namely that Cioran writes literature, although he theoretically despises it, aiming at a possible aesthetic restoration of the unaesthetic in existence, in the tradition of symbolism and of Baudelaire. "What we nowadays enjoy in Cioran's writing is precisely the literature within his philosophical discourse", concludes the critic⁹. Yet, this situation is less surprising than it seems to be, considering that the famous cultural generation directed by Nae Ionescu Cioran belongs to shows much interest in the relationship between philosophy and arts, opposing to the old generation influenced by Titu Maiorescu, as Ion Ianoși states¹⁰. The thinker's disbelief in literature is not singular either, considering Eugène Ionesco's injurious remarks, as well as Constantin Noica's or young Mircea Eliade's incriminating opinions in this respect. Cioran's personal mark in this problem resides in a fastidious disapproval, as pure in intentions, as impure in its inner substance. Over and above, he considers himself an incomplete disbeliever, privately confessing to his friend, Sanda Stolojan, that one should not be impressed by words, and that a passionate negation actually represents an affirmation, since ultimately everything is affirmation¹¹. Made by a prophet of the end of the world, such an observation sounds rather astounding. Thence, Cioran, the non-philosopher and the non-writer, is certainly aware of the deficiencies of his non-system, reflecting an assumed constitutive duality.

"I am not a writer, he claims in his diary, because I don't like writing. I am not seeking the 'truth', but the reality, as sought by a hermit – who has abandoned everything for it. I want to know what is real and why we cannot possess it¹².

In *The Syllogisms of Bitterness (Silogisme amărăciunii)*, Cioran seems to share Nietzsche's opinion on philology, stating that "it is hard to imagine a more deceiving universe than the literary one and a more untruthful individual than the man of letters¹³, while in a letter published in the book entitled *The Temptation to Exist (Ispita de a exista)*, he prosecutes literature in a rather literary way: "Getting inside the literary inferno, you will experience deceit and venom; disconnected from reality, turned into a parody of your own person, you will no longer be able to live anything but formal, indirect experiences; you will be devoured by words /.../. As for the men of letters, they will prove to be useless. However, you will become aware of all this just too late, long after having wasted your best years of life in a superficial, unsubstantial world. The man of letters? A big-mouthed,

⁹ Eugen Simion, *O mitologie a nedesăvârșirilor*, București, Tracus Arte, 2014, p. 299.

¹⁰ Ion Ianoși, *O istorie a filosofiei românești în relația ei cu literatura*, Cluj-Napoca, Apostrof, 1996, p. 177.

¹¹ Cioran, *Caiete III 1967-1972*, ed. cit., p. 149.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 59.

¹³ Cioran, *Silogisme amărăciunii*. Translated from French by Nicolae Bârna, București, Humanitas, 2002, p. 15.

selling his miseries for almost nothing, exposing and endlessly repeating them; impudence – display of secret thoughts – is his precept in life; he is a prostitute”¹⁴. Moreover, the thinker endorses the relation of literature to the originary sin, to further predict a non-literary era, already manifesting itself through the “corruption” of literary genres, proper to the eclecticism of contemporary culture. Although the presumed future death of literature, as a concern for nothingness, satisfies the philosopher’s general distaste, he surprisingly mentions in another text, prophetically called “Beyond the Novel”, that the absence of literature would turn us into mere robots¹⁵.

The so-called decadence of contemporary culture is supposed to be primarily revealed by the dissolution of the novel, as a hybrid, impure literary genre, animated by vulgarity and arrivisme, dealing with a second hand humankind, advocating the art of low talking and of peeping in, as a substitute of old metaphysics. Reversely, Cioran longs for the profoundness of the “Ungrund” sought by the mystics, yet conceding that the contemporary novel, void of substance, characters, conflict and causality as it is, attempts to venture up to the roots of the Unrevealed. The alleged decline of contemporary culture and art may thus stand for a possible regeneration, since “any end encloses a promise and liberates the horizon”¹⁶. According to this interpretation, the writer’s hope for the end of the novel entailed by current syncretism is a call for realness as opposed to fiction, in a general meaning.

As to his literary tastes, Cioran paradoxically lingers on his contradictory opinions, as he confesses, for instance, not being able to read a novel up to the end, although the most fascinating – if not even greatest – books he had ever read happened to be novels. In his diary he expresses, more or less ironically, his regret for not having been a novelist¹⁷, despite his distrust in literature.

Among all the literary species, the essay seems to hold a privileged place in his view, despite the usual contradictions. Letters and diaries are considered to be less fictitious than other narratives, he maintains, but, on the other hand, “to keep a diary means to get a fishwife’s habits, to notice any kind of irrelevant things, to insist upon them, and, furthermore, to place too much importance to what happens to one, neglecting instead the essential, to become a writer in the worst meaning of the word”¹⁸. Two years later, reflecting on his own confessional writing habits, Cioran decides to never give them up, since this very so-called “trivialness” might reveal the essential. Therefore, the diarist, as well as the

¹⁴ Idem, “Scrisoare despre câteva impasuri”, in vol. *Ispita de a exista*. Translated from French by Emanoil Marcu, București, Humanitas, 2016, p. 89.

¹⁵ Idem, “Dincolo de roman”, in vol. *Ispita de a exista*, ed. cit., p. 135.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 133.

¹⁷ Cioran, *Caiete II 1966-1968*, ed. cit., p. 46.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 399.

novelist, would fail into nothingness, though nothingness itself leads to substance, while the essayist, as a prisoner to a tricky literary genre requiring constant contradiction¹⁹, is still the most reliable writer of all.

As a repudiator of literature who still does approach literature, if only by means of confession, or as a philosopher who subscribes, in the footsteps of Kierkegaard, to a modern way of expression such as the fragment, Cioran proves to be not just an incomplete disbeliever, but even a paradoxical assertive pessimist. His apocalypses fail to be ultimate, always shattered by redemptive glimpses of hope. Besides, his lyrical, passionate style is often not consistent with his prophetically proclaimed negativism.

Surprisingly, the prosecutor of literature is a constant reader of poetry, and especially of the Romantic poets, sharing their belief in the power of aesthetic emotion to reveal completeness. Many of his remarks on poetry are void of any mark of nihilism: "As long as one keeps close to poetry, he states, he is not exposed to inner emptiness/.../. As in the case of music, one comes close to an essential, overwhelming thing: some kind of a gift, of a supernatural complicity with the Astounding. Time is moved away and one is expelled out of becoming. Music and poetry, two sublime aberrations"²⁰. Like Berdiaev, Cioran considers poetry a way of universal redemption, and poets – superior to saints. Although he praises non-expression and non-action, one of his "admiration sketches", dedicated to Saint-John Perse, holds language as a possible substitute of the universe itself, in case of extinction²¹.

Beyond the bitter disbeliever fighting against modern culture and civilization, there is also a romantic believer, fascinated by the compensatory world of poetry, and dreaming of a possible lyrical redemption. The former intends to avoid the "perils" of poetry, not to give in the seduction of lyricism, while the latter eventually comes to regret having abandoned lyricism for the elegant expression that made him famous in France. Statements like the following should be read with mistrust, as the brilliant stylist disapproves of intimate confession in general: "My ideal of writing: to put to silence once and for all the poet hidden inside; to get rid of the last residuals of lyricism; – to resist one's inner core; to forsake one's inspirations, to trample on one's elations – and even one's dissatisfactions"²². Despite these intentions revealing both ludic bitterness and nostalgic nonconformism, the essayist does not abandon either his lyrical personal style or his literary preferences, the same way as the

¹⁹ Cioran, *Mărturisiri și anateme*. Translated by Emanoil Marcu, București, Humanitas, 1997, pp. 136-137.

²⁰ *Convorbiri cu Cioran*, ed. cit., p. 209.

²¹ Cioran, "Saint-John Perse", in *Exerciții de admirație. Eseuri și portrete*. Translated by Emanoil Marcu, București, Humanitas, 1993, p. 112.

²² Idem, *Caiete I 1957-1965*. Foreworded by Simone Boué, translated from French by Emanoil Marcu and Vlad Russo, București, Humanitas, 1999, p. 10.

agnostic's interest in the mystics remains vivid against all negations. He never turns against his "inner core", writing only by the impulse of inspiration, always consumed by the most intimate elations or idiosyncrasies. Even in non-lyrical moods, he keeps reading at least one poem a day, unaware of the consequences of his own distinction between truth, on the one hand, and reality, on the other, or between the "unessential" specific to literature and the essential pursued by the mystics. Therefore, the "inferno" of literature appears to be one of his constant greatest delights.

Among Cioran's favourite authors are Dostoyevsky, read about five or six times, Shakespeare, the English poets, Baudelaire, Pascal, Dante, Swift, Proust, Eminescu and Blaga. Confessional literature, letters, memoirs and biographies, expressing the "accidental", that is the "real", also provide an enjoyable reading. On the other side, he dislikes contemporary literature, especially French literature, represented by Sartre, Camus, Gide and even Paul Valéry, as well as the modern poetical trends, such as Hermeticism or Avant-garde. French literature is supposed to have become a mere expression of language itself, while criticism, be it literary, artistic or philosophical, reflects a concern for the method instead of a free, personal reflection.

Criticism itself is wholly disapproved both by young Cioran and by the author of the *Treatise of Decomposition (Tratat de descompunere)*: "Among all reflections, the most useless ones are those on literature. Criticism is the most futile activity possible; one should better be a grocer than write about others"²³. Critics would thus be nothing else but scandalous parasites, hanging out at the periphery of literature.

Nevertheless, despite his conviction that nobody should write about anybody, Cioran embraces criticism himself, even only for financial reasons, as he confesses. Hence, he is the author of an unaccepted preface to Paul Valéry's eighth volume of *Works*, where the French poet is described as a sheer "sentence-maker", a "costive, subtle and fussy spirit"²⁴. Similarly, reflecting on *The Death of Ivan Ilici*, he identifies Tolstoy's supposedly dubious anxious, tormented spirit, his self-hatred and world horror, as well as the incongruence between his life and his beliefs²⁵. All these – in a fluid, highly expressive, almost fictional style, quite surprising for a language and literature disbeliever. The nihilist is obviously a very original and passionate critic, fully aware of the limits of his objectivity: "I am writing a text about Tolstoy's fear of death, he confesses, and, as I usually do, I think more of myself than of the author I have to speak about"²⁶.

²³ Idem, *Caiete II 1966-1968*, ed. cit., p. 216.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 280-284.

²⁵ Cioran, „Cea mai veche dintre spaime”, in vol. *Căderea în timp*. Translated by Irina Mavrodin, București, Humanitas, 1994, pp. 123-139.

²⁶ Idem, *Caiete I 1957-1965*, ed. cit., p. 199.

Both his approvals and disapprovals seem to be speculative, quite risky adventures, whereas admiration comes close to hyperbola, and distaste – to the pamphlet. However, the texts in the volume entitled *Exercices d'admiration* are elegant, lyrical essays, written in an expressive, almost poetical style. Here are, for example, some reflections on the verses of Saint-John Perse: "Literate and virgin, deliberate and originary lyricism, emerged from an insight of saps, from an erudite inebriety of elements, a Pre-Socratic and anti-biblical inebriety that assimilates to the sacred everything bearing a name, and thus being able to be redeemed by language – this real redeemer"²⁷. Neither the "inferno" of literature, nor the "misery" of criticism are visible in these reflections that seem to be written rather by an enthusiastic Impressionist than by a simple scribe endowed with no literary gift, as he describes himself. While the diarist thinks of literary analysis as an obstacle to spiritual evolution, the occasional critic idealistically dreams of the redemptive power of language. Constantin Noica justly notices Cioran's extraordinary understanding of the artistic and cultural phenomenon in which he actually invested everything, despite his professed nihilism. "I know nobody else's means being in such a discordance with ends", exclaims the philosopher²⁸.

Therefore, literature is not at all repugnant to Cioran, despite his pretended contempt, while literary criticism looks distasteful to him only in its postmodern forms. As a deceived enthusiast or as an elegiac disbeliever, the essayist disapproves with the so-called "scientific", methodological criticism, "hybridized" by the intrusion of other cultural fields, instead of promoting genuine literary reflection: "What is nowadays named the innovation of criticism, he asserts, means adopting an exterior language, unspecific to literature. Not to speak as writers, but as philosophers, sociologists and all the others. The whole actual criticism is carried on either on behalf of Marx, Freud or Heidegger or on that of some new discipline using a new terminology"²⁹. Moreover, he appreciates impressionistic criticism, based on spontaneous, emotional reading, as an experience of self-knowledge rather than as an arid scientific approach.

Many of Cioran's considerations on literature reveal both his assumed incomplete disbelieving and what Eugen Simion calls "a messianic mythology" predicated upon "the essential paradox of *Cioranism*", namely "the contradiction between the radically nihilistic view on modern world" and "the project of an active man, willing to change and redeem the world after having striven to blow it up"³⁰. The philosopher of the end of the world does confess that his writings attempt to

²⁷ Idem, „Saint-John Perse”, in vol. *Exerciții de admirație. Eseuri și portrete*, ed. cit., p. 106.

²⁸ Constantin Noica, „Gânduri despre Emil Cioran”, in vol. *Pro și contra Emil Cioran. Între idolatrie și pamflet*, ed. cit., p. 293.

²⁹ Cioran, *Caiete II 1966-1968*, ed. cit., pp. 212-213.

³⁰ Eugen Simion, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

bring awakening, since the simple act of writing means transcending relativity, temporality and, ultimately, death. The essays and portraits in the book entitled *Exercices d'admiration* abound in literary creeds postulating the superiority of arts upon all the other fields of knowledge, in a quite lyrical, assertive manner. Hence, in a "Brief Confession" at the end of the book, Cioran claims that writing means "competing and even surpassing God, by the mere power of language"³¹.

To conclude, the apocalyptic philosopher pretends to have got lost in the universe of Letters only to prevent suicide or murder, deeply convinced that real life resides beyond words. The "superficial" and "delusive" world of literature, opposite to both reality and spiritual life, suggests the very inferno, as a direct consequence of the originary sin. Thus, the novel is supposed to be an "inept" literary species, yet pointing to the profoundness of the "Ungrund", as revealed in its latest forms of expression. Similarly, confessional literature implies the habits of a "fishwife", despite the fact that this very kind of "trifleness" put down daily might accede to completeness. In turn, poetry is considered a miscellany of trickery and ecstasy, and still an opposite to emptiness, relativity and becoming, invested with a superior ontological status. Literature itself is at the same time misleading and aiming at transcendence. Entering the "inferno of literature", Cioran certainly proves to be both an incomplete disbeliever and a messianic idealist, persuaded that a passionate negation represents an affirmation.

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³¹ Cioran, „Scurtă confesiune”, in vol. *Exerciții de admirație. Eseuri și portrete*, ed. cit., pp. 195-197.

BOOK REVIEW

CRISTINA CHEVERESAN, *The Present with a Past: Explorations of Identity in Ethnic American Fiction*, Timișoara, Editura Universității de Vest, 2015, 367 p.

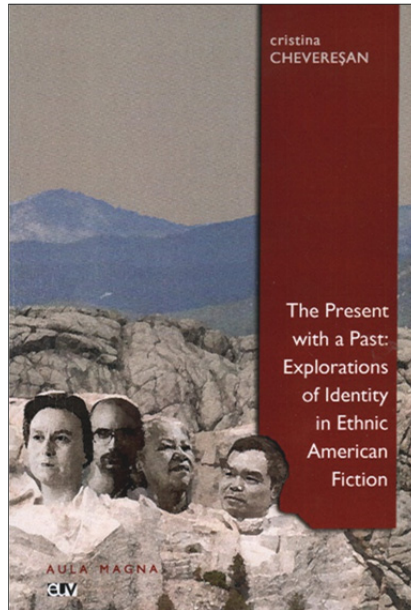
Cristina Cheveresan's book *The Present with a Past: Explorations of Identity in Ethnic American Fiction* represents a significant contribution to the larger American Studies landscape as well as to the more specialized Ethnic Studies field. For a multicultural society such as the American one, ethnic fiction represents the best barometer for the level of integration and well-being of a community and the most appropriate lens to use when analyzing its diversity and potential for accommodating those who are "different."

The author offers an in-depth overview of contemporary ethnic American fiction along theoretical and particular lines. The introduction of the book provides, selectively, concepts and terms which are later used as keys to understanding particular works and authors. The three constitutive parts which follow treat individual and communal hyphenated identities within the African-American, Asian-American and Latino-American ethnic groups. Just as the meaning of the term "ethnic" contains connotations of the national, as well as the "other", the terminology of writing about immigration by immigrants has changed its face overtime from "immigration novel" to "ethnic literature", to "multicultural representation", which reflects the mutable perceptions of this multi-faceted phenomenon.

The first part of the study is dedicated to the African-American experience and includes the following authors and works: Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Heidi Durrow's *The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*, and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. The author explores various aspects of slavery and its impactful aftermath, identity crises and dilemmas raised by skin color, racial prejudice and white supremacy. She uses these texts to look into the individual and communal memory of trauma, and the ways in which these narratives of suffering and injustice raise historical aware-

ness. As some of these novelists suggest, through the voices of their protagonists, freedom has not brought about either relief from pain, or happiness because of the tragic past which keeps haunting individuals and communities alike. Infanticide, rape, physical and psychological abuse are fictionally invoked and used as "pretexts" for exposing the terrible distortion of values which the protagonists experienced in the wake of trauma.

The therapeutic potential of storytelling is invested in some of the characters who carry a message of hope beyond past and present discrimination. Storytelling as a strategy for survival and a means of coping with the ghosts of the past



is employed as the narrative driving force behind the fabric of most of these novels. Thus, the commodified, objectified, abused self stands the chance of redemption through keeping memories alive, as palliative, and as a way of preventing future bias and tragedy. Women especially bear the brunt of violence within and outside the black community, yet manage to find solace in divine grace and sisterhood.

Part II of *The Present with a Past* focuses on Asian-American-ness as embodied in the Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese and Indian communities. Cristina Cheveresan selects the most representative works of Amy Tan and Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Joy Luck Club* and *The Woman Warrior*, respectively, to talk about fictional reflections of the Chinese-American ethnic group along the lines of adaptation to the big metropolis, language acquisition and self-reevaluation through the new language, the constant emotional hesitation between allegiance to the adoptive country and the old native land and the coming to terms with an identity in the making. Americanization as a professed goal against the multicultural background of New York City is another notable aspect of ethnicity which this study addresses with regards to its treatment in Gish Jen's *Typical American* and Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker*. The Japanese experience in the United States reflected in *No-No Boy* by John Okada presents the author with the opportunity to add another critical and analytical dimension to her study: the second generation Japanese-Americans' youth having to choose between their ethnic allegiances following Executive Order 9066 and the US Army's decision to recruit volunteers to fight against Imperial Japan. A similar pressure of life within the 'either/or' logic structures, thematically, is the collection of essays *East Eats West: Writing in Two Hemispheres* by Vietnamese-American author Andrew Lam. Being torn between the values inherent in the American way of life and those celebrated by Vietnamese culture and the solution of embracing diversity in a personalized manner

adds nuance and perspective to Cristina Cheveresan's enterprise of mapping ethnic American fiction. Last but not least, the understanding of identity as a construct, continuously in the making, re-making and un-making, constantly nostalgic, yet willing to adapt and belong, especially on the part of male Indian-Americans, is Jhumpa Lahiri's contribution to the rich dialogues about hyphenated selves in the United States.

The third part of this conversation documents the Latino-American community through the experience of writers such as Julia Alvarez, Juno Diaz, Gloria Anzaldua, Sandra Cisneros and Cristina Garcia. Julia Alvarez's fictional account of the Dominican-American journey is facilitated by the tradition of storytelling inherited from the old country, Diaz's perspective tackles male dominance and men's complex of inferiority within the immigrants' family and the large, American society. Identity-building in the Borderlands is the common denominator of the main representatives of Mexican-American ethnic literature: Gloria Anzaldua, Richard Rodriguez and Dagoberto Gilb. The Latino neighborhood is the focus of Sandra Cisneros' exploration of the deeply rooted struggle for survival and affirmation of identity, especially on the part of women, who fight against financial precariousness, the hostility of the social environment and of their own patriarchal tradition. The experience of three generations of Cuban women, their memories, real, negotiated or acquired, of a native land which has fascinated and/or scarred them for life form the fictional space where novelist Cristina Garcia interrogates the Cuban ongoing transition to American realities.

Cristina Cheveresan's insightful study of ethnic American fiction represents a tour de force both in scope and in depth. The author uses a wealth of theoretical and fictional resources to describe hyphenated identities and destinies and, in so doing, offers a documented, reader friendly narrative, valuable for academic audiences as well as for ethnic fiction aficionados.

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BOOK REVIEW

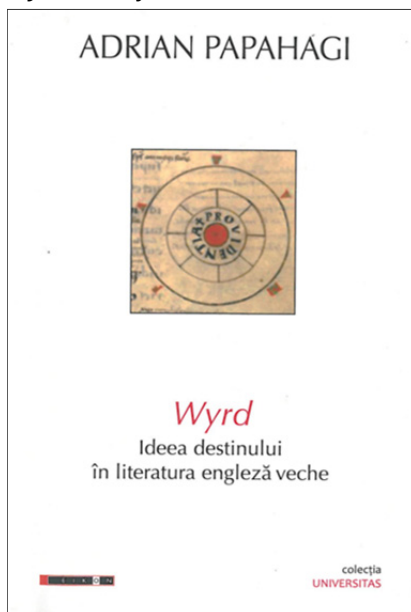
Adrian Papahagi, *Wyrd. Ideea destinului în literatura engleză veche* [*Wyrd. The Idea of Destiny in Old English Literature*], Cluj-Napoca, Eikon, 2014, 430 p.

The present volume is an extended analysis of a single concept in Old English literature, namely that of *wyrd*, slowly re-

vealed to be subtler than a mere Anglo-Saxon approximation of fate as the author follows it across a corpus of literature understood in the older and more generous sense that accommodates translations and glosses alike. The book under review pleasantly surprises the reader with its many openings towards a variety of research interests ranging from philosophical studies and cultural theory to literary studies, philology, religion and mythology, as well as history. In an age increasingly concerned with transnational literature, this volume offers a welcome insight into pre-national literatures that sheds a different light on the issues of crisis, (self-)exile, nostalgia, assimilation, and migrating meanings that mutate in different cultural contexts. Old English literature is revealed to be rich, nuanced, and just as familiar with hybridisation as more overt contemporary writings since it attempts to negotiate three attitudes towards the question of free will and divine intervention, namely Augustinian orthodoxy, Christian Neo-Platonism, and the pagan Germanic underlay-

er manifesting itself in the archaic vocabulary, especially in alliterative verse.

Over the years, Adrian Papahagi has demonstrated an active interest in medieval studies, publishing in prestigious journals such as *Scriptorium*, *Medium Aevum*, *Note&Queries*, and *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, to name just a few. Another remarkable contribution to the field is his 2010 volume dedicated to the Latin and English tradition of *Consolatio Philosophiae*, the Boethian opus also treated in *Wyrd*. Maintaining the same rigorous approach, yet benefitting from a more generous corpus thanks to the Dictionary of Old English



published by the Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Toronto, the study under consideration offers a philologist's perspective on how nuances of thought can be lost or reconstructed in instances of culture clashes, tracing the words' mutating meanings in different cultural contexts. One of the volume's many merits is its unprejudiced and balanced treatment of sources, even of those written in objectionable contexts, such as the 1930s findings of Gehl, Brandl, and von Kienle. Both the Romantics who exaggerated the pagan elements and those taking Anglo-Saxon litera-

ture to be fundamentally Christian are read just as carefully while maintaining a critical distance from both. As the author adopts a perspective from inside the culture he discusses, it is remarkable how close he comes to the image of the medieval man as seen by C. S. Lewis in *The Discarded Image*, a master of taxonomy. If he is anyone's accomplice, it is not a historian, a critic or a theorist in particular, but the culture he wishes to do justice to.

The very structure of the book suggests its desired exhaustiveness. The author takes no shortcuts, as evidenced even by a quick glance at the table of contents, as the methodical approach calls for a rigorous structure that leaves nothing unaccounted for in its right place and at the right time. The analysis is close, detailed, systematic, and the conclusions are carefully discussed, without bold leaps. It is this method that secures the accuracy of the study and recommends it as a landmark in the field. Indeed, the author deftly moves across languages and cultures, tackling texts directly in Latin, Old English (and several dialects at that, as in the case of the *Aenigmata anglica*), Greek and Old German, while just as naturally providing footnotes relevant for further study in French or comparing the English and Swedish translations of *Waldere* and *Widsith*. An excellent knowledge of grammar allows the author to explain how other translations have missed the mark, such as the Genitive singular "wyrđi" mistakenly translated as the plural "wyrđa", thus reducing "wyrđ" to mere "events". Even copyist mistakes are accounted for, as when the issue raised by the so-called "open a" of manuscripts is brought up. One of the book's most interesting findings clarifies why Beowulf, the central hero of Anglo-Saxon literature, is never described as *faege* (doomed to die), not even in his dying hour. *Wyrđ*, this Shakespearean "thing of darkness" that even Christian marginalia reluctantly accept to mention, is indomitable but impersonal, and it can only be avoided through feats of courage. Thus, the artisan

of one's own death escapes its reach. A necessary distinction is also made between the wheel included by Anglo-Saxon copyists in *Consolatio Philosophiae* and the medieval wheel of fortune, as the former is an innovative insular hierarchical system where the more removed one is from *providentia* and valour, the closer they are to *wyrđ*. The scholarly influence of Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* is also exposed as responsible for the image of the Parcae imposed over the Norns of the Icelandic Edda, which wrongly led some to assume *wyrđ* was a triad of vengeful goddesses.

Interestingly, the book seems to address a hybrid audience. While by no means a book for the general audience because of its academic rigour and insistence on discussing texts in their original at all times, the volume is intended for researchers interested in areas as diverse as translation theory and practice, religion, cultural politics, and philosophy. Given the awareness of the ways in which language can distort thought demonstrated by the present study, having it written in Romanian rather than English indicates an interest in enriching the development of medieval studies in the author's country. Indeed, it was implicitly written with such an audience in mind, given the way the author occasionally makes use of examples familiar to the Romanian public, such as when he mentions Alecsandri's version of *Miorița* to problematize the assumption of *Beowulf's* archaic underlayer. Given that the author also teaches Old English literature at academic level, the present volume's illustrative and instructive approach can be seen not only as an informative account of in-depth research, but also as a walkthrough in the field so as to encourage new scholars to join the stage, if not on adjacent topics, at the very least using a similar method. Time-consuming though such readings may be, they are an investment well worth making.

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BOOK REVIEW

Maria Aloni and Paul Dekker (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Formal Semantics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2016, 925 p.

This review is about the latest publication in the *Cambridge Handbooks in Language and Linguistics* series, where each volume provides a general description of one major sub-discipline within the field of language and linguistics: phonology, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, second language acquisition, bio-linguistics, generative syntax, and others. Providing a broad picture of the state-of-the-art of formal semantics, and documenting the background and development of the main currents in this field, this handbook is a comprehensive survey of the major theoretical and empirical advances in this domain. In a nutshell, it provides a historical context for what is happening in the field of formal semantics today and its three-fold aim can be reduced to (i) the investigation of the various approaches to linguistic meaning, (ii) the overview of the major areas of research within current semantic theory, and (iii) the study of the interfaces of semantics with bordering academic disciplines.

The present volume, edited by Maria Aloni and Paul Dekker, is structured into five large parts. The twenty-five chapters are thematically grouped into one of these sections. The contributions encompass the most important issues and topics within the subject, and offer a coherent picture of the latest theories of and findings in the field of formal semantics.

The book opens with *Contents* (v–vi), *Figures* (vii), *Tables* (viii), *Contributors* (ix–x) and *Preface* (xi–xii).

Part I, entitled *The landscape of formal semantics*, contains five introductory chapters on formal semantics and gives a

general sketch of the perspectives from which semantic research is conducted.

The first chapter (Barbara H. Partee, *Formal semantics*, pp. 3–32) sets the stage by first defining ‘formal’ and ‘formal semantics’, and then providing a brief history of this sub-discipline of linguistics. This section is studded not only with the names of the most representative contributors to formal semantics but also with references intended for those who would like to pursue things further or dig deeper into the history of formal semantics. The key question refers to what meaning is and how meanings are put together. The author discusses noun phrases, quantifiers, and relative clauses before she turns to issues concerning the syntax–semantics interface, the increasing attention given to the role of context, and the consequent blending of formal semantics and formal pragmatics. The chapter closes with a discussion on the connection between formal semantics and cognitive science, and studies of language processing and language acquisition.

Chapter 2 (James Pustejovsky, *Lexical semantics*, pp. 33–64) first introduces readers to the most representative features of lexical semantics together with the most important milestones in its history. The core of the chapter is dedicated to the interaction of the lexicon with other components of grammar: the semantic distinction between lexical ambiguity and systematic polysemy, the selectional requirements and constraints on verbs, verbs of variable behavior, and event semantics. Some of the topics touched upon here foreshadow the topic of some other chapters dealing with semantic issues

in the verbal domain. Since semantic roles are so crucial to lexical semantics, the author devotes one section to them before closing his contribution with some open issues.

In *Sentential semantics* (pp. 65–105), Peter Pagin is concerned with (declarative) sentences in the syntactic sense and discusses at great length how different semantic theories model sentence meaning. "The Principle of Semantic Compositionality" tackles the question of how the meaning of a complex expression is derived from the meaning of its parts, how these meanings are syntactically combined, and makes a connection to the previous chapter(s). The chapter is distinguished by its highly heterogeneous nature, several of its sections presenting different views on sentence meaning (Frege, Davidson, Montague and Kaplan). The remainder of the chapter is devoted to some more generous topics, such as possible-worlds semantics, centred-worlds propositions, relativism, two-dimensionalism, situation semantics, structured meanings, verificationism and procedural semantics.

In *Discourse semantics* (pp. 106–129), Nicholas Asher focuses on the interaction between discourse contexts and semantic interpretation. He is interested in the way Discourse Representation Theory, Dynamic Predicate Logic and Continuation style semantics lead to a much better understanding of discourse contexts. Asher is also interested in their relation to certain linguistic phenomena such as quantifiers, operators, anaphoric expressions, and anaphoric dependencies. In addition to these theories of discourse semantics, the author presents some other elaborate theories of discourse structure, which all cast light on several examples of context-dependent interpretations in discourse and imply that all units of information serving as constituents of discourse structure have context-dependent interpretations.

The final chapter of Part I (Jonathan Ginzburg, *Semantics of dialogue*, pp. 130–169)

is linked to the previous chapter as "studying dialogue forces one to a particularly careful study of the nature of context" (130). Starting with some antecedents of formal dialogue theory, that is, works in the philosophy of language, pragmatics, and cognitive psychology, the author lists a number of core phenomena that linguistic theories of dialogue need to account for: direct relevance, utterances without an overt predicate (sentential fragments and interjections), metacommunicative interaction, and genre sensitivity. Then, he indicates how three contemporary dialogue frameworks account for some of the above phenomena as well as for conversational relevance and conversational meaning, two problems a theory of dialogue should try to solve. The chapter also provides a bird's-eye view of a number of additional dialogue phenomena and challenges which have not been the subject of intense research but which require significant modifications in our view of semantics.

Part II, *Theory of reference and quantification*, is concerned with semantic issues related to the nominal domain.

Paul Dekker and Thomas Ede Zimmermann's joint work (*Reference*, pp. 173–205) specifies the role played by reference in formal semantics. Reference has been investigated thoroughly over the last few decades; it has occupied a prominent place in linguistic theory and raised important questions for logicians and philosophers of language. Reference and meaning of proper names and definite descriptions have attracted the attention of many scholars, hence the divergent perspectives on this topic: the views of Frege, Russell and Quine, to name only the most prominent scholars in these areas. As for theories of direct reference, the names of Kripke, Putnam, and Kaplan are mentioned. Other scholars, such as Strawson, Donnellan, and Karttunen are mentioned in connection with their views on referential acts, referential usage and discourse reference respec-

tively. The glossary of some of the core terms discussed here closes this chapter paving the way for the following contribution.

The next chapter (Dag Westerståhl, *Generalized Quantifiers*, pp. 206–237) goes one step further and discusses generalized quantifiers. After the preliminary section, which is meant to make things easier for the reader with its definitions and examples, the subsequent sections highlight some of the most important achievements of generalized quantifier theory applied to natural language. The following phenomena are dealt with: noun phrases (*Mary, everything*), domain restriction (*most students*), quantity (*at least three*), negation (*not all*), polarity (especially negative polarity items such as *yet* and *any*), existential *there* sentences (*there is a cat here*), definites (*the ten boys*) and possessives (*John's books*). The chapter also shows what generalized quantifier theory has to offer to the analysis of each of the above phenomena.

The purpose of the chapter entitled *Indefinites* (Adrian Brasoveanu and Donka F. Farkas, pp. 238–266) is to provide an overview of some of the solutions brought to the semantic and pragmatic problems indefinites raise. And it seems that indefinites do raise serious problems as they are, first and foremost, difficult – if not impossible – to define. Furthermore, there is much disagreement as to where the (precise) borderline between definite and indefinite expressions is and it is sometimes difficult to decide upon the membership of certain controversial nominals especially if one takes into account the various subtypes of existentials. The discussion on the different approaches to the definite/indefinite divide is followed by another problematic aspect of indefinites, namely their unlimited upwards scope, which is considered illusory by some, but real by others. The authors round off their chapter with a description of the typology of indefinites.

Although the issue of plurality may seem straightforward and unproblematic, in

the chapter entitled *Plurality* (pp. 267–284) Rick Nouwen sheds light on several puzzling (semantic) aspects of the interaction between plural arguments and predicates. In order to achieve this, some key terms such as *sums* must be explained and illustrated first. This is closely linked, on the one hand, to the distinction between the collective and the distributive understanding of sentences with nominal subjects expressed by plural individuals, and, on the other hand, to cumulative reading and its relation to distributivity. The final section looks at dependency phenomena involving plurals.

In the last chapter of this section, entitled *Genericity* (pp. 285–310), Ariel Cohen considers some of the puzzles and paradoxes raised by generics, and tackles the reason(s) why they are so hard to capture and understand. These few pages prove that there has been a tremendous amount of discussion in the literature regarding the semantic aspects of generalizations. The chapter offers a synopsis of the most important aspects of generics: (i) the distinction between direct kind predication and characterizing generics, (ii) the relationship between generics and quantification, (iii) the possibility of combining the rules-and-regulations and the inductivist theories to explain generics, (iv) the fact that generics are lawlike but they are also similar to sentences involving an overt adverb of quantification, (v) the different ways generics are realized in English and other languages, and (vi) the use of generics.

The five chapters of **Part III**, *Temporal and aspectual ontology and other semantic structures*, turn to semantic issues in the verbal and predicative domain.

The first chapter of this section, more precisely Chapter 11, entitled *Tense* (pp. 313–341), is written by Atle Grønn and Arnim von Stechow. Its aim is to shed light on the most important aspects of the semantics of tense, one of the main devices for encoding time in language. Although much has been written

about this topic, there are still matters of considerable debate in the literature. This review chapter addresses several questions related to the morphological and syntactic expressions of tense and its interpretation at the sentence and text level. It also targets numerous central notions and bread-and-butter issues, such as tense in compositional semantics, referential tense, quantification and temporal adverbials, the analytic perfect construction, (in)definiteness, the (in)definite tense, and (in)definite operators. The last section shows how the presented formal analysis can be extended to integrate the (in)definite aspect and it ensures a smooth transition between this chapter and the following one.

Susan Rothstein's contribution (*Aspect*, pp. 342–368) is a natural continuation of the ideas introduced in the previous chapter. As tense and aspect are two intimately related phenomena, the grammatical category of tense is often defined in interaction with aspect, and the two categories may frequently overlap. These few pages aim at providing a concise overview of the most important findings and insights gained in the study of three aspectual properties: lexical aspect, grammatical aspect, and the telic/atelic distinction. Not only is the relation between the lexical classes and the telicity value complex and unclear because of their interesting and subtle interaction but this relation has also raised a number of general and specific questions, each of which has been answered from a different perspective. The problematic aspect of this part of the chapter (the critical presentation of the four cases of aspectual composition: mereologies, lexical semantic decomposition, scales and event individuation, together with the existence of some variable behaviour verbs) may seem to be in sharp contrast to the relatively simple and unproblematic subject of grammatical aspect, especially if one disregards cross-linguistic variation.

Mereology, by Lucas Champollion and Manfred Krifka (pp. 369–388), focuses

on one topic that readers have already been introduced to: mereology and unstructured part relations. With its roots in ontology and mathematics, mereology has also played an important role in natural-language semantics and it is the primary purpose of this review chapter to highlight some of its applications in this field. After a section on the axiomatizations of (unstructured) parthood relations, the author takes a close look at the principal linguistic applications of mereology in the nominal domain (the count-mass and singular-plural distinction), in measurement constructions (*three liters of milk, two cats*), and in the verbal domain (cases of conjunction such as *the girls sang and danced*). Finally, the reader is introduced to the idea that the domain of events is a mereology analogous to the domain of individuals, which is often referred to as Krifka's event-argument homomorphism.

Chapter 14, *Vagueness* (pp. 389–441), authored by Hans Kamp and Galit W. Sassoon, first presents the main challenging aspects of vagueness from the point of view of adjectives. The discussion is centered on the idea that relative and absolute adjectives do not group into discrete classes but rather into fuzzy sets with respect to their potential for the expression of vagueness. Then, the authors give some brief illustrations of the pervasive manifestations of vagueness in other categories such as common nouns, proper names, quantifying expressions, frequency adverbs, and adjectival modifiers. The Sorites paradox together with the efforts to understand it, although dealt with mostly from a philosophical point of view, can nevertheless cast light on important connections between vagueness and other aspects of language and thought. The final section examines some additional challenges posed by vagueness in grammar: the connections between vagueness and morphological gradability, on the one hand, and imprecision, on the other

hand, as well as the consequences of vagueness for the architecture of grammar.

Louise McNally's contribution (*Modification*, pp. 442–464) closes this part of the handbook. First, the chapter takes up questions regarding the typology of modifiers, where the modifier is defined as “an expression which combines with another expression to produce a result with the same semantic type” (458). The four most important families of modifier typologies proposed in the literature (the morphosyntactically-based, notionally-based, entailment-based and pragmatic/discourse-related typologies) provide a broad survey of various adjectives. The second part of the chapter is devoted to some key issues raised by modification for semantic theory and degree modification.

Part IV, *Intensionality and force*, covers core areas of formal semantics, and gives an overview of the various moods and modalities in language.

In her chapter on the expression and interpretation of negation in natural language (*Negation*, pp. 467–489), Henriëtte de Swart begins with the treatment of negation in classical logic and the pragmatic problems negation may raise. As far as negation in natural languages is concerned, there is a wide range of negative markers as languages may realize sentence negation by means of negative verbs, auxiliaries and negative particles (in the domain of verbal constituents) or even negative quantifiers (in the domain of nominal constituents). The author not only describes the range of variation attested in the expression and interpretation of sentential negation but also deals with the syntactic status and position of these negative markers relative to the position of the verb in different languages. Interested readers may also find in this chapter details on negative quantifiers and scope, negative polarity items and negative concord.

Conditionals, by Paul Egré and Mikaël Cozic (pp. 490–524), reassesses a number of key issues that have been discussed in the

literature with respect to the semantic analysis of conditional sentences constructed with *if*. In the opening sections, the authors set the stage for further semantic considerations on conditionals. First, they review the inadequacies and problematic laws of the two-valued material analysis of conditionals. Then, they offer its main alternative, the Stalnaker–Lewis analysis of conditionals (see Stalnaker 1968 and Lewis 1973), called the variably strict conditionals. This presentation is illustrated with some of the problematic predictions the authors make regarding three laws (the law of Import–Export, the law of Or-to-If, and the law of Simplification of Disjunctive Antecedents) and two refinements of their framework: the referential treatment and the quantificational treatment of *if*-clauses. Both of them make specific predictions about the syntax–semantics interface. The two closing sections move away from the examination of the most influential semantic frameworks and the ways in which they can be used to cast light on indicative conditionals in order to draw attention to the specificity of the other two types of conditionals: counterfactual and relevance conditionals.

Modality has long been of interest within formal semantics, so the following chapter (Lisa Matthewson, *Modality*, pp. 525–559) presents the extremely interesting human ability to talk about possible worlds, which is known as modal displacement. The chapter aims at providing an introduction to three topics which are central to understanding the semantics of modal elements: modal flavour (epistemic, deontic, circumstantial), modal force (strong and weak necessity modals, possibility modals, graded modal force), and modal–temporal interactions (the world and time of evaluation of modal statements). The Kratzerian (Kratzer 1981, 1991, 2012) outline of each of these phenomena is underpinned by some cross-linguistic data from some highly understudied languages, as well as some ongoing de-

bates and interesting unanswered questions. Evidently, there remain many open questions, the answers to which will certainly pose descriptive and theoretical challenges for future work.

In the following chapter (*Questions*, pp. 560–592), Paul Dekker, Maria Aloni and Jeroen Groenendijk explore some basic questions on the meaning of questions in formal semantics. After running through some of the perspectives on interrogatives, the authors turn to the classical semantic theories of questions: proposition set theory, categorial or structured meanings approach, and partition theory. Despite their superficial similarity, which consists in the fact that they all attempt to characterize question meaning in terms of answerhood conditions (the correspondent of truth condition in indicatives), the three approaches differ in several ways. The special topics in the study of questions deal with old and current debates which have to do with identity and scope. The final section deals with some pragmatic features of questions and answers and the general role that questions play in discourse and dialogue, leading up to a brief introduction to inquisitive semantics.

The closing chapter of this part is entitled *Imperatives* (pp. 593–626) and authored by Paul Portner. Its purpose is to take a close look at another sentence type which neither asserts nor asks for information but has a directive meaning. The two main parts of the chapter are organized with reference to the issues which have animated recent theoretical work on the semantics and the pragmatics of imperatives. The first part provides an overview of some of the – seemingly independent – key issues in the semantics of imperatives: (i) semantic restrictions on the imperative subject, (ii) the logical properties that distinguish imperatives from declaratives, (iii) the nature of the directive force in imperatives, and (iv) the interpretation of complex

sentences containing imperatives. The second part sketches two theoretical viewpoints on imperative meaning: the modal approach and the dynamic approach.

Part V, *The Interfaces*, is an investigation of the relationship between semantics and other components of the human language system.

The huge number of phenomena that prove to be important to our understanding of the structures and meanings of natural language lie at the juncture between syntax and semantics, and it is this that makes the syntax–semantics interface very important. Among the most relevant interface phenomena that Chapter 21 (Manfred Sailer, *The syntax–semantics interface*, pp. 629–663) discusses, we find argument identification, quantifiers, scope ambiguity, discontinuity, negative concord and cross-linguistic variation. They have all been approached from diverse perspectives such as, first and foremost, Montague Grammar, Logical Form and Categorial Grammar, to name only the three major research trends of the last decades, with other additional perspectives and theories mentioned in the closing section. The question in the main part of the chapter revolves not only around the approaches that these three prominent theoretical frameworks take but also around the type of analysis (syntactic, semantic or interface-based) that they put forth in their approach to each of the above phenomena.

Philippe Schlenker's chapter, *The semantics–pragmatics interface* (pp. 664–727), surveys three domains where the informational content conveyed by the utterance has semantic and pragmatic sources. The first domain of scalar implicatures attributes an implicit meaning beyond the explicit or literal meaning of an utterance by the use of a weaker term on a scale (*some*). The reason why the speaker does not use a more informative term or a term higher on the same scale is that, to the best of his knowledge, none

of the stronger characterizations in the scale holds (*most, all*). The second domain of presupposition is an implicit assumption about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in discourse. Whereas in the former case the initial pragmatic perspective has recently been replaced by a semantic (or even syntactic) viewpoint, in the latter case the movement occurred in the opposite direction: presupposition, a basically semantic phenomenon, has recently been reassigned to pragmatics. Finally, conventional implicature is a type of implicature that is part of the agreed meaning of a lexical item and not part of the conditions for the truth of that item. Behind these definitions, one finds a rich array of methods, concerns, questions, and answers which all show that these phenomena are still a matter of lively debate.

Enric Vallduví's contribution (*Information structure*, pp. 728–755) continues the series of chapters on the areas where semantics has developed ties with other parts of the human language system. The topic of this chapter is information structure, which is an umbrella term for the expression of a bundle of phenomena that exhibit not only pragmatic and semantic but also morphosyntactic and phonological features. In these few pages, the author brings together several information-structural notions, such as theme and rheme, givenness and topic, and contrast. Considering that context – the information state of an interlocutor at the time of utterance – is essential for the information structure, the necessary background for a better understanding of the above notions is provided by the brief description of contextual resources. Most of these notions are defined in connection with other related notions such as discourse referents, alternative, and focus.

Another component of the human language system which meets and affects semantics is cognition and cognitive neuroscience. It is the intended purpose of Giosuè

Baggio, Keith Stenning, and Michiel van Lambalgen to shed light on the properties of this 'meeting point' in their chapter entitled *Semantics and cognition* (pp. 756–774). After looking at the domain of discourse, which proves to be very suitable for the technique known as event-related potentials, the authors present examples of this technique, such as planning and causality, the logic of processing discourse and the way discourse is processed. Then they highlight the importance of logical and formal semantic theories (logical analysis, Bayesian analysis) – as well as some alternative explanations – in producing hypotheses testable by event-related potentials. The discussion is far from exhaustive but it surely provides a coherent introduction to the major strands of research on the bridged gap between semantics and cognition.

The chapter that closes Part V and the entire handbook is entitled *Semantics and computation* (Matthew Stone, pp. 775–800). As suggested by the title, it explores the scientific overlap of formal semantics with another (seemingly distant) field, namely computer science. Computational semantics inspects the natural connection between linguistics and computer science through the parallels between the representations used in the two domains. The author comments on the interaction between computation, on the one hand, and compositional semantics and lexical semantics, on the other hand. Finally, some ideas are mentioned about the explanations given to meaning in the broader context of language use. Due to lack of wide knowledge of computational semantics, I am not in a position to make further comments on this chapter so I would only like to say that these few introductory pages will surely make the overlap between semantics and computation easier to understand.

The book ends with *Bibliography* (pp. 801–915) and *Index* (pp. 916–925).

Each chapter is preceded by an individual table of contents but the references are not arranged after the last section of each and every chapter but they are collected at the end of the handbook in the general bibliography. This, together with the numerous cross-references found in one chapter to related phenomena discussed in another chapter make the book a coherent whole.

The authors of the individual chapters, key academics from around the world, not only present the uncontroversial aspects of the topic but they also call attention to problems, admit limitations, and clearly state the imperfections of the proposed account which lead up to ongoing research. As for the content of the handbook, it contains thoughtful essays covering the many aspects of formal semantics that have been explored and developed extensively in recent years.

Summing up, *The Cambridge Handbook of Formal Semantics* is an excellent book. I would recommend it to anyone interested in formal semantics with the advance warning that it sometimes presupposes basic knowledge of logic and mathematics, and basic familiarity with semantic formalism is sometimes highly required. As far as specialists in semantics are concerned, this handbook should be included in their own personal library because of its richness of the empirical detail covering a broad range of different phenomena. As for general linguists, it should be on the list of absolute must-read books because of its guiding nature showing its readers where formal semantics and its interfaces with other components of the human language system stand.

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BOOK REVIEW

ROXANA PATRAȘ, *Cântece dinaintea decadenței. A.C. Swinburne și declinul Occidentului*. Iasi, Timpul, 2012, 302 p.

In a period marked by conflicting impulses, a deepening sense of doubt and the overwhelming experience of transition, as the nineteenth century came to be known, the lives of numerous literary and cultural figure-heads were tied to controversy and scandal, either through circumstance or by personal choice. Within the gallery of Victorian writers, Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), described by many as the last of the romantics and a centrepiece among the decadents, is second perhaps only to Oscar Wilde when it comes to the magnitude of the waves created in the public sphere by the vagaries characterising flamboyant and non-conformist spirits. An almost inexorable source of speculations (did he, or did he not eat a monkey after all, as he once had claimed?) and a common target of elitist and puritan disdain, Swinburne is one of the artists whose reception and fame has inevitably been marked by the continuous blurring of the border between myth and reality, persona and person.

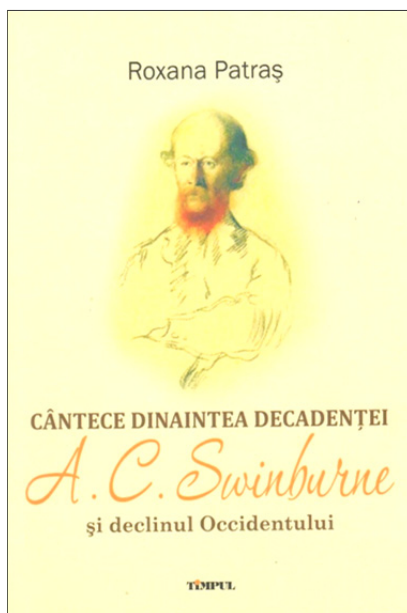
Unfolding along four chapters in which the detailed monographic approach is complemented by the interpretive insights of a fine literary critic, Roxana Patraș's book, *Songs*

before the Decadence. A.C. Swinburne and the Decline of the West, is at once a recuperatory and revelatory act, whose main ambition is

precisely that of casting a stronger light on the gray-area between fact and fiction traditionally associated with this major Victorian poet.

The opening chapter, "A Century of Swinburnean Exegesis", the most theoretical of the sections of the book, is intended to set up the appropriate contextual framework for the author's own study, providing the readers with a survey of the major scholarly contributions on the Victorian poet's critical writings, at the same time setting forth the reasons and the ob-

jectives of the current research. We are reminded that Swinburne, the *enfant terrible* of his time was not spoiled by his Victorian contemporaries, whose antipathy and scorn plagued him until his death. Already from these pages the image of an exceptional character emerges: a "plague of mankind" (as R. Rooksby described him), sarcastic and scary villain (13), Swinburne astonished his contemporaries through vitality and an extraordinary capacity to regenerate, and his biography is still read by some as a romantic myth. Yet, even in old age, this "last flower of a gal-



lant era" (16) was considered by many an adolescent *par excellence*. Rejection followed him into the twentieth century: T.S. Eliot and E. Pound felt obliged to "invent" for him a "more noble" and balanced ascendancy (14). The "most European" and at the same time "most American" of the Victorian poets (15) was relegated to a secondary position, but rediscovered and re-established as a representative, even canonical writer, especially by the later American critics. Thus, a century after his literary beginnings his reputation was restored, once the critical interest for him had resurfaced. The reason for this rather belated success, the author explains, has to be sought in the poet's histrionic personality. The documentary testimonials reveal him as an exceptional and genuine entertainer, one who would not shy away from amazing and seducing his public through the primarily "performative" nature of his creations (15). Such a dramatised and spectacular poetic formula (15-16), naturally connected to the personality of the actor-author, was intended to re-instate the ritualistic character of literature, as had been the case in former, golden ages (16). Nevertheless, as our author aptly points out, this ebullient and impulsive character was also the main stumbling block in the poet's path to respectability. On numerous occasions, Swinburne the actor subverts the authority of Swinburne the writer: the actor-character takes on, successively, a series of roles which deceive and bedazzle. It is only natural that the search for the "real Swinburne" carries the risk of the reader getting lost in a maze. For our scholar, this risk is, however, worth taking. We are therefore invited to embark on an investigative journey along which our steps will be guided by the magical yarn of a highly sophisticated and precise biographical and analytical examination.

The author's ambition, we find out over the following pages, transcends in fact the rather mundane limits of scope and method imposed by biographism, targeting

the much more demanding (and even more risk-laden) goal of critical recuperation. For such an enterprise to lie on solid foundations, it is inevitable for any informed investigator to know the lessons of the past and clearly identify the gaps to be filled. Roxana Patras dedicates the remainder of this chapter to providing us with an overview of the main corpus of academic expertise on Swinburne.

The first thing to note, we are told, is the prolonged absence of works which focus exclusively and precisely on Swinburne's plays, prose or criticism, as such creative expressions have generally been considered secondary products of a lyrical consciousness incapable of finding an adequate working medium in drama, prose or the realm of ideas (17). However, the author argues, such a fragmentary treatment or conscious ignorance of the Swinburne's ideological stance would shatter the coherent ideatic nucleus manifest in his dramatic pieces (18). Examples of this fragmentary view are numerous, one such case being that of the representatives of gender-studies (R. Dellamora, J.B. Bullen), who chose to focus on a classic body of Swinburne-an pieces, ignoring the tempting offering of novels, manuscripts or shorter dramatic texts (19). Nonetheless, a change of perspective can be observed in the literary histories published in the new millennium. Scholars such as James Eli Adams, David G. Riede or Jerome J. McGann drew attention on the necessity to take into consideration the previously ignored facets of the man (as, for instance, the period of his creative maturity) and a host of long-neglected works (the epic poems and novels). The post-McGann exegesis distinguishes itself through the effort to propose alternative interpretive routes and new hypotheses, focusing on unknown texts, and intent on bringing Swinburne closer to the Victorian canon. It is precisely in the lineage of such endeavours that our author's study should be placed: an exercise in re-cohering the disparate parts, fully observant of the spirit of a multi-faceted

personality and aimed at revealing the artist and his art in a *process* or performative movement, as an indivisible whole. As such, the author admits, the professed approach requires attacking the central issues from all directions, similar to an army's tactic of encircling the opposing forces. As departure point, it is tributary to the objective guiding Rooksby and Shrimpton's 1993 study, that of saving the content and meanings of Swinburne's oeuvre, rather than its forms.

What follows after this step is a formidable critique of criticism, the author exploring the merits and shortcomings of the research conducted by Anglo-Saxon and French scholars (Timothy Burnett, Terry L. Meyers, David G. Riede, Pascal Aquien, Dennis Bonne-casse, Charlotte Ribeyrol and others), ending with references made to critical texts as close to us as the year 2010. This exercise also serves as a very useful summary of the main periods in the reception of Swinburne's works, with emphasis on the major turning points. We learn that the 1930's were the first moment when the analytical studies started distancing themselves from biographism and psychologism, drawing attention upon the need to understand the poet's work globally and monographically. This stage was then followed by the publication of Swinburne's letters and private documents. A third, more recent change of perspective is represented by the initiative of the researchers involved in the virtual projects "The Swinburne Project" (Indiana University) and NINES, reliant on complex tools and methods, such as the study of conceptual networks and of hypertext, hyper-personality, the hyper-human or information nodes (32-33). The author's own work is indebted in fact to what she calls the "hermaphroditic dichotomy" —an analytical field punctuated by the triad theatricality - ideology - sexuality—transformational concepts which reflect both the idea of historical / aesthetic transition and creative / performative processuality. *Songs before the Decadence*, the author

clarifies, is rooted in historical-cultural investigation, rather than analysis (though, we should add, her work gives us ample proof of a significant amount of the latter as well). For such an investigation to succeed, Swinburne should be labelled Victorian rather than post-romantic or pre-modern. In fact, Swinburne's "Victorianism" is couched in the bourgeois-aristocratic reflex of a new stoicism, the paradoxically androgynous formula of his writing, the hybrid ideology of "conservative liberalism" and the oppressive consciousness of the new times (34). Within this scheme, the poet becomes a hard to isolate "conglomerate", an "uncontrollable identity", impossible to tackle in a comprehensive, exhaustive manner (35). In consequence, the critic must necessarily be an archaeologist, foraying deep and at several sites simultaneously, because Swinburne is a "virtual portal" and a "hyper-personality".

Since the task is further complicated by the difficulty of defining such key-terms as "Republic" and "democracy", as expected, an overview of the main perceptual angles on these concepts comes to complement our author's argumentation at this stage (36-41). Of greatest interest appears to be McGann's non-Euclidian perspective, whereby "Republic" is defined as the geometrical space of all possible transitions, and "Republicanism" as a "manifesto" for reviving the universal man as the "man-child", possessing a Republican or androgynous spirit. In effect, a central tenet of Swinburne's own critical texts is the "androgyny" of great creators, a characteristic which goes beyond the realm of myth and is re-signified ideologically (39). Within such a framework, Republicanism would imply, above all, a quintessential means to overcome animal subjectivity and self-centredness (ibid.). Within a Republican space, the imaginary of androgyny and incest testifies to an understanding of art as process, as a vacillating, flux-driven species. Similarly, Patraş explains, "democracy" / "democratism" carries a peculiar semantic load with Swinburne: it has

little to do with the “forced calculus” of egalitarianism, being in fact an expression of the natural or common-sensical, understood as the hierarchy of good people and a system in which each particular thing has its proper place, thus also illustrating the Victorian desire to *aim at* (rather than necessarily attain) “equality”—a dynamic process informing one’s desire for the betterment of all humankind (40). Consequently, the author argues at the end of the chapter, Swinburne’s art must be regarded as fundamentally political, an expression of the creed that art has to be not only pleasant but significant too (42).

The second chapter of the book, though primarily biographical in its observations, begins with another critique of criticism. The detective-like precision with which certain scholars have brought to the forefront of attention almost exclusively the anecdotal details of Swinburne’s life reflects a curiosity devoid of nobility, since it emphasises only the little man behind the text, while ignoring the spiritual existence and the complicated birth of the literary text itself (43-44). Though many have claimed that love and alcohol broke a destiny in two distinct chapters (a period of anarchic revolt, respectively, one of Bourgeois quietude), readers of Swinburne should not forget that the poet never displayed a persistent sense of the artificiality of his own existence. Instead, he nurtured an obsession for the artificiality of identity, manifest in dramatising one’s personality by multiplying the masks that conceal the self (45). Thus, as a corrective effort, the subchapters focus on the development of Swinburne’s personality from “Hadji’s Childhood” through the “Wanderings of the Pupil Reginald”, his period of literary “apprenticeship” and the emergence of a strong personality / sense of self, concluding with “The Voice of the Old Bard” (46-49). The highlights include references to little Algernon’s spiritual universe, announcing the later protean manifestations of the artist’s mature personality (52), the “fall from Paradise” after his enrol-

ment at Eton and the first manifestations of what many scholars have viewed as deviant, pathological behaviour (combated by the author on the grounds of the ostentatiously ludic-ironic predisposition of the poet, as revealed through the paratextual indications scattered through his texts), or his association with the Pre-Raphaelites and rising Republican idealism and the subsequent later rejection of the Pre-Raphaelite label in his mature period (61-73). A number of influential encounters are also taken into account, including Lord Houghton’s impact on creating a lasting image of Swinburne as both descendant of Tennyson and a cursed, infamous poet (79). We are also reminded, once again, of the critics’ mistakes, who have often fallen for the poet’s somewhat Bovaesque mention regarding the aesthetic supremacy of the volume “Songs Before Sunrise” to the detriment of the earlier tome “Poems and Ballads” (85-86). The final target of this biographical survey is the period of recuperation and “taming” under the watchful eye of Theodore Watts-Dunton, at Putney (still punctuated with clarifications regarding errors of critical appreciation, such as the wrong conclusion drawn by certain scholars regarding the harmful effects of this salvaging gesture).

The last three sections of the chapter focus more closely on Swinburne’s art, starting from the topical observation that the poet never allowed himself to be tempted by any of the dominant currents of his age, by some fashion or passing whim. Swinburne did not programmatically set out to be a thinker or an aspirant to a philosopher’s throne. His withdrawal into the realms of medieval spirituality represents the final, successful quest for inner peace (102). His art, the author opines, appears to distance itself from life precisely to endow it with an eventual higher sense, whereby it could transcend individual destiny and biography (106). Another pertinent note on Swinburne’s reception complements and completes this part of the exegesis. We learn

about the delicate and uneasy relationship between the poet and his contemporaries, who would relate to him either with condescension (the established, grand names) or excessive appraisal (the younger literary aspirants). We are offered a number of examples that testify to this: Tennyson's dismissal of certain Swinburnesque works and the subsequent polemic attitude of the latter regarding the Poet Laureate, Browning's description of Swinburne's verse as a "fuzz of words" or Arnold's ironic remarks on the excessive verbosity of his poems (106-111). We are also reminded, however, of some other names that at the time looked at Swinburne's creation with a more appreciative eye, such as Ruskin, Pater or Wilde (111-118). A summary of the most memorable polemical confrontations between Swinburne and figures of his time (Robert Buchanan, F. James Furnivall and R. Waldo Emerson) is a welcome addition to this segment of the investigation.

At this point, we might have the impression of having wandered off course, but once more, we are given proof of the author's rigorous exegetic skills. Thus, in the final pages of the chapter we return to the poet again, this time motivated by the curiosity to examine the echoes of the Swinburnean verse, in the form of parodic takes, which, as examples of the Genettian "hypertextuality", should be viewed as testimonials to the value of "Poems and Ballads": they strengthen the sense of a (literary-artistic) community indicating also the inclusion of one's work within a larger tradition. Paradoxically, Patraş suggests, it was the "unserious" parodists, not the pretentious academic spirits who best appreciated the worth and impact of Swinburne's works (self-parody being also invoked as a sign of the poet's awareness of his own unique position) (130).

Naturally, the remaining two chapters provide an in-depth analysis and illustration of Swinburne's endeavours as a critic. The first of these begins with a number of introductory

points on Swinburne's contributions to this field, which appear to be as extravagant in expression as his prose or theatre, challenging the readers' imagination in a manner similar to creative writing (132). Such texts, focusing on "chameleonic" personalities like himself, integrate contradictory tendencies and ideas in an anti-dogmatic formula intended to captivate the audience's attention, above all (134). His critical texts abound in exaggerations and digressions, since he rarely attempted to clarify the principles of his own exegetic judgement or creative choices. In fact, there are only three pieces in his entire oeuvre in which he exposes his views on literature and art, texts which will be, in their turn, inspected with an analytical-critical gaze by our author: "Notes on Poems and Reviews", "Under the Microscope" and "Dedicatory Epistle". In these profoundly "androgynous" texts one might still discover the rudiment of theory (138). Here, Swinburne is driven by the awareness of his role as educator of the masses, preferring a universalist stance over the anarchic-experimental one (142). As for the target of his critique, we witness again the same multifaceted personality. If the first of these pieces is mainly a response to the unfavourable reception of "Poems and Ballads" and an arrow cast in the direction of a part of the literary audience which had been over-courted by the English writers of the time, in the second, Swinburne's intention is to unmask the hidden games and ideological fluctuations in the literary field. In the last of them, a later piece, he renounces to the "tyrannical subjectivity", opting instead for a space of "fertile" and "relativising" dialogue (152). This change, the author explains, is indicative of the aged poet's more reserved attitude toward "experimentation" and his growing preference for classical forms, also visible in his lyrical pieces, which now express a desire to "annihilate the self".

The other Swinburnean critical pieces discussed in-depth at this point include those dedicated to various landmark literary fig-

ures, such as Baudelaire and Blake, who, we are told, exemplify a similar view on the authenticity and sincerity of art, arising from an essentially mystical spirit (a surrealist, respectively, an antinomical one) (173). For our author, however, of greater interest is the essay on Blake, and justifiably so. Returning to one of her earlier claims, Roxana Patraş informs us that Swinburne's interpretation of the English visionary poet is underpinned by a particular ideological formula of Republicanism, for which "freedom" and "religion" are expressions of the same temperament and are inextricably and indispensably connected (174). Furthermore, by attempting to destroy the myth of the discontinuous romantic spirit, which he replaces by a more coherent psychological formula (the "twofold vision"), Swinburne emerges as a pioneer of Blakean exegesis (175), being groundbreaking also in method (a markedly anti-allegorical reading) (181).

The remainder of this chapter discusses other foci of Swinburne's literary criticism. We are offered an overview and examination of the more scattered reading notes, found in the literary journals of his time and collected in sundry volumes ("Essays and Studies", "Miscellanies" and "Studies in Prose and Poetry"). We learn of Swinburne's views on a number of names of greater or lesser resonance, poets and novelists alike (e.g., Shelley, Wordsworth, Byron, Landor, Keats, Tennyson, Musset, Rossetti, Morris, Arnold, Collins, as well as Emily Brontë and Charles Reade). Most of Swinburne's commentaries (except those guided by his admiration for Hugo's impressive work) are centred on English poetry. In these, the critic demonstrates his rejection of the organicist-causal paradigm of the nineteenth century, professing instead a cyclical, anamorphic view on creative faculties, which, in his view, may resurface even at a distance of centuries in the texts of different but kindred personalities (193). A "critical optimist" (195), Swinburne is anchored in his explorations in a

somewhat Miltonic ideological frame of the nationalist-conservative type: instead of replacing the ossified forms by fresh ones, Swinburne chooses to turn to even older ones (197). He studies in detail the more obscure writers, giving lesser attention to the names of his time, in the conviction that novelty is merely a cliché and modernity a renewal of things past (198). Rossetti, Morris, Arnold, Wordsworth, Byron, Tennyson, Whitman and Musset, the Brontës or George Eliot are scrutinised by Swinburne from the vantage point of the "hermaphrodite creator" (198-224), as creative spirits conditioned by a dual androgynous sign which combines apparently incompatible elements and impulses, such as sexual energy, religious fervour, failure or imperfection—the latter two the true marks of genius (222). Within his views on this former set of personalities, Swinburne moves freely between honest admiration and sometimes unrefrained "ideologically-contaminated" remarks (the case of the Brontës vs. G. Eliot, for example) (222-223). His considerations of the romantics, the author notes, are more coherent, though (224). In these explorations, Swinburne's intention is to place himself at a critical pole opposed to that of Arnold's, fundamentally aestheticist one (227).

At the end of this chapter, we are reminded of Hugo, "the poet of the sacred terror", one of Swinburne's idols and formative models (232). The Victorian poet intersects with him as well as with Landor on an ideological level, sharing with them a "Republican" political creed. Like Blake, Hugo represents for Swinburne "the ideal balance between talent and character" (234), an artist who embodies the ideal of the "artistic hermaphrodite"—a purveyor of both feminine and masculine emotions, a liberator of humankind who worshipped the divine in every individual, despite the anarchic impulses (235).

The concluding chapter opens with an examination of what the author calls "a case of complicitous receptiveness"—

Swinburne's views on Elizabethan literature. His five volumes dedicated to the representatives of this age, Patraş explains, can be inscribed with the broader nineteenth century preoccupations for nationhood (238). They were, however, received with contempt, as mere examples of a readerly whim and extravagance of a spirit marked by a "diabolical passion". Nevertheless, we are instructed not to forget that Swinburne regarded himself mainly as a reader, not a critic by choice, relating to such efforts as to some entertaining chatter which could provide the interpreter with the opportunity to express his subjectivity freely (239). It should not be surprising, thus, that these Swinburnean exercises take on the form of the "conversational essay" or the "critical elegy" — constructions which are less constrained by the rigours of scientific method and, consequently, a copious target of scholarly sanction (242). And yet, the author insists, the merit of Swinburne's "methodless method" (a term coined by Samuel C. Chew), as acknowledged by later commentators of his work, resides in reflecting a subjective-creative dimension, with strong stylistic underpinnings (245). Swinburne moves toward "a performative-dynamic artistic concept" whereby he tries to capture the artist's personality in his "natural propensity to create worlds and beings", leaving the impression of an "almost dramatic composition of the critical discourse" (247). Swinburne's approach and expression is at once a mirror of his own subjectivity and a manifestation of the nineteenth century anti-rationalistic and anti-bourgeois responses. His work, the author argues, is indicative of a "mythopoeic" process similar to what M.H. Abrams has attributed to the romantics, which replaces religious mythology by a secular one (248).

Swinburne's idealisation of a golden age of literature is, in effect, perfectly aligned with the impulses of other distinguished nineteenth century thinkers (Ruskin, Carlyle,

Arnold, Pater), "sceptical rationalists" who chose to return to the past in order to discover the "mythopoeic eons" (250). For the poet, this "eon" is a "pantheon" of representative figures, rather than a collection of memorable literary works, since his primary interest, as had been the case with Coleridge before, is to underscore the mystery of the spontaneous creativity of a genius (the true mission of criticism). Therefore, Swinburne assumes a number of alter-egos, playing the roles of each of the analysed personalities as if his main intent were to dynamically and performatively re-create each particular artistic existence (*ibid.*). Inevitably, his critical explorations will lack unity or systematicity (251). Unlike Dryden, Swinburne does not respect the principles of classicist normative poetics (257), aligning himself more closely with a series of romantic commentators of the Elizabethan theatre (e.g., Richardson, Goethe or Coleridge) and identifying the essence of tragedy in the "conflictual dynamic of human passions" (*ibid.*). His aesthetic option is, above all, a psychologising one, aimed at revealing the mystery of the human psyche by an investigation which is fundamentally mythopoeic and visionary (258).

Illustrative, for the "methodless method" are the series of 21 sonnets included in the volume "Tristram of Lyonesse", in which Swinburne forces the limits of logic, subsuming largely heterogeneous experiences and interpretations to arbitrary critical theses, demonstrating at the same time that many of his ideas about the theatrical compositions under scrutiny had, in fact, originated in answers found when still an adolescent (258-259). One such source of "youthful admiration" was Marlowe, whom he regarded as reference point in the effort to formulate a theory of art as process or performance, wherein the creative act is primarily intended to support the artist's inner development and self-knowledge (262). In his views of Shakespeare, Swinburne is much

more consistent, however. For instance, in “A Study of Shakespeare”, he organises his thought along value-oriented criteria, rather than chronological ones, placing at the top of the Shakespearean creation texts like “Othello”, “Macbeth”, “Anthony and Cleopatra” or “King Lear”, and ranking the Elizabethan master as the most profound psychologist of all times, an artistic genius and “doctor of human passions” (270).

His other, less appreciative verse portraits are dedicated to figures like Ben Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, John Ford, Webster, Dekker or Thomas Middleton. Together with his particular observations and value-judgements of each, Swinburne also discloses his belief in the existence of a major man, exemplary for a certain age, suggesting various analogies between literary figures (e.g., Jonson-Dryden-Byron, Shakespeare-Milton-Shelley or Blake-Shelley-Coleridge), putting forward the view that the flux of creative energy becomes manifest in different personalities of different eras (288).

At this point, our author’s investigation ends abruptly, almost like a riddle, with the remark that the decadent Swinburne was not the one called-for to be the true harbinger of national renaissance. While some readers, caught-up in this finely-crafted maze of critical appreciations might consider themselves betrayed by the lack of a summative or conclusive chapter, we have the feeling that in the case of Roxana Patraş’s book this is by design. On the one hand, as the author herself has remarked elsewhere in her study, there are paths that have been left unexplored, and thus the door to further explorations should be left open by any cautious scholar. More importantly though, we think, such a choice of ending gives the already enlightened readership the gift of freedom—to enrich with their own reflective contributions the plethora of Swinburnean personas this study has attempted to reveal in all their splendour and glory.

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BOOK REVIEW

LAURA CARMEN CUȚITARU, *Elements of Psychology and Pathology of Language*, Iași, Editura Universitas XXI, 187 p.

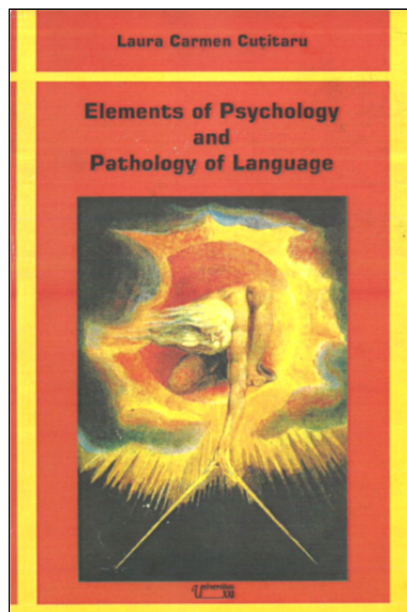
In 2007 Laura Carmen Cuțitaru published a very interesting study on psycholinguistics which harmoniously combines international and Romanian bibliography with the author's own considerations and questions. The study is written in a very clear style which shows that Cuțitaru has been pondering on these issues for years. The book can be a challenging and pleasant reading both for specialists as well as the general public interested in such issues as "What is language?" "Why do we speak?" "How do you speak?" "When did language appear?" "What is the connection between language and thinking?" Cuțitaru is very careful to give the reader balanced answers to all the questions that she raises. The beautiful cover of the book which reproduces William Blake's *Ancient of Days (God as an Architect)* discreetly warns us that the author supports or at least does not openly contradict the answers given by religion to several of the questions that she raises.

The study is divided into five chapters followed by an Addenda and a biblio-

graphical list. In Chapter I, the author analyzes the essence of the linguistic phenomenon starting from the "languages" used by animals (bees, primates, whales, birds) and ending up with "mentalese" (the silent language that exists in our mind, according to the famous linguist Steven Pinker). Even for a non-specialist, the discussion of the Saussurian paradox, for instance, is very challenging. Although languages change in time, we can still understand them.

Chapter II deals with the first language acquisition. Cuțitaru talks extensively about the pre-linguistic stage and the linguistic stage in the child's development. Although not a linguistic, Julia Kristeva's theory about the semiotic and the symbolic stages as developed in her seminal work *Revolution in Poetic Language* could have been helpful because they correspond exactly to what the author calls "pre-linguistic" and "linguistic."

Chapter III, "Mastering Another Language," is very topical for all the teachers of foreign languages. The author



comments on the work of well-known specialists, such as Stephen Krashen, Timothy Jay, Ellen Broselow, Tatiana Slama-Cazacu. She discusses the distinction (very well explained) between the acquisition and the learning of a foreign language and justifies her indistinct use of both. Of great interest nowadays, when people live much more mobile lives than in the past, often moving from one country to another, is the discussion of bilingualism and its stages. Cuțitaru considers that bilingualism can manifest differently: from an equal, alternative use of the two languages to the speaker's ability to think in both languages. Following Wallace Lambert, the author considers that bilingualism is the presence of two languages in one mind. A lot depends on how these languages are organized in the mind. Consequently, we may have additive bilingualism (which is perceived as an enrichment of one's personality) and subtractive bilingualism (where the two languages may be at war). Of high relevance for the actual practice of teaching English is the differentiation Cuțitaru makes between second language acquisition and foreign language acquisition. A subchapter on "Code switching and Contamination" and one on "Bilingualism and Emotions" end up a very consistent segment of the book.

Chapter IV is one of the very few approaches to a problem of crucial importance, not only to the specialists but to, practically, everybody. It is entitled "Language and the Brain" and it gives answers and raises questions about the connection between language and thought. How do we think? Does language influence our way of thinking? Is there an organ of language in our brain? The author discusses at length the importance of

neurolinguistics for the construction of a language model that can support a theory of language. Different language disorders as well as different psycholinguistic models of speech production are analyzed in order to provide answers to extremely complex problems which actually define us as humans. Laura Carmen Cuțitaru is extremely cautious when making statements. Her conclusion is that the right hemisphere of our brain "appears to connote" (102), whereas the left one "appears to denote" (102). With the precision and the delicacy of a neurosurgeon, the author unfolds a map of our brain and points to the different areas that have to do with speech production and reception. The author discusses at length how the brain influences/affects our use of the language. I think it would have been interesting to add the theories of Vygotsky and especially Sapir and Whorf who consider that the use of a certain language can influence the way our brain functions, the language acting as a sort of epistemic grid through which we see and classify reality.

A subchapter of Chapter IV is dedicated to the connection between gender, language, and brain. Laura Carmen Cuțitaru is not a feminist, she is a balanced researcher who is not afraid to say when science has reached its limits. On the other hand, it is interesting that sometimes her conclusions hover on feminism.

True to her knowledge and not to preconceptions, Cuțitaru debunks the myth that women talk more than men. Quoting very serious researchers she points out that it is men who talk more than women (107). When men break into a conversation, they are thought to have something important to say. When women break into a conversation, they

are considered to be nuisances. Women pay attention to what men say, most of what women say passes unnoticed by men. Women ask more questions than men. In this way they try to draw attention to the problems that concern them. Men interrupt women and this is accepted in the dynamics of conversations, but not the other way round (108). The investigation of language in courts led to the conclusion that men are more believable than women. These are not impressionistic considerations, they are the result of serious research undertaken by such specialists as Elaine Chaika, Pamela Fishman, Donald H. Zimmerman, or William M. O'Barr. Although the author prudently refuses to go further with her considerations, feminism is inevitable at this point. Another topic of great importance and consequence in this study is the comparison between the male and the female brain. Although the female brain is smaller, according to the latest research quoted by Cuțitaru "women have more grey matter than men" (110) and the bundle of nervous tissue that connects the two hemispheres of the brain is thicker and contains over 30 % more connections in women's brain. On the other hand, the area in the hypothalamus which is responsible for mating is much bigger in men than in women (110). Language processing is different with men and women. Men are better at solving spatial tasks, women are better at language and communicative tasks. The conclusion of Laura Carmen Cuțitaru is extremely balanced and shows that she has all the qualities of a researcher who refuses prejudice. The makeup of our brain does not tell us everything. Of course, it influences our performance

but the latter is also the result of the social environment we live in.

The next subchapter criticizes phrenology and supports the idea that probably there is no such thing as the "mind" but mental functions organized in packages resembling the quanta. Descartes and a whole trend in European culture are wrong when they separate the mind and the body. Mind and body are one. Both spirituality and scientific interests have a place on the map of the brain. The final chapter of the book brings us close to on philosophy. It is about the origin of language. So after seeing how we speak, Laura Carmen Cuțitaru sets herself the very ambitious task of finding out why we talk and what is the connection between thinking and talking. She presents the Darwinian hypothesis and although Cuțitaru is careful not to show any bias, one can feel between the lines that she is a creationist. In the end, she comes to the conclusion that both evolutionism and creationism "are equally a matter of faith" (139). This fierce debate reminds me of the scientific battle regarding the nature of light. Some scholars would swear light is a wave, other would only admit that light is made of particles. In the end, both camps proved to be right. Light is a wave of particles. Why not consider also the idea that both creationists and evolutionists are right. Life and language (as a characteristic of living beings) was created at some time and then evolved. The book ends with an Addenda where the author sums up some of the most important books from her bibliography.

The study *Elements of Psychopathology and Pathology of Language* is a very interesting book worth reading

both by specialists and the general public, a valuable Romanian contribution to the discussion of very difficult and challenging issues. Some disputable statements or some repetitions in the Addenda do not diminish in anyway the value of this study.¹ Laura Carmen Cuțitaru is,

undoubtedly, a well-read intellectual who knows her field and who is able to capture the attention of both the knowledgeable reader and the curious reader. I am convinced that her future books will reconfirm her intellectual and professional qualities.

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¹ At p. 9 the author says "English has a total of 46 discrete sounds" (9). Or it is only American English that has a total of 46 phonemes, British English, for instance, has 44 phonemes. Talking about human groups or tribes living in underdeveloped area (120) and speaking languages initially considered to be "primitive," Cuțitaru gives some examples: the American Indians (120) or the Negro Africans (121). In the former case, the recommended term is Native Americans and this minority group live in the United States, not in the Third World, although their poverty reminds one of the Third World. The latter term is also problematic because of its racist connotations. At p. 139 the author declares that the Earth is hardly 10,000 years old. Unfortunately, Cuțitaru does not give the source of this information. The problem of the Earth's age is still under serious debate. And at p.140, the author says that "Darwinism is not so appreciated in Europe as it is in America." I think it is difficult to make such a comparison. In most EU countries it is mandatory to teach evolutionism, but, on the other hand, Europe never had anything such as the famous Monkeys' Trial (1925).

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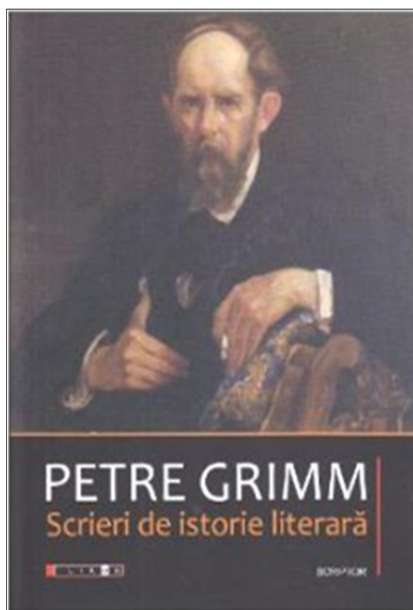
LIANA MUTHU (ed.), *Petre Grimm: Scrieri de istorie literară*, Cluj-Napoca, Eikon & Scriptor Publishing House, 2012, 237 p.

Liana Muthu, linguist and lecturer with the Department of Applied Languages of the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, collects the main articles and translations authored by Petre Grimm (1881-1944) for the contemporary reader. The works, as we shall see, relate to the diverse fields (literary history, translation studies, sociology and anthropology) of current academic research for which they still represent a valuable resource.

But, who was Petre Grimm?

Born in Bucharest¹, son of a German engineer, Frederick Grimm, and of a French teacher, Leontina Leclerc, he graduated in modern philology from the University of Bucharest (1904). Until 1914, he taught French and German in some smaller towns in the Southern part of Romania. Meanwhile, he also specialized in aesthetics (Paris – 1908), English and aesthetics (London and Oxford – 1911), and German studies (Freiburg – 1912, Heidelberg – 1913, Vienna – 1914).

The study journeys abroad had an impact not only on the quality and methodology of his literary and linguistic research, but also on the educational ideas and policies he afterwards advocated for. As Liana Muthu points out in her introductory essay (7-8), Petre Grimm put forward the idea of a multi-centered university education. Replicating the English model of Oxford and Cambridge, the Romanian universities were to get out of the big cities in order to be more accessible



to the masses. After the 1918 Union of the three Romanian provinces, a new higher education institution, “Dacia Superior” University was founded in the Transylvanian city of Cluj-Napoca. Within this university, the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy was set up in 1919. In the same year, Petre Grimm took a temporary position as lecturer with the English department. In 1920 he was tenured, then promoted full professor (1925), and later dean. Besides the positions held in the academia, he was also the Secretary of

¹ According to the bio presented in *Grimm* 17-20.

the Museum of Romanian Language (appointed in 1920) and, at some point, school inspector for secondary education.

Getting a closer look at Peter Grimm's education and his professional career should help us understand his impact on the study of English literature in Romania, comparative literary studies and translation studies, both as a researcher, and a representative of important cultural institutions. Although the "Dacia Superior" University and its Faculty of Letters and Philosophy were founded only in 1919, literary studies in Cluj-Napoca, especially in German, had already developed a tradition of comparative approaches. Hugo von Meltzl, the head of the German Department within the "Franz Josef" University² was also the editor of the first journal of comparative literature worldwide³. It is within this tradition – to which he added his own academic background – that Petre Grimm defended his doctoral thesis in 1924: "Romanian Translations and Imitations from English Literature. Study of Comparative Literature". The paper (included in the volume *Scieri de istorie literară*), to my endless surprise, not only carefully searches and then thoroughly lists the Romanian translations of various English poems and plays (prose writings are not included in the study), but it also traces the respective works in the writing of Romanian authors, and very often, also in French and German literature.

² A Hungarian higher education institution founded in Cluj, in 1872.

³ See <http://lett.ubbcluj.ro/prezentare/istoric/>

Though difficult to believe for the twenty-first-century (young) reader, the English language was little known in the Romanian provinces during the nineteenth century. Grimm inserts a minor, but suggestive incident in this respect. Thus, he shows (28) that in 1837 the English Government sent a note to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bucharest which was returned with the request for such communications to be accompanied by their translation in French. Translations of literary works from English into Romanian appeared late and were rare. English authors were often translated into Romanian via French or German.

In an article first published in 1948 and now included in the chapter on Petre Grimm from *Scieri...*, Dumitru Popovici points out that Grimm's work on the English-Romanian literary relations was that of a pioneer and that, at the time, Grimm was the only one to have the necessary competencies for this assignment. The Romanians' approach to English literature was often mediated by French or German and thus, "the researcher had to be exquisitely knowledgeable not only of English and Romanian, but also of the mediating languages. Grimm met these criteria to an extent to which, until today, no other Romanian researcher has done it." (Popovici in *Grimm* 196).

To illustrate how Grimm traced the translations and their influences on local literary productions both in terms of content, and lexicology, I shall give an example. Edward Young's *Night-Thoughts* is "the first work that gets to be known among Romanians and it has a strong influence for over a

generation; even today some of the elderly recall this book as one of the most uplifting that they read in their youth" (*Grimm* 30). The poem was therefore translated, first by Lazar Asachi in 1819, from Russian or Polish; then, in 1831, by Simeon Marcovici after the French version done by Letouneur; and then, in 1864, by Andrei Mureșanu, from German. Grimm covers all the details: who the translators were and what their educational background was, the publishing years, and the number of editions. Then, he goes more in depth to analyze the translations: how faithful each of them was to the original in terms of content and prosody; the quality of the target language. The Romanian version signed by Marcovici is praised for its lexical value: "it was used for the words and phrases it comprises in the construction of the great Dictionary of Romanian Language published by the Academy" (*Grimm* 32). Inspiration from Young was to be found in the work of the following Romanian poets: Cezar Bolliac, Grigore Alexandrescu, and Gheorghe Asachi. Petre Grimm shows similar attention to details in the analysis of all literary translations he included in his 1924 doctoral thesis, "Romanian Translations and Imitations from English Literature. Study of Comparative Literature". In the case of dramatic texts, he would also include statistics with the number of performances of a certain play (120).

Since the research is conducted both intensively and extensively, its quality is impressive. Therefore, this study is a valuable research resource for the literary historian, the lexicologist, the literary translator, the sociologist and the anthropologist, and also for

the pedagogical research. Grimm's remarks on the use of language: neologisms (84), translation of wordplay (98), archaisms (106) and especially the conclusions of the study "Romanian Translations and Imitations..." (128-134) should be definitely revisited by literary translation scholars and students for their relevance, their illustrative strength, and the beauty of the language in which they are expressed.

A skilled user of languages, Grimm himself was also a translator. The volume also includes a series of examples: two of Robert Burns's poems translated into Romanian and five of Mihai Eminescu's poems translated into English, which can surely be taken as reference translations. Grimm was interested not only in the translation of English literature into Romanian, but also the other way round. An article dedicated to the first literary translations from Romanian into English is also included in the collection.

The profiles of Shakespeare, Keats, Chaucer, Shelley, and Robert Burns - short articles probably used in his English literature classes- are concise and meaningful. They give some information about the life and the major works of the respective poets. They make an entertaining reading, especially in the paragraphs in which the writers are excused in such a metaphorical language for their failures to exemplary conduct: not having been a good husband (Shakespeare), drinking himself to death (Robert Burns), etc.

The note on English literature and its features was, unquestionably, part of the power discourse of the first half of the twentieth century. According to Grimm, the qualities of a national literature are derived from its peo-

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ple and the English are the bravest, the first to have national pride and conscience; they are good Christians and have high moral conduct, etc. One can smile seeing how in tune the Romanian scholar was with the policies and politics of the then British Empire.

Liana Muthu's endeavor to collect the main studies and translations authored by Petre Grimm is more than welcome and necessary. I am also inclined to think that this body of works could be very actively revisited in the realm of translation studies and literary history.

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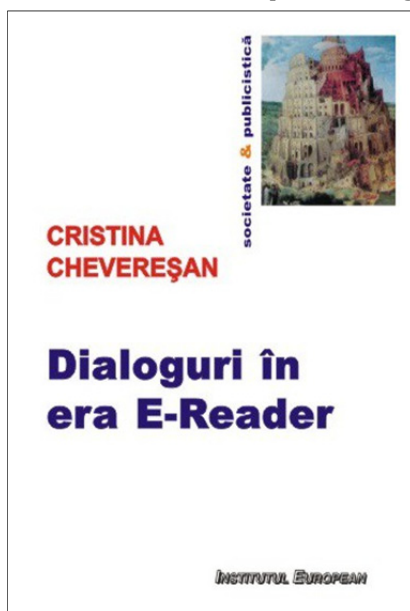
BOOK REVIEW

Chevereșan, Cristina, *Dialoguri în Era E-Reader. Cărți, autori, editori (ediție bilingvă)*, Iași, Institutul European, 2012, 254p.

Cristina Chevereșan's writings are indicative of a well-honed interest in the literature of the Outsider-Within. This is strongly suggested by the *ExCENTRIS. Marginals, Excentrics, Rebels* which she edited with Ciprian Vălcan in 2012, the same year that *Dialoguri în Era E-Reader Cărți, Autori, Editori (Ediție Bilingvă)* was published. The author's academic formation and her translation activity suggest that she is well within her comfort zone at the intersection between different cultures and mentalities.

The idea around which the interviews in this book are conducted is that of the need to adapt not only to shifting mentalities, but also to the sonic speed of technological progress and to the effects of globalization. The author's goal is to offer a glimpse at how cross-culturalism determines the formation of hybrid identities. She conducts interviews both with immigrants to the Outsider-Within status by focusing on Marcel Cornis-Pope's identity reconfiguration, and with cross-cultural natives such as Gish Jen and Tino Villanueva. The distinction between the two categories becomes obvious when reviewing these authors' writing proclivities.

Gish has to challenge the stereotype of being seen primarily as a meta-ethnic writer and to adapt her writing style to her readers' expectations. Verisimilitude has different meanings for the cross-cultural writer and for the consumer of ethnic literature. Stereotyping leads to the difference-minimizing imposition to "downplay ethnicity for success" (155). Chevereșan repeatedly drives her interviews so as to incorporate multiple perspectives on what authentic writing has become under the impact of globalization. The overall impression that she strives to convey is that writing is a process of



building a heterotopia, which converges neither with the ethnic intention of the writer nor with the exotic expectations of the mainstream reader.

Moving on to Tino Villanueva, Chevereșan strives to show that the challenge present here is not only that of moving between two cultures, but also that of using two languages. Writing is the "organic process" (173-174) of alternating linguistic codes. Supervising the translation of one's own bilingual works becomes a process of nurturing the text so that it falls in line with a singular view, rather than being corrupted by tangen-

tial interpretation. Dominick LaCapra, on the other hand, shares his post-interview perceptions on memory and trauma, history and memory, as well as on otherness and the accompanying sense of disempowerment. Transference, interest, and traumatic memory acquire a new dimension when transcribed into a discourse which serves to explain something experienced by an author.

In the last interview included in the book, Chevereșan directs attention to the pressure technology exerts on language and the stringencies this inadvertently adds to domains centred on linguistic production and reception. Her interview with Lindsay Waters focuses on the manner in which the progression of expressive forms challenges what is considered to be canonically artistic. Her discussion with David Crystal also tackles the evolution of linguistic forms.

As an interviewer, Chevereșan looks for answers to how the evolution of communication places a strain on different

strategies of encoding and decoding texts. Her strategy is to divide her book into two parts, one containing the interviews as they were recorded in English, and a translation of these discussions. This makes the book accessible not only to the Romanian readership, but also to English speakers. I find this particular feature relevant since the author focuses on the adaptive process of working in the Anglo-Saxon academia, as well as on the difficulties of publishing in this environment. The bilingual text serves to underline the difficulties of translation and its inherent pitfalls. The core themes of the book, i.e. adaptation, academic survival, linguistic shift in the English-speaking world, and publishing by the Anglo-Saxon standards, bring the reader to the forefront of the dynamics of contemporary writing. Consequently, the book is a valuable tool for understanding the type of interest native and ethnic writing can elicit and a compelling collection showing contemporary linguistic change.

OANA-MEDA PĂLOȘANU

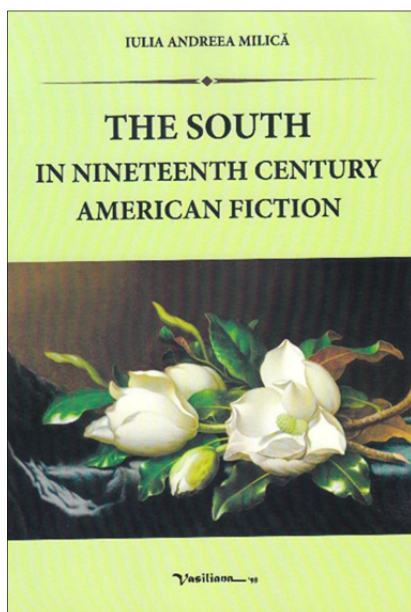
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BOOK REVIEW

IULIA ANDREEA MILICĂ, *The South in Nineteenth Century American Fiction*, Iași, Vasiliana '98, 2014, 373p.

Iulia Andreea Milică has already made a name as a specialist on the culture and literature of the American South. The author's assiduous scholarly efforts to present the complexity of this regional literary culture beyond the popular clichés have enriched the contribution of Romanian scholars to the field of American literary studies. Iulia Andreea Milică's interest in the American South began with her doctoral research, published as *Southern Cultural Dimensions in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction*. Her contribution later materialized in several books and articles on Southern writers such as William Faulkner, Ellen Glasgow, or Katherine Anne Porter. In her 2013

book *Literary Representations of the Southern Plantation*, Iulia Andreea Milică supports the inclusion of the founders of the plantation romance in the discourse on the evolution of American literature. Although the scope of her other book on American literature, namely *Studies in American Literature* (2013), is wider, Milică's interest in the American South is still very clear in her analyses of Southern identity. The reader under review, *The South in Nineteenth Century American Fiction*, falls into the same category of valuable resources for students and scholars interested in the literary representations and representatives of the nineteenth-century American South.



With texts organized into four distinct sections following the introduction, *The South in Nineteenth Century American Fiction* revisits

regional literary (self) portrayal with a view to contributing to the destabilization of a clichéd cultural topology, of a monolithic image of the American South. The volume attempts to emphasize the complexity of the “literature out of which the South emerges as if out of a puzzle of images” (10). The puzzle Milică created with this volume is, indeed, elaborate, since the texts included here reflect the cultural (self)positioning of the region by reuniting both Southern and Northern perspectives.

The first section in the volume, “The Romance Tradition in the South”, creates a space for the inclusion of competing standpoints. It engages the slavery controversy and opposes the image of the South as reflected by the plantation and the historical romance, in the works of John Pendleton Kennedy and William Gilmore Simms respectively, to the abolitionist propaganda of antislavery literature (Harriet Beecher Stowe) and slave-narratives (Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs). The next section is the richest of the volume and is dedicated to regionalism and local color in the post-Civil War period. It includes texts by Thomas Nelson Page, Joel Chandler Harris, Kate Chopin, George Washing-

ton Cable, Mark Twain, Charles Waddell Chesnut, and Ellen Glasgow. The first subsection takes the reader from the nostalgic recollection of the antebellum 'good ole times' in the often anthologized "Marse Chan" to the dark side of the plantation myth in "No Haid Pawn", and then to slave folklore in the tales of Harris' Uncle Remus. The reader's journey continues with the painful and ironical treatment of racial and gender oppression in Kate Chopin's "Désirée's Baby" and "La Belle Zoraïde", the insightful take on the collision between the old ways and the new order in Cable's "Jean-ah Poquelin," the exploration of genealogical determinism in the excerpt from Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and the dynamics of interracial relationships and mixed-race identity in Chesnut's most anthologized short story, "The Wife of His Youth." This section ends with excerpts from Ellen Glasgow's Civil War novel *The Battle-Ground* that invite the reconsideration of the conventions of the plantation romance and of the traditional notion of heroism. The following section illustrates and discusses Southwestern humor in the work of Augustus B. Longstreet, Thomas Bangs Thorpe, and George Washington Harris. The stories in this section move away from the plantation life to the frontier experience. The last section of the anthology offers additional theoretical resources meant to add to the student's understanding of the complexity of the changes and challenges of ante- and post-bellum Southern culture. The section presents the pro-slavery stance expressed in George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South* and Caroline Lee Hentz's Preface to *The Planter's Northern Bride*, the refusal of the defeat of Southern values in Edward A. Pollard's *The Lost Cause*, and the concern for the identity of mixed-race individuals in Charles Waddell Chesnut's *What Is a White Man?*

The South in Nineteenth Century American Fiction is a valuable academic resource for several reasons. First of all, besides reproducing well-known and often anthologized texts, it makes available texts that would otherwise be more difficult to find for the Romanian reader.

Moreover, the texts are organized into sections meant to guide the student through the intricacies of the composite representations of the American South. The introduction to each section is clear and easy to follow, offering enough details and references for a proper understanding of the particular aspect that guides the organization of the texts in that section. For example, "Postbellum Literature: Regionalism and Local Color" – the richest section in the anthology – begins with an introductory explanation that presents the social, political, economic, technological, and cultural factors that led to the emergence of realism, regionalism, and 'local color' literature. It also explains the impact of the Civil War on Southern literature and ends with pointing out the continuation of the regional movement beyond the period covered by the volume, into the work of twentieth-century Southern writers. Such approaches are welcome as they contextualize early writers and texts and show their relevance for the evolution of literary forms, genres, and preoccupations. The writers included in the anthology benefit from similarly clear and relevant introductions and, when only fragments of a longer text are included, details are provided to help the reader understand the story and locate the excerpts. The set of questions at the end of each text enhance the reader's experience; they challenge the reader to identify and examine the specificity of each text, while also inviting the analysis of the multifaceted constructions of regional literary tropes across texts.

The volume is intended as a reader for students interested in the literary representations of the American South. It can be easily used for class discussions or as a self-study guide. Moreover, the texts anthologized here and the reading recommendations in each section can also serve research purposes, as they successfully present the complexity of the writings on the American South and challenge popular regional clichés.

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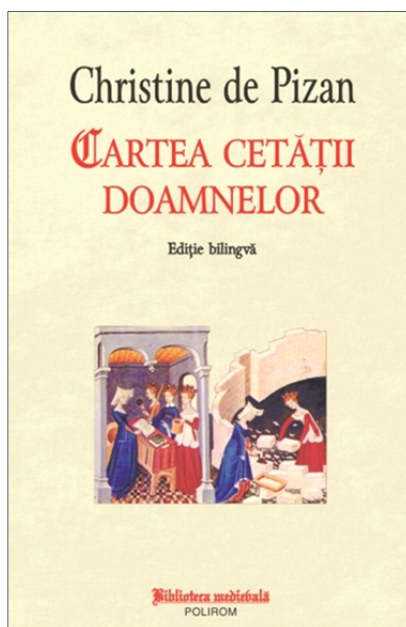
BOOK REVIEW

Christine de Pizan, *Cartea Cetății Doamnelor* [The Book of the City of Ladies], Iași, Polirom, 2015, 745p.

Christine de Pizan (1364-1430) is one of the first Western women scholars and professional writers. She was the daughter of the Italian physician and astrologer Tommaso di Benvenuto da Pizzano, who moved to Paris to work as the personal adviser to King Charles V, in the middle of the fourteenth century. As the daughter of the king's adviser, Christine de Pizan had access to the Royal Library at the Louvre. There, under the strict supervision of Gilles Malet, the director of the library, she was raised to become an educated woman. After many beautiful years spent in the Royal Library, at the age of fifteen, she married Étienne, a royal secretary. Unfortunately, her husband died 10 years later, and left her without any financial support. Moreover, she had to stand up to the creditors trying to collect her husband's debt (sometimes, even more than he owed them). In order to survive as a widow with children, she started to write various types of scholarly texts to earn money. In 1418 she retreated from public life and went to Saint Louis monastery in Poissy, where she spent the rest of her life.

Although during her short career as a writer she wrote poems, political texts like *Le livre du corps de policie* (1407) and *Le livre de la paix* (1414), and historical texts like *Faits et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*, she is known today as a protofeminist, due to her representations of women's status and behaviour in the society of her time in *Le livre de trios vertus* (1406), and to her position against male superiority and for the creation of the perfect women's society in *Le livre de la Cité des dames* (1405).

The publication of *Cartea Cetății Doamnelor* [The Book of the City of Ladies], Christine de Pizan's best-known work, in a Romanian and French bilingual edition, in the collection *Biblioteca Medievală* [The Medieval Library] coordinated by Alexander Baumgarten at Polirom Publishing House in Iași is a welcomed development, because it brings before philosophers, philologists and readers interested in gender studies the only text written by a woman of that period which defends the image of women and in which the author describes an extraordinary utopian female city based



on models of women borrowed from history, religion and mythology. Moreover, as the author herself mentions in the first pages, she started writing this text after reading Mathéolus's diatribe, which described women as creatures prone to evil doings and vices, as did other authors of the time.

The translation of such a work must have been difficult due to the challenge of making a translated medieval text attractive to today's reader, but it is possible to say that Reghina Dascăl, the translator, managed to offer us a fascinating translation, which uses archaic language when needed, in order to make the reader feel as if truly reading a fifteenth-century text, but not to such an extent as to make the translation difficult to read. Moreover, the translator, an expert on Christine de Pizan's life and work, also offered a complex and useful introduction to the Romanian translation of *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Reghina Dascăl had already published a book in 2008 on Christine de Pizan's life and work, entitled *Christine de Pizan: Essays*. She is a Reader at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the Faculty of Letters, History and Theology, at the West University of Timișoara, and has published books and articles on British studies and gender studies.

Unfortunately, Christine de Pizan has been overlooked for a long time by gender studies researchers, because of the temperate way she approached the problem of the correct depiction of women, unlike the modern women authors, who imposed their opinions in their writings. Today, researchers, such as Reghina Dascăl, bring her personality and work back to the spotlight through extraordinary translations of her works and extensive academic studies, so that even an inexperienced reader can

learn about Christine de Pizan's contribution to challenging the representations of women and women's role in the patriarchal discourse.

The Book of the City of Ladies is divided into three parts. In each, the character-narrator is guided through the process of building the city of ladies by a woman embodying one of the three most important virtues: reason, rectitude and justice. In the first part, lady Reason helps Christine de Pizan lay the foundation of the new city by showing her that although women are mocked by the majority of authors of the time, not all women are attacked, but only those who are evil. These attacks, she claims, are warnings for the male readers to stay away from this type of women (119). However, there are also authors who mock women either because of their own vices or because of envy, and in order to combat these men and help Christine de Pizan build a solid foundation to the city, lady Reason offers the narrator examples of women who led cities or nations; were great warriors; were well educated; invented sciences, crafts or things useful to mankind; or had lived a good and peaceful life because of their intelligence.

In the second part, lady Rectitude advises Christine de Pizan to construct the buildings of the city with the bricks that she had prepared, which were actually sibyls, the prophetesses of the true God. Moreover, after raising the buildings of the city, lady Rectitude urges the narrator to find virtuous women to populate the city: wives who love their husbands; who help their husbands with advice; women who could shape the world, one way or another; who can hold secrets; who are educated and honest. She also suggests women known to have been loyal to their lovers, even if their lovers had not shown similar

loyalty in return; women who dress elegantly but are also virtuous; women cherished for their virtues, not for their affection; wealthy and generous women; and other virtuous women who lived in France at the time.

In the last chapter, lady Justice tells Christine de Pizan all about the most virtuous women living in the castles and the mansions of the city. The first among these women and the future governess of the city is the Virgin Mary, because not only is she the Queen of the city of ladies, "but she is the ruler of all the made things after her Son, whom she bore and conceived from the Holy Spirit and who is the Son of God, the Father" (557). The Virgin Mary does not live alone, "she is accompanied by her blessed sisters [...] Mary Magdalene" (561) and other sainted and holy women, who lived holy lives and, in many cases, died for their belief in Jesus Christ. At the end, lady Justice advises that virtuous women remain humble, married women be patient, virgins be simple, pure and serene and widows be pious, lest men be able to attack them anymore. Women are advised to follow the role models of the city of ladies.

Given the importance of Christine de Pizan, the Romanian translation *The Book of the City of Ladies* is more than welcome. It shows contemporary researchers and inexperienced readers that, although the Middle Ages produced numerous writ-

ings that mocked women and presented them as evil beings, there was, at least, one important text that defended women and presented numerous examples of virtuous women from the Ancient world and Christian history. Moreover, the work in question introduces the reader to a utopian city of ladies, similar to the community of Amazons from the ancient legends, but which is based on model women defined by Christian virtues. The reader will be surprised to discover that the book employs a didactic style, similar to the volume of letters published by the Italian writer Laura Cereta (1469-1499) and the poems written by Marie de France (1160-1215). Moreover, the style is also similar to that of books written by Queen Sohye (1437-1504) and Lady Hyegyeong (1735-1815) containing advice about the proper behavior of women in the Confucian Korean society of that time. Naturally, Christine de Pizan and the other women writers from the medieval period wrote for the Christian women of European societies, in general, in order to teach the ladies how to act so that men should stop misrepresenting them as evil. The connections one can make between Christine de Pizan and the above mentioned writing ladies show how different societies tried to contain women, and this is not only an issue of the past.

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