

ACTA NEOPHILOLOGICA

42. 1-2 (2009)

Ljubljana

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Acta Neophilologica is published once yearly (as a double number) by the Faculty of Arts, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete (The Scientific Institute of the Faculty of Arts), University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, with the support of Ministry of Science, Schooling and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia. The review is primarily oriented in promoting scholarly articles on English and American literature, on other literatures written in English as well as on German and Romance literatures. The Editorial Board also welcomes scholarly articles in related areas (as e.g. cross-cultural studies, ethnic studies, comparative literature). All articles are refereed before being accepted or rejected. Manuscripts will not be returned unless they are commissioned. Computed-printed copies must be double-spaced and new paragraphs should be printed with an indention. Articles must have an accompanying abstract. References should be worked into the text as far as possible, and end-notes kept to a minimum. Literature used must be prepared in the alphabetical order of authors.

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Articles and suggestions for exchange journals and books for reviews should be sent to Mirko Jurak, Department of English, Filozofska fakulteta, Aškerčeva 2, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

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Printed by the Birografika, BORI, d.o.o., Ljubljana, Slovenia.

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AND SLOVENE DRAMATISTS (I):
A. T. LINHART'S *MISS JENNY LOVE***

Mirko Jurak

Abstract

One of the signs of the universality of William Shakespeare's plays is undoubtedly their influence on plays written by other playwrights throughout the world. This is also true of Slovene playwrights who have been attracted by Shakespeare's plays right from the beginning of their creativity in the second half of the eighteenth century, when Anton Tomaž Linhart (1756-1795) wrote his tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*. However, Slovene knowledge about Shakespeare and his plays reaches back into the seventeenth century, to the year 1698, when a group of Jesuit students in Ljubljana performed a version of the story of King Lear in Slovene. The Jesuits used Slovene in theatrical performances, which were intended for the broadest circles of the population. The first complete religious play, written in Slovene, is *Škofjeloški pasjon* (The Passion Play from Škofja Loka), which was prepared by the Cistercian monk Father Romuald. Since 1721 this play was regularly performed at Škofja Loka for several decades, and at the end of the twentieth century its productions were revived again.

In December 2009 two hundred and twenty years will have passed since the first production of Anton Tomaž Linhart's comedy *Županova Micka* (Molly, the Mayor's Daughter). It was first performed in Ljubljana by the Association of Friends of the Theatre on 28 December 1789, and it was printed in 1790 together with Linhart's second comedy, *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi* (This Happy Day, or Matiček Gets Married; which was also published in 1790, but not performed until 1848). These comedies represent the climax of Linhart's dramatic endeavours. Linhart's first published play was *Miss Jenny Love* (1780), which he wrote in German.¹ In the first chapter of my study I shall discuss the adaptation of Shakespeare's texts for the theatre, which was not practiced only in Austria and Germany, but since the 1660s also in England. Further on I discuss also Linhart's use of language as the "means of communication". In a brief presentation of Linhart's life and his literary creativity

¹ In my article I often use the abbreviation *ZD* for A. T. Linhart's *Zbrano delo* (Collected Works, ed. Alfonz Gspan 1950) and *MJL* for *Miss Jenny Love*, which was published in this edition. After acts and scenes I quote the number of the page of Linhart's original text (German and French are included) and the second page number which follows after /, is the number of the page of the Slovene translation. Translations into English are mine.

Acknowledgement. I sincerely wish to thank the following individuals and institutions for their assistance in my preparation of this study for publication: the librarians of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures and the librarians of the Slavic Department of Languages and Literatures, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana; Ms Katarina Kocijančič and Ms Francka Slivnik, Slovene Theatre Museum, Ljubljana; Dr Malina Schmidt Snoj, Ljubljana; Dr Tomaž Toporišič, The Mladinsko Theatre, Ljubljana; Dr Jason Blake, Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, and particularly to my Scottish friend, Professor W. H. Fraser.

I shall suggest some reasons for his views on life, religion and philosophy. They can be seen in his translation of Alexander Pope's "Essay on Man" as well as his appreciation of Scottish poetry. The influence of German playwrights belonging to the Sturm and Drang movement (e.g. G. T. Lessing, J. F. Schiller, F. M. Klinger) has been frequently discussed by Slovene literary historians, and therefore it is mentioned here only in passing. Slovene critics have often ascribed a very important influence of English playwright George Lillo on Linhart's tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*, but its echoes are much less visible than the impact of Shakespeare's great tragedies, particularly in the structure, character presentations and the figurative use of language in Linhart's tragedy. I shall try to prove this influence in the final part of my study.

Because my study is oriented towards British and Slovene readers, I had to include some facts which may be well-known to one group or to another group of readers. Nevertheless I hope that they will all find in it enough evidence to agree with me that Shakespeare's influence on Linhart's play *Miss Jenny Love* was rather important.

I.

In the preface to the published version of his play *Miss Jenny Love* (which appeared in German, in Augsburg, in 1780) Linhart wrote the following motto: "Allow me, if you please, to tread with boyish steps in the path of Shakespeare! The path is slippery and one might fall at every step! Who shall lend me his hand?" (ZD 130/331). In a letter to a very close friend of his, priest Martin Kuralt (1757-1845), Linhart wrote on 1 January 1780 the following: "I have the pleasure to inform you that I have written a tragedy (MJJL, note by M.J.), which will be published in Augsburg. It is black, *a la Shakespeare*, and I am afraid that it will have the honour to be forbidden outside the Empire." (ZD 267/410) Two months later, on 24 February 1780, Linhart sent another letter to Kuralt in which he says, among others things, "Have you seen in the theatre the unreachable Shakespeare? It was *Hamlet*, I do not doubt it. If you had seen *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, but not Shakespeare's *Macbeth adapted by Mr Stephanie* but *Macbeth by Shakespeare*, you would have seen three plays which have enchanted me to madness." (ZD 270/412)

Let us have a closer look at these statements, which are related to Shakespeare's tragedies and to the productions of his plays in Vienna. Linhart's panegyrics on Shakespeare and his plays have been noticed by Slovene literary historians, particularly his rejection of adaptations of Shakespeare's plays by Austrian and German actors and directors. But Slovene critics have seen such adaptations as an isolated process which was happening in Central Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century and not as a process which started in England much earlier. One of the Austrian actors, directors and translators in Vienna who is often mentioned by Slovene critics and who is explicitly mentioned by Linhart, is Gottlieb Stephanie (1741-1800). He, for example, rather arbitrarily adapted Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, and his version of this tragedy was first performed in Vienna in 1772. A few years after Linhart's return from Vienna to Ljubljana, in 1780, Stephanie's adaptation was also criticised in the German newspaper issued in Ljubljana, in *Laibacher Zeitung* (no. 46, 15 November 1787). The editor of Linhart's collected work, Alfonz Gspan, surmises that the author of this article was Linhart himself (Gspan 1950: 529). Stephanie's revision of Shakespeare's plays is dealt with in detail in the monographic study on the early life and work of Linhart, which

was written by Mirko Zupančič (1972: 49-56). He believes that Stephanie's version of *Macbeth* was the result of the involvement of Queen Maria Theresa and her son Joseph in the theatrical life in Hapsburg Empire. The rulers disapproved of Shakespeare's combination of historical events in his plays and they criticised his "mistake" to include poetic phantasy in his tragedies and histories. Shakespeare's approach to the presentation of life in drama was in opposition to the prevailing rationalism of the age, which did not approve of "murders, madness, inexplicability" of Shakespeare's royal heroes, and who – in view of the then Austrian critics – did not support the stability of the state and its moral norms.

Many Slovene literary historians, including Zupančič, pay a lot of attention to the official censor of theatrical productions in Vienna, university professor Joseph von Sonnenfels (1733-1817), who may have been Linhart's teacher at the university. Sonnenfels was the main representative of the Enlightenment as led by the Austrian Emperor Joseph II, and he was also the author of the doctrine of theatre censorship. Sonnenfels was also a strong opponent of Shakespeare as well as of the new Sturm und Drang dramatic movement in the German speaking countries. As an advocate of French classical drama Sonnenfels strongly supported the three unities, opposed the inclusion of comic scenes in tragedies, and saw the aim of plays as a means of teaching theatre-goers the moral norms. He also rejected popular folk comedies in which playwrights freely inserted allusions to contemporary events and personages. Zupančič defines his attitude towards the theatre as didactic, because the theatre was for Sonnenfels "a school for noble characters and good manners" (Zupančič 1972: 22), an idea with which most theatre-goers and critics would disagree today.

The point made by Slovene critics about the arbitrary adaptations of Shakespeare's plays by German speaking translators and theatre directors is valid, although this process had started in England more than a century before Sonnenfels prepared his suggestions about theatre censorship. Since the beginning of the Restoration period in England, in 1660, Shakespeare's plays had been adapted also by English actors who directed his plays in London and elsewhere in Britain. They often changed the tragic original into a kind of a popular melodrama ("soap opera"), which was far below the aesthetic standards of the original. Let me cite some cases. For example, in the 1660s Sir William D'Avenant produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields theatre a number of "improved" versions of Shakespeare's plays, among them *Macbeth*, "in new clothes, new scenes, machines ... with music, singing and dancing ... in the nature of opera" (Halliday 127-9, 295). The history of stage productions of Shakespeare's *King Lear* is even more astonishing. The last original version of this play was done in England in 1675. In 1681, Nahum Tate, a minor Irish poet and playwright, adapted several Elizabethan plays, among them also *King Lear*. Tate believed that by his changes the play received a greater probability regarding fate in man's life. In his version *King Lear* is restored to his kingdom, and Cordelia marries Edgar. This adaptation of Shakespeare's text was even accepted by Samuel Johnson and some of the best English actors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (e.g. David Garrick, John Philip Kemble and Edmund Kean) performed in it until W. C. Macready returned to Shakespeare's text. But, surprisingly enough, this happened only in 1838 (!). There are several possible reasons for such adaptations.

With the Restoration of the monarchy by King Charles II Puritanism collapsed and the gravity of the previous period was no longer encouraged. Besides, some attempts to write tragedies in Shakespeare's manner, failed, and for example, Dryden's tragedies do not reach the aesthetic qualities of Shakespeare's plays. Dryden's tragedy *All for Love, or the World Well Lost* (1678), written on the same theme as Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* (1606), is one of the best proofs for this assertion. Another reason for these changes can possibly be found in the happy ending of some of the plots which Shakespeare "borrowed" from English legends. Thus, for example, the first known legend about *King Lear*, which was written by Geoffrey of Monmouth in *Historia Regum Britanniae* in the twelfth century, and published in 1507, ends happily (See: Geoffrey of Monmouth 81-6). Besides, an anonymous version of an earlier play, *King Leir* (1594), also ends happily. Of course, the original legend reads like a fairy tale and the main characters lack the psychological development and personal integrity of Shakespeare's protagonists. Other characters connected with *King Lear* in this legend are also flat, one-dimensional, and there is no tragic development and no catharsis in this tale. From the aesthetic point of view Shakespeare's treatment of *King Lear*'s story is an artistic vision of life, with all its paradoxes and diversities, whereas the story about this hero as treated by Geoffrey of Monmouth, is a plain, linear narrative, a simple legend, with no artistic dimensions whatsoever. The happy end of *King Lear* is in opposition to the previous artistic development of the play, to its characters and their relations, and therefore such an end is artificially imposed upon the tragic subject-matter of the play. This is also true of the above mentioned Stephanie adaptation of *Macbeth* and of *Hamlet*. Such changes were introduced also in other German speaking theatres, for example, in Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's production of *Hamlet* in Hamburg in 1776. Slovene literary historians knew these adaptations (Zupančič 1972: 44-56) but they do not mention the English practice and some of the reasons why these adaptations took place.

The point which has been made in connection with Linhart's preference of the original Shakespeare's text, if compared with an adaptation, is that Linhart was obviously very much aware of the artistic difference of plays as they were written by Shakespeare and of their adaptations in the second half of the eighteenth century, which were still popular in Central Europe. Linhart's decision also shows his high artistic standards regarding the composition of plays, the presentation of characters and the totality of tragic vision of life which is presented by Shakespeare in his plays. It is very likely that Linhart knew enough English already during his stay in Vienna (1778-1780) so that not only did he see Shakespeare's plays performed in the original versions but that he understood English enough to read Shakespeare's plays in English. This could definitely help him to make his own judgment about Stephanie's productions and the artistic quality of Shakespeare's plays.

In the second half of the eighteenth century early romantic tendencies can be noticed in German plays belonging to the Sturm und Drang movement, which developed in German speaking countries. Its members included, besides some minor playwrights, also Goethe, Lessing, Schiller and Klinger. Slovene critics have often tried to find similarities between these playwrights and between English "domestic tragedies", especially with George Lillo's play *The London Merchant: or the History of George Barnwell* (1735). But they have neglected some important differences between Lillo's

tragedy and plays written by the German playwrights belonging to this movement, not to mention Lillo's tragedy and Linhart's *Miss Jenny Love*, which I shall discuss later. One of the more noticeable differences between German plays of the Sturm und Drang movement and Lillo's play are echoes of the English Restoration comedy. The differences include primarily witticisms, paradoxes, humour, vitality of characters, etc., which are all typical elements of the English Restoration comedy. The German dramatists – and Linhart too – still rejected comic elements in serious plays, and therefore their heroes are more like one-dimensional sketches than real human figures, embodying both serious and comic features, positive and negative moral traits. These plays often lack wit, their diction is contrived, the structure of their plays is sometimes rather complicated, their characters are not complex enough to portray people who are round characters. Briefly, these plays often lack some of the artistic qualities, which are present in the best works of dramatic art. Shakespeare successfully included even in his “great tragedies” some comic elements as constituent parts of his plays. This is an important difference between the English domestic tragedies like Lillo's *The London Merchant*, and the German tragedies of the second half of the eighteenth century. It is most likely that because the German literary historians have accepted Lillo's play as influential for the development of “Trauerspiel”, Linhart's *Miss Jenny Love* was more or less automatically included as a product of this manner of writing by Slovene literary historians too.

II.

In order to present Linhart's position in the development of Slovene drama as well as Shakespeare's influence on *Miss Jenny Love*, some basic historical and biographical facts about his life and his creativity may be helpful. Anton Tomaž Linhart was born on 11 December 1756, at Radovljica, and he died before the age of forty, on 14 July 1795, in Ljubljana. Radovljica is a small mediaeval town in the north-western part of Slovenia, a region which is called Kranjska (Carniola), and which was in Linhart's time a part of the Austrian Empire. The rule of the Hapsburg dynasty was represented in the 18th century mainly by the Empress Maria Theresa (who ruled between 1740 and 1780) and her son, Joseph II (r. 1780-1790). During their rule a number of progressive reforms in education, law and religion were enacted. However, in Austria, which was composed of heterogeneous peoples, as well as in some other European countries, the national movements began to grow in the second half of the eighteenth century, when non-dominating nations began to demand more cultural freedom. One of the main obstacles in the field of culture was the dominance of the German language in the whole of the Habsburg Empire in which this language was the official language of all nations belonging to the Empire (e.g. the Czechs, the Slovaks, the Hungarians, the Croatians, the Slovenes). Besides, the middle classes in these countries lacked political and also very often economic power and they resented privileges of German nobility, aristocracy, and administration. Therefore nations living in Central Europe, including the Slovenes, were inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution (July 14, 1789). These nations often expressed their demands for cultural freedom, for the non-discriminatory

use of their languages. This was done at first in their works of art, and later, in their political activities.

This is also true of Linhart and his period. He wrote two successful comedies, which stirred the Slovene national consciousness. His play *Županova Micka* received great public acclaim when it was performed on 28 December 1789 at the Stanovsko gledališče (The Theatre of the Estates) by the Družba prijateljev gledališča (The Association of Friends of the Theatre). This was an association of amateur actors: Linhart himself directed the play, and his wife acted in the leading role of Micka. Linhart's play is based on the comedy *Die Feldmühle* (The Country Mill), which was written by the Austrian playwright Joseph Richter and which was first staged in Vienna in 1777. Linhart's play was published in book form before its premiere, but dated 1790. Almost at the same time Linhart began writing another comedy, *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi* (abbr. as *Matiček*) which was based on Pierre Augustin Carron de Beaumarchais' comedy *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*. Beaumarchais' play was originally shown in Paris in 1784 after the playwright's hard struggle with censorship. In it the author did not attack the weaknesses of an individual man, but of the society as a whole. In addition to the anti-feudalist sting of *Figaro* Linhart added to his play the anti-Germanising point by showing how the administrators used the German language "to sow confusion among the Slovene-speaking aristocrats and members of the 'third estate'" (Grđina 2005: 578). Linhart had the same kind of difficulty with *Matiček* as Beaumarchais did with his play in France: although *Matiček* was also issued in book form in Ljubljana in 1790 but it could only be first produced in Slovenia in 1848, owing to the increased censorship in the Habsburg Empire. In these two plays Linhart chose a typically Slovene setting and the plot of the play presents comic events in which simple Slovene villagers outwit the foreign noblemen. Linhart shortened the plot of both plays, he reduced the number of characters and he substituted the world of aristocracy with less noble Slovene background of the Carniola region. Linhart's adaptation of the originals is so thorough that we can definitely regard them as Linhart's own plays. Both comedies still belong to the standard repertoire of Slovene theatres and are regarded as the first two Slovene comedies.

Linhart's birth place, Radovljica, is situated at the bottom of the Julian Alps. This is a mountainous region, full of "rocky landscape" (Linhart uses these terms for the description of the setting in Scotland in *Miss Jenny Love*; 1.1, 133/332). In this small medieval town there are several manor houses and there are also a number of castles in its vicinity (e.g. the Castle Kamen, which is not far away from Radovljica and which was in Linhart's time still used; or, the medieval castle built on a hill by Lake Bled). This landscape most likely gave Linhart an idea what the mountainous Scottish landscape might be like. But in reality the countryside near Edinburgh (where Acts I-IV are set) is not surrounded by such high rocky mountains and the vegetation in the countryside is rather different from the landscape near Radovljica. Therefore it is not easy to accept the opinion of some Slovene critics that "one of the recognizable characteristics of Linhart's tragedy is its setting" (L. Vidmar 2005: 156), although even some earlier Slovene literary historians did not question Linhart's description of the setting in *Miss Jenny Love* and agreed that this "very vivid countryside ... was Scotland" (Pogačnik 33). The Scottish location is mentioned in the play, so that – technically speaking – we can rely only on

Linhart's directions about the specific locality of this play, but in reality, according to Linhart's brief description of the setting the play could also be set in Slovenia or in some other mountainous region in Europe. It is possible that Linhart chose Scotland as the setting of his play *Miss Jenny Love* because James Macpherson published in the 1760s his Ossianic poems, some of which Linhart knew, and as Professor W. H. Fraser says, "if you wanted a romantic tale then Scotland is the place to set it in the 1770s".² On the other hand, the nightmarish atmosphere of some scenes in Linhart's *Miss Jenny Love* does remind us of the setting Shakespeare used in *Macbeth*.

After Linhart had attended the elementary school in his native town, he was sent to the Jesuit College in Ljubljana, where he already distinguished himself with his knowledge of German, Latin and Greek. At the college he also prepared some occasional speeches for various social events, and wrote some poems. In 1776 he entered as a novice in the Cistercian monastery at Stična, a small place south of Ljubljana. He was rather disappointed with the low standard of teaching and bad relations among novices and the prior. His experience at the monastery must have been rather aggravating and it turned Linhart away from the established Church. After having spent two years at Stična Linhart left the monastery. His decision not to be a cleric and his later links with Slovene free masons have been much discussed by Slovene literary historians. However, from Linhart's writings and his correspondence it can be concluded that his religious and philosophical views remained deistic. We can agree with the conclusion made on this topic by Janko Kos (2005: 24-37), who asserts that even though Linhart was a free thinker who had distanced himself "from Christianity, the Bible, the Church and theism" his views were still deistic. Kos argues that there is no evidence of Linhart's adoption of the atheism and materialism of the French Enlightenment" (*ibid.* 37). Such suggestions had namely been made for example by Slovene literary historians Alfonz Gspan, Bratko Kreft and Josip Vidmar, but their view is not really firmly based either on Linhart's life or on his writing (even though Linhart and his literary patron Baron Žiga Zois were free masons). It is possible that for example Bratko Kreft's attempt to link Linhart with atheism and "revolutionary views" was made due to the impact of the historical and political situation in Slovenia after the Second World War.

In 1778 Linhart went to Vienna to study law and administration. We know from his letters written from Vienna that Linhart was particularly interested in theatrical life. He could have access there to plays written by famous European dramatists (e.g. by Shakespeare, Corneille, Voltaire, Calderon, Lessing etc.), although many of these plays were still produced in arbitrary adaptations, which often almost completely ruined the original text.

In the final months of 1779, while still in Vienna, Linhart wrote his first play, *Miss Jenny Love*. He sent it to the publisher in Augsburg, where it was published in spring 1780. One of the standard questions raised by Slovene literary historians is why Linhart wrote the play in German and not in Slovene, although printed books had been published in the Slovene language since 1550. There are several possible answers to this question. First, in his youth Linhart used German as his spoken language, and besides, it was the official language of the Empire. Therefore some critics think that Linhart

² W. H. Fraser, letter to M. J., 1 June 2009.

belonged then to “the German cultural sphere”. For the validity of this argument a line from a poem written by the greatest Slovene poet, France Prešeren (1800-1849), which was chiselled on Linhart’s tomb-stone is often quoted. Prešeren mentions in this epitaph that Linhart had left early “the German Parnassus” and that his comedies and historical works will be praised for ever by Thalia and Clio. A contemporary Slovene playwright and critic, Ivo Svetina (2005:107), has made an ironic observation about Linhart’s supposedly “German period” by asking Slovene critics, if France Prešeren, who also wrote at first some poems in German, was then also “a German poet” (2005: 107). Prešeren is not only considered the greatest Slovene poet but also as one of the main promoters of Slovene art and language; he is an icon admired by the Slovenes. In 1991, when Slovenia became an independent, sovereign republic, a stanza from one of Prešeren’s poems was even chosen as the Slovene national anthem. Therefore a suggestion about Prešeren’s “Germanic phase” is ridiculous. A more acceptable idea about reasons which can explain Linhart’s writing of his first play in German may be that in Linhart’s time plays were still mainly performed in Slovenia by professional travelling theatre companies from Germany (this was true also of other countries belonging to the Hapsburg Empire). Until the 1780s operas which were staged in Ljubljana were mainly sung in Italian. The Italian singers first visited Ljubljana already in 1531. Only in the final decades of the eighteenth century Linhart and his patron, Baron Žiga Zois, began to translate Italian arias into Slovene. Another explanation why Linhart wrote *Miss Jenny Love* in German is also his belief that he would have had a much better chance to see his play performed in “the official language” in other parts of the Empire than if it had been written in Slovene. His decision to have his play published in Germany was also practical, because there the censorship was not as strict as in Vienna. The Emperor Joseph II strongly rejected satirical attacks on the feudal system and on his absolute rule.

Linhart was sponsored in Vienna by some noblemen who had estates in Slovenia. Among them was also Count Johann Nepomuk von Edling (1751-1793), to whom Linhart dedicated the play and who may have suggested to Linhart the publisher from Augsburg. Edling also published a book of poems with the same publisher in the following year (Gspan 1950: 483, 530). Edling was of German background but he knew Slovene and he also encouraged Slovene authors to write text-books (in Slovene) for schools in Slovenia. Edling also helped Linhart to get an administrative job after his return to Ljubljana in August 1780. Another argument, which supports Linhart’s use of German in his later scholarly communication can be explained by the fact that in the eighteenth century the German language was *lingua franca* in Central Europe (as English is today). In 1781 Academia Operosorum (The Society of the Working Men) was reinstated in Ljubljana and both Edling and Linhart were its members (Gspan 1950: 536-8). Its primary aim was to publish works on Slovenia, its history and culture. In a letter written by Linhart on 5 April 1781 to his friend Kuralt, who then lived in Florence, Linhart asks Kuralt to send him some news for the Academia Operosorum and he tells Kuralt that he “ need not limit himself to any subject or any language” (ZD 276/416). Therefore it is most likely that Linhart’s decision to use German in his first play was based on several reasons, which I have mentioned above. Even in the final decade of his life Linhart used German for his scholarly work on the history of the Slavs in southern Austrian lands (*Versuch einer Geschichte von Krain und den übrigen Ländern der südlichen Slaven*

Österreichs, Vol. 1, 1788; Vol. 2., 1791). In Linhart's letter to Karl Gottlob Anton, a scholar from Leipzig, who was also interested in the research of Slavic history and with whom Linhart corresponded, Linhart says that he has "never used the language as the final aim, but only as a means for help" (Gspan 1966; 2 May 1789). In another letter which Linhart wrote to the same scholar (*ibid.* 26 January 1790), Linhart tells Anton that his play *Županova Micka* was successfully performed in Ljubljana: he adds that he was pleased to see that "these Slavs, who have been Germanized for centuries, still feel as Slavs; they still stick to their language, their customs, to their original 'roots' with enthusiasm". On 6 October 1790 Linhart expresses in his letter to K. G. Anton once again his attitude regarding the use of the Slovene language. He informs Anton that he is preparing a Slovene version of *Figaro* (*ibid.* 153). Linhart speaks here with special pride about the melodious qualities of Slovene and its ability to express in it the finest comic features. We may conclude that when the communication of ideas or knowledge was in question Linhart was obviously not a rigid linguistic purist but that he primarily wished to get the message across to other people and that he used the language as a means of communication. However, since 1780 Linhart had been fully aware of the aesthetic and social functions of Slovene and Slovene literature and of their utmost importance as the constituent elements of Slovene nation. Linhart believed that with his works of art he could prove to the world that the Slovene language was no less noble and less rich in expression than other European languages.

Several Slovene literary historians have speculated why so few copies of Linhart's first play, *Miss Jenny Love*, and also of his almanac *Blumen aus Krain* (Cvetje s Kranjskega, Ljubljana, 1781; Flowers from Carniola), which was also printed in German, have been preserved. In Gspan's edition of Linhart's collected works (ZD 494, 496) the editor believes that the assumption made by some literary historians that Linhart himself may have burnt these works, is possible. But he adds that due to the harsh censorship in the Habsburg Empire it is also quite possible that not many copies of *MJL* could be found anyway. Gspan also believes that in the 1780s Linhart raised his aesthetic criteria and that he did not consider that his first two published works had a permanent artistic value. Igor Grdina successfully argues that the almanac "bears witness to his (i.e. Linhart's, M.J.) total renunciation of certain goals which he had set for himself at the beginning of his career (when he wanted to wait for the day when German taste would be "joined" by that of the Italians)", when the Germans would accept the Slovene language as an equal language, as was the case with the Italians (Grdina 2005: 570). Although Linhart's view of the position of Slovene among the Italians was overrated there is no doubt that Linhart wished to see Europe as the place where all languages and cultures would be equally appreciated but it is clear that two hundred years had to pass before such attempts are – to some extent – becoming the reality! The Austrian rule in Slovenia had a typical character of linguistic subordination of the Slovene language. This pressure was different in its intensity in various historical periods and Linhart obviously became fully aware of this situation in the 1780s. However, in spite of these linguistic intricacies Linhart's tragedy *Miss Jenny Love* is nowadays considered by Slovene critics and literary historians as the first secular play written by a Slovene playwright – although it was written in German – and in spite of its dramatic shortcomings (e.g. the development of the plot and characters), which

do not place it in the file of those Slovene plays which are still nowadays easily and successfully produced on the stages of Slovene theatres.

III.

Among possible influences of German dramatists on Linhart's tragedy *Miss Jenny Love* several Slovene literary historians (e.g. Alfonz Gspan, Mirko Zupančič, Filip Kalan, Luka Vidmar etc.) have included dramaturgic similarities and philosophical views as expressed in the works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and his plays *Miss Sara Simpson* (1755), and *Emilia Galotti* (1772). Earlier criticism attached more importance to the influence of *Miss Sara Simpson* on *Miss Jenny Love* whereas Luka Vidmar quite successfully proves that in a number of aspects (e.g. in the outline of the plot, the main female character, the constellation of protagonists and antagonists) Linhart's play is closer to *Emilia Galotti* (Vidmar 2005: 150-67). These German plays were often produced in the Court and National Theatre in Vienna after 1776, where Linhart could see them.

There is another possible source which may have provided theoretical background for Linhart's dramatic concepts and which has often been rather neglected: these are Lessing's articles and essays on drama. It is most unlikely that at the time when Lessing's plays were regularly performed in Vienna and when his views on dramatic art were widely known through his papers published in *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767-69) and *Laokoon* (1766), Linhart would not be familiar at least with some basic principles expressed by Lessing in his writing. In his "papers" Lessing tried to replace the convention of French classical drama by a freer approach, and he particularly stressed the importance of Shakespeare's dramatic practice. It is well-known how highly Lessing appreciated Shakespeare's work and the evaluation which is expressed on Shakespeare in Dryden's essay. Lessing knew Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesie* (1668), which is written in the form of a prose dialogue. He mentions this and other essays written by Dryden in his articles several times and he praises them very highly. Among the four speakers who discuss ancient and modern drama Neander is supposed to interpret Dryden himself, and his view on Shakespeare's greatness is "summarized" in the following passage:

To begin, then, with Shakespeare. He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is

presented to him; no man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit, and did not raise himself as high above the rest of poets.

(Dryden 363-64)

Lessing was not only impressed by Shakespeare's neglect of some traditional rules which had been recommended by Aristotle in his *Poetics* (e.g. of the three unities), but he also advised other playwrights to write plays in such a manner that their characters embody a variety of features and moral norms, and that the spectator feels empathy with the tragic character. In one of Lessing's remarks about the dramatist's lack of observation of the unity of place he says: "So what; and he did not (observe them, M.J.)" (17th paper; 26 June 1767). On another occasion Lessing declares that the smallest presentation of beauty in a play written by Shakespeare bears a unique stamp; and he also demands from German playwrights that Shakespeare's plays should be "studied and not robbed" (73rd paper; 2 January 1768); the point he makes is that Shakespeare's texts should not be simply copied or exploited. Linhart, who knew Lessing's and Shakespeare's work, was undoubtedly influenced by these ideas, and he was inspired also by the progressive, avant-garde Sturm und Drang movement.

IV.

Although Linhart's collection of miscellanea titled *Blumen aus Krain* was published almost a year after the appearance of *Miss Jenny Love*, in 1781, at least some pieces were written before this date so that the collection was ready for printing in autumn 1780 (Gspan 1955: 495). This collection has been analysed by several Slovene critics and I shall only briefly mention those poems which show Linhart's knowledge of English and Scottish literature. Linhart's poem about the tournament between the two knights, Pegam and Lamberg ("Der Tournier zwischen Ritter Lamberg und Pegam", ZD 201-206/377-79) was written in the form of hexameters and it was most probably inspired by the German translation (prepared by Michael Denis) of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760) prepared by James Macpherson. In Linhart's poem knight Lamberg, who resides at the castle Kamen in Carniola (which I have mentioned earlier in connection with Linhart's birth-place Radovljica) is summoned by court to Vienna to fight a duel with a fearful giant Pegam, who tyrannizes the city. The story in Linhart's poem is based on Slovene folk poems about Lamberg (*ibid.* 499-500). As it is common in the tradition of folk heroic poetry, Lamberg wins the duel and he cuts off Pegam's head. The legendary Gaelic warrior Fingal, who was celebrated by "an ancient bard Ossian", is replaced in Linhart's poem by Pegam, who comes from Carniola, from the castle Kamen. Macpherson used Gaelic tradition to promote Scotland, and Linhart used Slovene folklore in order to celebrate our national hero.

A number of poems printed in Linhart's collection clearly reflect motifs and attitudes of the poet, which are typical of English pre-Romantic poetry and which are in my opinion also thematically close to his play *Miss Jenny Love*. In his poem "Als die Glocke Mitternacht Schlug" (Ko je bila ura polnoči, When the Clock Struck Midnight, ZD 206-207/379-380) the speaker is woken up by his vision of venomous snakes which

splash their devilish poison (!) across the earth. Although castles seem to be built of hard diamonds, this cannot stop “the robber”. He cannot be stopped either by locks of conjugal fidelity, and the virginal flower of virtue is thus withering. The poem ends with the speaker’s remark that those who do not see this horror and who are protected by a benevolent angel are blessed. Mirko Zupančič comments on this poem that the speaker’s horror is presented in the poem in “intricate, hardly understandable metaphors” (Zupančič 1972: 75). These metaphors become clearer, if we connect them with the plot of Linhart’s play *Miss Jenny Love*. In this tragedy the heroine, Jenny, is kidnapped by an evil, sensuous villain, Lord Herington, who wishes to get rid of her lover, Eduard Sandwell, and “to possess her”. Herington, who is referred to by several characters in the play as “the devil”, keeps Jenny by force in his domain. Because of her “innocence” (which is reflected also in her emotional and intellectual simplicity), Jenny is referred to by several characters as “an angel”. Linhart probably wrote most of his poems for this collection while he was still in Vienna, at the time when he planned and wrote his tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*. I suggest that he also used themes of this and of some other poems as constituent elements of the story he created in his tragedy and some of which may be based on his personal experiences. The speaker in the poem is afraid that his tongue would betray the “consciousness of this terror” which he experiences in the middle of the night and which is based on sins involving a sexual act, connected with the breach of a marriage vow and with the loss of maid’s virginity. In the Freudian interpretation this dream may denote the speaker’s feeling of guilt, which is the result of his subconscious awareness of guilt and his moral responsibility for the acts committed.

Another poem which Linhart included in this collection is also “Die Reue” (Kesanje, Repentance, *ibid.* 210-211/381). The speaker has a vision of himself as of “a terrible monster”. Thousands of snakes appear, begotten by the speaker’s sin, which was the kiss between brother and sister, and which “shook the world and the firmament”. The speaker obviously has a very negative self-image, which reaches extreme proportions with regard to his supposed “crime”. In Linhart’s poem “Lied” (Pesem; Song, *ibid.* 220-223/386-87) the speaker expresses his sadness because the wind does not carry his sighs, his desires, to his beloved. The sun does not shine on him but her shadow will still “appeal to him” when he is dead, when she might visit his grave accompanied by her husband. The speaker ends his lament with the consolation that even a tear which she might shed for him would bring him back to life. Such exaggerated emotions are also typical of the lover’s feelings in Linhart’s tragedy, but the situation is reverse: Jenny dies and her lover, Eduard Sandwell, remains alive.

The fourth poem, which may be linked with Linhart’s play *MJL* is his “Die schlaflose Nacht” (Prečuta noč, A Sleepless Night, *ibid.* 213-14/383). The central motif in this poem is the speaker’s meditation on damages (on the ruin) he has caused to mankind by his evil deeds, by the pile of dead bodies which prevents him from sleeping. Whereas the first three poems discussed treat the connection between the heroine of the play and her lover, the theme of this poem may be related to the evil antagonist in *Miss Jenny Love*, to Lord Herington, to his murders and other crimes, which he had committed. Although the themes of these poems are dealt with by Linhart in a rather abstract manner, nevertheless the emotional impact of these images is very similar to feelings expressed by some of the characters in *Miss Jenny Love*. Could Linhart’s poems be the

source of his motifs, of the mood and emotions which he further developed in this play? The answer seems to be positive: although Linhart may have been inspired in his use of imagery by the pre-Romantic poetry, motifs which he treats in these poems were not likely used just as a “literary exercise” but they seem to be connected with the speaker’s personal experiences. This hypothesis offers a new possibility for the interpretation of Linhart’s *Miss Jenny Love*. Mirko Zupančič primarily sees Linhart’s choice of themes and imagery of his poems as the expression of the graveyard school of poetry. This is at least partially true but it would be a mistake to rule out the possibility that they are – at least to some extent – the expression of the poet’s own feelings at the time when he was writing his first play in Vienna. If we accept the assumption that the poet’s own feelings are the likely source for his characters and of the emotional background of *Miss Jenny Love*, then one of the riddles referring to the genesis of this play may have been at least partly explained.

In Linhart’s collection *Flowers from Carniola* there are also several poems expressing the speaker’s admiration of the beauty of nature (of the moon, the sun etc.) as well as poems, which Linhart wrote on themes Horace had used in his odes. In Linhart’s poem to the moon (ZD 218-19/385-86) Linhart asks the moon if it does not stop to listen to “sweet songs of Fingal’s son and his heroes”, to “pleasant sadness” of their melody, which would “bring light to souls of Morven warriors”. Gspan writes in his notes that the possible source Linhart used for these poems are the translations of James Macpherson’s *Fingal* by Melchior Cesarotti and Michael Denis (ZD 506). Zupančič mentions in his study: Denis’s thoughts on the importance of folk poetry and he also points out that the Slovene translator of poems from this collection Damascen Dev inserted in his version a call urging the Slovenes to publish collections of Slovene folk poetry (Zupančič 1972: 78, 84-88). Linhart was familiar with English pre-Romantic poetry dealing with the images of nights, castles and graves (e.g. with Edward Young’s poems), but the heroic element of Macpherson’s *Fingal* must have also stirred in him patriotic feelings and an awareness of the importance of the hero’s actions for national consciousness, an aspect which has not received enough attention from Slovene critics. If we take into account the fact that Scotland was a separate kingdom until the legislative union with England in 1707, and that the Slovenes belonged to the Habsburg dynasty in Linhart’s time and even much longer (until the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in 1918) we can notice in Linhart’s enthusiastic attitude to this Scottish hero (regardless of the historical truth) Linhart’s implicit desire for Slovene national independence. His choice of the subject-matter not only shows Linhart’s interest in the heroic past of the Scottish people but it also reflects his hope that both countries would be free, independent (however slight this hope was in Linhart’s time). Zupančič believes that Linhart as a state employee was “in a somewhat paradoxical situation” (102, 103): as a censor of books (and later as school inspector) he had to obey instructions he received from Vienna, and at the same time Linhart wished to stress his view on the historical significance and creativity of Slavic nations. His writings on Slavic history and his optimistic comedies are the best proof of his patriotic feelings.

In his collection *Flowers from Carniola* Linhart also published an interesting essay (written in prose, in German) titled “Über die Nutzbarkeit der natürlichen Philosophie” (Koristnost filozofije o naravi, On the utility of natural philosophy). The essay has a

subtitle, “From English” (ZD 253-59/402-406), and it is mainly based on the first epistle of Pope’s philosophical poem “An Essay on Man” (1733-34). Mirko Zupančič at one point of his study (1972: 17) only surmises that Linhart’s essays is “an adaptation of Pope’s essay”, but in his discussion of Linhart’s philosophy he accepts the validity of this supposition (88-92). Alfonz Gspan believes that Linhart’s article is a revised version of a paper which Linhart wrote while he was attending the sixth grade of the Jesuit college in 1772-73 (Gspan 1950: 516). Stanislav Južnič speculates that Linhart also used for his “translation” of Pope’s essay an early German version of Pope’s text (which was published in 1758) and possibly also a French translation (Južnič 2005: 319). If we compare Linhart’s essay with Pope’s treatise we see that Linhart shortened Pope’s poem, but he may have been familiar with the whole poem, with all four epistles. Views which Linhart expressed in his essay are quite influential for the philosophical and religious background which is presented in Linhart’s play *Miss Jenny Love* and therefore they are worth looking at more closely.

Pope’s expresses in this philosophical poem his aim “to prove the ways of God to man and to define the universe as an entity”. But – Pope states – we cannot see the universe as perfect or complete and because of our limited vision we cannot accept evil as the integral part of man’s life. Linhart points out in his essay that man’s existential duty is “his search for truth, wisdom and knowledge” and that the philosophy about the importance and value of nature can bring us “to heavenly scenes” where “beauty, order and harmony” were born (ZD 259/406). (Linhart’s thoughts thus place him as one of the first Slovene intellectuals who was deeply conscious of the value and the necessity of preserving nature on the global level.) Linhart’s theism is seen in his final demand expressed in this essay in which he states that we should never forget that God is the creator and supreme ruler of the universe who transcends his creation and that he is also the primeval and finite leader of man. Linhart concludes his essay by his plea to God to destroy those who deny God so that when “disappearing” they will say: “*He is.*” (*ibid.*) This axiomatic statement is expressed in a slightly different way in Pope’s last line of his first epistle “One truth is clear, ‘Whatever is, IS RIGHT’” (Pope 1970: 51). Both Pope’s and Linhart’s final statements can be connected with the following quotation from the Bible: “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18.25), implying the meaning that the ways of the Lord are (always) right. Linhart’s final statement also brings to one’s mind God’s saying to Moses (Exod. 3.14): “And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM”, which is usually interpreted as: I am the one whose existence does not have a beginning or an end. This is also the explanation in the latest Slovene edition of the *Bible* – “I am God, who am here for you, to save you” (119). Both interpretations are relevant for a number of statements made about God and man’s fate by Linhart’s characters in *Miss Jenny Love* (e.g. arguments about God expressed by Lord Herington; by Sandwell’s former friend Warford as well as by Jenny’s father, Sir William Love alias Sudderley). On the other hand many ideas which are stressed in Linhart’s essay based on Pope’s poetic treatise, reveal Linhart’s persuasion that man can only reach the truth through his experience and search for knowledge, by his reason. Pope also stresses the role of an individual and his reasoning, as well as man’s necessity to know himself (e.g. in the fourth epistle Pope states: “And all our knowledge, is Ourselves to know”; Pope: line 398). The duality of man’s nature, of good and evil which coexist in man as

well as the division between his ratio and his senses, is also mentioned in Pope's essay, e.g. "Virtuous and vicious ev'ry Man must be" (epistle 2, line 231), or, "What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone" (3, 42). Such views also form the backbone of Linhart's philosophy as expressed by his characters in *Miss Jenny Love*. It is understandable that because Linhart shortened Pope's writing he could not include all themes which are dealt with in the source text and that he had to limit himself to essential "messages" from the first epistle. Besides, Pope's poem abounds in references to the Bible and to English writers (e.g. Shakespeare, Milton, Young, Swift) and also to different philosophers (e.g. Plato, Juvenal, Seneca, Horace, Thomas Aquinas, Montaigne etc.) who are not mentioned in Linhart's essay. The only exception among philosophers is Linhart's reference to Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727), whose discoveries in physics and mathematics Linhart connects with man's knowledge about truth. According to Newton's belief God is present in every particle of Nature and as a transcendental Being he may help us to better understand Nature through Philosophy. Even in his shortened version of Pope's poem Linhart's essay is important regarding the philosophical background of his tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*.

V.

As I have already briefly indicated, Slovene literary historians have attributed an important influence on Linhart's domestic tragedy *Miss Jenny Love* to George Lillo's play *The London Merchant; or, the History of George Barnwell*. George Lillo (1693-1739) is little known today in the history of English literature. He was probably the descendant of Flemish refugees and a jeweller by profession. Lillo wrote six plays among which the most famous is *The London Merchant*. The source for Lillo's play was an old English ballad and the play was first produced at Drury Lane Theatre in London in 1731. By 1740 the play appeared in seven editions and it was also very successfully performed in the eighteenth century on the Continent where it was one of the most popular non-Shakespearean tragedies. This play is often mentioned in connection with the development of German drama, it influenced Lessing's plays and therefore it is understandable that Slovene literary historians started to link Lillo's play with Linhart's tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*. As early as 1920 the Slovene literary historian Ivan Grafenauer expressed his opinion that this play had more influence upon Linhart's play than Shakespeare's tragedies (1920: 111). Gspan, the editor of Linhart's works, thinks that one could find some similarities between the so-called "bourgeois tragedy", which originated in social processes taking place in the eighteenth century, and Linhart's *Miss Jenny Love* (he even mentions in this connection Edward Moore tragedy *The Gamester*, 1753). Among reasons for his statement Gspan mentions the subject-matter of these plays, the playwrights' rejection of Classicistic rules and the substitution of literary dialogue with everyday speech. As the main weakness of this type of drama he points out the exaggerated sentimentalism and bathos typical of Sturm und Drang (1950: 493). This view is mainly shared by another Slovene theatre critic and historian Filip Kalan in his essay and in his book on Anton Tomaž Linhart (1948: 275; 1979: 64, 95). Vladimir Kralj, who was an important Slovene critic and literary theoretician in the period before and immediately

after WWII, attributes Lillo's importance for Linhart to "the dramatist's confrontation of the middle class with the nobility and the feudal system, with which the progressive European bourgeoisie became relevant also in the dramatic art" (1956: 1101). In his monograph on Linhart written by Mirko Zupančič, the Slovene historian of drama and the theatre art, the author agrees with previous critical views on Lillo, and states that Lillo presents "the inner problems of the bourgeois class", which are connected with man's virtue, morality, honesty, "when a virtuous man becomes a victim and at the same time an accomplice in the crimes committed" (1972: 69-70). Janko Kos argues that the German Sturm und Drang movement does not rely so much on the atrocities which are presented in Shakespeare's revenge tragedies, but that their plays rely more on motifs and themes typical of the baroque period, on their sympathy for picturesque portrayal of life and vivid dramatic atmosphere (Kos 2001: 35). To some extent these views may also apply to Linhart's *MJL*, the extreme cruelty typical of the heroes in Shakespeare's great tragedies as well as of the protagonists in revenge tragedies definitely are seen also in Linhart's antagonist, Lord Herington, who could also be a villain in Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* or in *Richard III*.

A number of details connecting Lillo's play *The London Merchant* and Linhart's *Miss Jenny Love* are also presented in Luka Vidmar's essay in which he thematically connects Linhart's *MJL* with Lessing's plays and with Klingler's play (2005: 147-167). Vidmar also compares Lillo's heroine, Millwood, with Linhart's villain Herington and points out the playwright's use of allegorical names for Linhart's characters. Because Lillo's play is nowadays almost forgotten some basic dramatic elements which appear in Lillo's tragedy and which are the same / or different than in Linhart's play should be briefly mentioned.

Lillo's play *The London Merchant* deals with the disastrous consequences of a young apprentice, George Barnwell, who is seduced by the pretty and cunning Sarah Millwood. Although he is essentially a virtuous man, his passion leads him to commit one crime after another even though his conscience pricks him at first. But he cannot resist Sarah's charm and when she entices him into stealing money from one of his uncles, he unintentionally kills him. Barnwell escapes imprisonment by going to sea, but his conscience stings him and he returns to London. Millwood, trying to save her skin, betrays Barnwell to the police, but she is finally also caught and they are both tried and sentenced to death. When they meet at the gallows Barnwell is still obsessed by his passion for Millwood, but he nevertheless hopes that he may be saved, whereas Millwood accepts her death without regretting her immorality or her evil deeds.

The play presents evil as a way of life. In this play evil is embodied in Millwood, who is referred to in the play as "a Devil", a moral trait which links her with Linhart's villain, Lord Herington. Both heroes are completely possessed by their sensuality: they lack basic moral norms, as well as essential Protestant virtues, which are typical of other characters in both plays. Some critics see Lillo's play as a morality debate, which echoes Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. Both dramatists, Lillo and Linhart, do not see any possibility of moral redemption of their "heroes", because their villains do not accept repentance as a possibility for redeeming themselves from vice. Millwood is a more powerful and complex character than Linhart's Lord Herington: she explains her immorality, her insatiable sexual lust and greed for money as a means which enables

herself to avoid being used by men for their satisfaction. But at the end of the tragedy she nevertheless sees herself as wicked (Lillo 160-1). On the other hand, Linhart's Herington does not accept his guilt, he also dies still being prepared to kill, he does not show any repentance for evil he has caused to other people, even to his "beloved" Jenny. In Linhart's tragedy his death follows as a natural consequence of his moral corruption as the natural result of the development of the plot.

Lillo's heroine, Millwood, notices Barnwell's dependence on her, as she says, in the way he gazes at her, "as if Desire increas'd by being fed" (Lillo 173). This image reminds us of Hamlet's description of the false relationship between Gertrude and Hamlet's father: "...she would hang on him / As if increase of appetite had grown / By what it fed on" (*Hamlet* 1.2.143-4). Whereas Barnwell repents his crimes when he is in prison, Millwood admits to her former lover that she had "sinn'd beyond the Reach of Mercy" and that she was "doom'd before the World began to endless Pains", because she had fallen prey to Despair (Lillo 207). Her views on life do not arouse in the reader any sympathetic feelings for the heroine. Lillo's didactic point of the play is rather obvious: those who transgress moral norms will be judged by society. The reader may nevertheless feel some compassion for Barnwell who admitted his crimes and his lust, but who was too weak morally to reject this way of life. The view that society will punish the evil-doer is also noticeable in Linhart's presentation of Lord Herington, who does not stop at performing any kind of crime in order to get his sensual satisfaction. Both characters, Lillo's Millwood and Linhart's Herington, only long for power which would enable them to satisfy their extreme sensuality, and which is, of course, in opposition to Protestant morality founded on reason. Lillo's heroine Millwood reminds us of Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth who also lures her husband into crimes, but who finally loses the clarity of her mind and "betrays" Macbeth by committing suicide, just as Millwood betrays Barnwell and brings him to destruction. Lord Herington in Linhart's play has the same kind of dramatic function as the two main characters in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but he also reminds us of brutal villains of the Elizabethan and the Jacobean tragedy, e.g. of Hieronimo in Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592), of the Cardinal and his brother Ferdinand in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* as well as of De Flores in *The Changeling*, which was written by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley. The last two plays were both first produced in 1623. There is no evidence that Linhart actually knew any of these plays, although *The Spanish Tragedy* was the prototype of the Revenge tragedy which influenced later tragedies of blood. Its influence may have been more indirect through works of minor playwrights like Lillo, even though the powerful impact of Shakespeare's great tragedies was dominant in the eighteenth century too.

Among morally positive characters in Lillo's play Vidmar enumerates some of them who may have served as possible parallels with characters in *Miss Jenny Love*. Such characters are, for example Trueman, who represents friendship in Lillo's play and who resembles Linhart's Heartwich; Maria, who symbolizes love, is like Jenny; Thorowgood, who stands for mercy, is similar to Linhart's Warford. Vidmar also suggests that names of characters in Linhart's play have allegorical features, e.g. Jenny symbolizes her longing for Love; Lord Herington's name shows his domineering personality (German "Herr" means "Sir, master"); Sandwell's and Heartwich's names signify that they are Jenny's "unfated saviours" (Vidmar 2005: 151-2). If we accept this supposition it is

still somewhat surprising that Linhart uses in *MJL* names of characters, which are not even listed in dictionaries of English names,³ and that he does not spell them properly (Herington's English version would be "Harrington", "Eduard" should be "Edward"). Such proper names are e.g. Heartwich, Warford, Sund, Andrews, Thomsen. It is possible that Linhart simply "invented" these names, and tried to link them with the features of their character, but without paying his attention to their possible usage in English language he made their symbolism rather ambiguous.

Among characters whom Luka Vidmar compares with Linhart's characters is also Marwood in Lessing's *Miss Sara Simpson* and Linhart's Lord Herington. But Marwood is not only a character in Lessing's play, she is also a well known character in William Congreve's comedy *The Way of the World; or, 1700*. In this play Marwood is rather ironically presented as an offended and revengeful woman who was rejected by the young lover Mirabell. Lord Herington's role is completely different: he is a real villain, a murderer, whereas Marwood's character is rather pitiful, almost comical. Among minor characters in Congreve's comedy the servant Waitwell also appears in Lessing's play. Such use of originally comic characters in a domestic tragedy not only shows the continuity of English literary tradition, it may also indicate the introduction of new social values and a new interpretation of characters which may be in juxtaposition to the previous period. In this way Lillo's debt to English literature in *The London Merchant* is seen in a continuation of English literary tradition, especially of the Restoration comedy. But Millwood's servants, Lucy and Blunt, are not only witty and humorous, as such minor characters in Restoration plays, but they are also the ones who finally observe the Protestant morality and are important for the development of the plot: they contribute to the tragic reversal in Lillo's play. Even in Shakespeare's great tragedies there are some comic characters, which provide a sharp contrast with the prevailing tragic action and which often create dramatic irony. However, there are no comic characters in Linhart's tragedy and this is one of the important differences between Lillo's and Linhart's play. Lillo established the connection between the English dramatic tradition, whereas Linhart could not do this and therefore the comic elements are missing in his play. In Lillo's *The London Merchant* this literary heritage is evident especially in Acts 1 and 2, when the heroine and her companions still enjoy the benefits of luxurious life provided to them by the easily ensnared victims, like Barnwell. In Lillo's tragedy we also come across a number of allusions made to other English literary works and to the Bible: e.g. Lillo's characters "borrow lines" which are spoken by Lady Wishfort in William Congreve's comedy *The Way of the World* (1.3.2); in Lillo's play there are several references to Shakespeare's play *The Comedy of Errors* (2.11.18), to Milton's *Paradise Lost* (2.1.9-11) and to Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (5.11.25-30), not to mention allusions made to some other minor English playwrights. These allusions and references in Lillo's play also enrich its figurative language. In Linhart's *MJL* a number of thematic and linguistic parallels can be found between this play and plays written by German playwrights of the Sturm und Drang movement, and between Shakespeare's plays. The above examples show that similarities in the subject-matter

³ See: E. G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (Oxford: OUP, 1950); John Ballard, ed. *Pronouncing Dictionary of Proper Names* (Detroit, Mich.: Omnigraphics Inc., 1993); *Chambers Encyclopedic English Dictionary*, ed. Robert Allen (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1994).

and portrayal of characters may to some extent show Lillo's influence on Linhart's *MJL*, but the supposition made by some Slovene critics and literary historians that Lillo's *The London Merchant* represents "the major source" for Linhart's play cannot be accepted. It is true that both in Lillo's play as well as Linhart's *MJL* the same spirit of the age is expressed, social values in both plays are very much alike, both plays are domestic tragedies marred by excessive sentimentality. But the plot of Lillo's play is much simpler than Linhart's complicated structure of events in *MJL* (which reminds us much more of Shakespeare's plays, especially of *King Lear* than of Lillo's play), each of the characters in Lillo's play has a very pointed and explicit moral purpose and is more persuasive as a human being than characters in Linhart's play who do not provide verisimilitude, the image of reality; they are too pathetic and too bombastic to be close to reality. Although there are a number of similarities between Lillo's and Linhart's play Linhart was nevertheless under much stronger influence of Shakespeare than of Lillo's *The London Merchant*.

VI.

Among Linhart's literary plans there was another possible tragedy which is mentioned by Linhart in his letter (written on 5 April 1781) to his friend Martin Kuralt. Linhart writes that "approximately four months ago the newspapers reported about the death of a famous Major André" (ZD 276/417). Linhart adds that André was aide-de-camp of British general Henry Clinton who served on the English side, and fought against the Americans. André was caught by the American forces and hanged by the order of George Washington. Historical details about Major André's life and his brave military performance are described by Alfonz Gspan in his notes to Linhart's letter (Gspan ZD: 534-36). What is relevant for our discussion is the fact that Linhart admired the behaviour of this officer, the courage he showed before the military court, so that he was intrigued enough to write a historical play about this soldier. Linhart's sympathy was probably on the side of his hero, because he was informed about the American war for independence by reports published in newspapers issued in the Habsburg Empire. The play should have been printed with the financial help of his patron and his friend, Baron Žiga Zois, but this never happened and even the manuscript of this play does not seem to exist any more. However, as we can gather from Linhart's correspondence with Kuralt, Linhart relied for the plot of his play on newspaper reports and he did not "invent" it. If we take into consideration this fact, and also the genesis of Linhart's poetry and of his two comedies – which he wrote later – we may surmise that Linhart may have had some source which also inspired him to write his tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*. But if we accept the hypothesis that Linhart (at least partly) based the plot of this play on his personal experience, what I have suggested above, such an explanation would support the opinion expressed by Janko Kos in his historical survey of Slovene literature, namely that *Miss Jenny Love* is "Linhart's most original play" (Kos 1982: 202). Particularly so, because we do not have any available evidence to prove that Linhart wrote his play by using some source which is not known. Linhart's dramatic skill is definitely shown in his comedies, whereas *MJL* was, in my opinion, his "dramatic battlefield" which

reflected his interest in the theatre and also enabled him to express his political, moral and social ideas.

VII.

Anton Tomaž Linhart wrote his first play *Miss Jenny Love* in Vienna towards the end of 1779 and it was printed in Augsburg in spring 1780. Various possible reasons for Linhart's decision to have the play printed in Germany have been mentioned before. In 1805 Linhart's book was mentioned by Marko Pohlin, a member of the Augustinian monastic order, who was himself the author of various literary and religious books. In 1918 Linhart's play was "rediscovered" in the National library in Vienna by Slovene literary historian France Kidrič (Kidrič 1918: 213-14). He saw in Linhart's *MJL* an important influence of Shakespeare's tragedies. Two years later Ivan Grafenauer expressed his view that although Linhart wished to write this play in Shakespeare's style, the play shows the influence of English bourgeois tragedy, which the young playwright could see in Lessing's *Miss Sara Simpson* and in Sonnenfels's writings (Grafenauer 1920: 111). In the 1930s France Koblar wrote in his article on Linhart that the subject-matter of Linhart's play reminded him of Shakespeare but in other aspects the dramatist showed his "Baroque taste" (Koblar 1932: 667). Another "spirit" of this tragedy was noticed by Bratko Kreft, who says in his article, which was published in 1946 in a daily newspaper in Ljubljana, that *MJL* was not only "the tragedy full of bloody actions", but that "it was also the manifest of youthful revolutionary spirit expressed by the Jacobean citizens and their hatred of the tyranny of rulers" in which Shakespeare's influence as well as Sturm und Drang movement are also present (Kreft 1946: 5).

A more "moderate" opinion about Linhart's tragedy was expressed by Dušan Moravec in his studies on Shakespeare in Slovenia. He did not find "important similarities" between Shakespeare's tragedies and Linhart's play, and he saw Shakespeare's prevailing influence simply in Linhart's decision to write this play, and much less in its plot, form and style (Moravec 1949: 51-74, 250-291). Moravec stuck to his observation also in later versions of his study. He also pointed out that Linhart appreciated Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *King Lear* more than his *Hamlet* and he explained this fact with Linhart's concept of the tragic mood, which was closer to him in the first two plays than to *Hamlet*. Moravec also indirectly refers to Lessing's theoretical views on drama, as expressed in Lessing's work *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, but he does not go into details.

In the following year, in 1950, Alfonz Gspan edited Linhart's Collected works and he mainly repeated views expressed by Dušan Moravec as regards Shakespeare's influence on *MJL*. He also mentioned Linhart's rejection of pseudo-classicism. Gspan based Linhart's adoration of Shakespeare's genius in the Bard's psychological delineation of man's nature and on his gigantic personages who are full of extreme passion. Gspan also directs the reader's attention to plays written by Lillo, Moore, and Lessing. The opinion of literary historians like Filip Kalan, Vladimir Kralj, Mirko Zupančič, Jože Pogačnik, Luka Vidmar and views of some others critics about this topic are not essentially different from the above mentioned opinion expressed by Moravec. Some literary

historians, like Mirko Zupančič and Luka Vidmar, have more closely investigated the possible influence of Lessing and Sturm und Drang movement on *Miss Jenny Love*.

Linhart's subtitle to *MJL* is "Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen" (Tragedija v petih dejanjih, A tragic play in five acts) and it indicates that the play is not written in the Aristotelian tradition of tragedy representing historical or mythological figures and (semi) gods, but that the author tried to apply the tragic form to the subject-matter dealing with the middle class citizens and their tyrannical feudal lords. Such plays are full of highly coloured (sentimental) melodramatic feelings, and they often present middle-class (bourgeois) citizens and their tyrannical feudal lords. Typical examples of this kind of tragedy are Lillo's play as well as Lessing's tragedies, which have been mentioned before. W. H. Fraser (2009) has suggested to me that another possible source which Linhart may have known is Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni work *The Story of Miss Jenny* (publ. in 1764). Riccoboni was influenced by the Scottish writer Henry Mackenzie, who was the author of *The Man of Feeling* (published anon. in 1771). The hero of this novel is a weak creature, dominated by a futile benevolence, who goes up to London and falls into the hands of people who exploit his innocence. Riccoboni's writing can be compared to Mackenzie's and her story was translated into Italian by Goldoni and it was presumably quite well known.

Linhart tried to follow in his tragedy *Miss Jenny Love* the type of complex dramatic structure by using the synthetic technique, which was also used by Shakespeare in his great tragedies, in which the dramatist presents on the stage only those parts of the story which are directly followed by conflicts and catastrophe. The main trap for the dramatist if he uses this kind of structure lies in the necessity that the dramatist should also include in the present action some basic explanation of events which had taken place before the beginning of the play. Shakespeare masterfully avoided this trap by providing reliable, persuasive motives for actions performed in his plays by various (even minor) characters. Otherwise, if the characters do not have sufficiently developed individual traits, they are likely to become types rather than individuals. In Shakespeare's plays such explanations of previous acts of his characters are intricately interwoven in the texture of his plays and in this way the playwright creates a group of persuasive human beings representing their individual aims, and the effect of the play is the result of well explained causes. This is undoubtedly one of the main difficulties with which a dramatist using this kind of technique is faced. It seems most likely that Linhart was not fully aware of this problem or that he simply did not know how to solve it. The reader does not get enough information about the causes of previous actions of his characters, their actions and their relations, and thus all major characters in *MJL* are insufficiently portrayed to be real human beings. If such "an explanation" which should be provided by the author is missing in minor characters (e.g. in Lord Herington's servants) the problem is less noticeable, because such characters are often interpreted according to the function they perform in the development of the story rather than independent, integral personages. If major characters are one-sided then their speech often remains in the form of a cliché, or as a philosophical, moral or religious monologue, showing maybe even the character's inner struggle, but without a closer link with the development of the story. This is the main cause of insufficient link between the episodes in Linhart play, and this is why Zupančič complained that "it is more difficult to summarize the story of Linhart's

tragedy *Miss Jenny Love* than it appears at the first glance”, because “a survey of the external presentation of events cannot sufficiently demonstrate the real contents and problems of Linhart’s play” (Zupančič 1972: 32, 35). Zupančič summarizes one scene after another of Linhart’s *MJL*, whereas Filip Kalan avoided this difficulty by dividing the characters into two groups, depending on their attitude to Jenny, the heroine, or to her opponent, Lord Herington (Kalan 1979: 68). Both critics thus prove that Linhart’s combination of episodes in *MJL* is rather complicated and that it does not contribute to the unity of the play, to the concentration of events in the development of the plot and, consequently, to the staging of *Miss Jenny Love*.

The plot of *MJL* develops around the attempts of Lord Herington, who has kidnapped Jenny Love, to force her to be his beloved and to do away with his opponents. Herington keeps her hidden at the manor house of Sir William Love, alias Sudderley, who is her father. Her lover Sandwell and his friend Heartwich try to rescue Jenny, although Herington’s men, including Sandwell’s former friend Warford, had already tried to murder Sandwell. Jenny’s mother, Lady Sara, has also come to Sudderley’s house hoping to help her daughter. In the meantime, Herington’s loyal servant Sund returns from his mission and tells Herington that the plot did not succeed and that Sandwell is still alive. They decide to use Warford again as a murderer, although now he regrets his betrayal of Sandwell but is at the same time too afraid of Herington to oppose him. Sudderley is in a similar situation as Warford is: he would like to help his daughter, but he is also scared of Herington, because Herington knows that Sudderley killed his wife’s brother and therefore Herington can victimize him. Sudderley had left his wife Sara and his daughter Jenny sixteen years ago, but now he would like to help them. As the story develops Lady Sara discovers Sudderley’s identity, but she hopes for the best. Warford was sent by Herington to murder Sandwell, but when Warford and Sandwell meet Sandwell forgives Warford. Warford informs Sandwell that Herington has already taken Jenny to his home in Edinburgh. In the mountains a fight between Herington’s men and Warford takes place and at first Sandwell becomes a suspected murderer, but the situation is later cleared up. Sund reports to his master that both Warford and Sandwell were killed, but when the police arrive Herington delivers Sund to the police. He intends to kill his “enemies”, and to sacrifice Jenny who would not accept his proposal to become his “property”. However, Sudderley gathers enough courage to prevent Herington’s murders and he stabs Herington. Jenny unintentionally reveals the identity of her father to the police officer. In spite of all the hardship she and her mother had to go through because of him she still loves her father and tries to protect him before the hands of justice. At this crucial moment several characters appear in Herington’s house with the intention to save Jenny (they are like characters from *deus ex machina* coming just at the right time in the manner of Fortinbras appearing at Elsinore). These are: Jenny’s lover Sandwell, his friend Heartwich and Jenny’s mother, Lady Sara. Jenny is overwhelmed by her happiness and she dies at the moment of her reunion with Sandwell. Before Sudderley is taken to prison he asks for his wife’s forgiveness, and she answers him that “God may forgive you and my prayers”. When Sandwell seizes his sword to kill Sudderley Sandwell’s friend Heartwich stops him by saying that he should pull himself together, for “There are enough people already dead!” (ZD 5.10; 182/365) The dramatic role of Heartwich in *MJL* is like Horatio’s function in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*:

he is Sandwell's trustworthy friend and at the same time the only rational voice who opposes the extreme emotions of people around him. Heartwisch blames Sandwell for his lack of use of reason and he is ready to sacrifice himself for Sandwell, although the very fact that they have to defend their innocence makes him appeal to Heaven for help but he questions God's mercy (4.7; 177/357). The situation when an innocent person is accused of sin and tries to bring Heaven as a "witness of truth" reminds us of two scenes when Desdemona tries to persuade Othello that she speaks the truth (4.2; 5.2). But Desdemona pays for Iago's wrong judgement about her with her life, whereas Sandwell and Heartwisch remain alive.

In Linhart's tragedy there are a number of examples which prove a strong link between Shakespeare and Linhart, which is mainly provided by the metaphorical language used in Shakespeare's great tragedies and by the figures of speech used by Linhart's characters in *Miss Jenny Love*. What is even more relevant is the fact that Linhart uses the figurative speech in dramatic situations which are very similar (or almost the same) to the ones in Shakespeare's tragedies. These situations happen most frequently in such moments, when the dramatic tension is brought to a climax of a particular scene. In several cases Linhart's image is a direct translation of an image which was used by Shakespeare in one of his tragedies, in some cases it is a paraphrase of Shakespeare's imagery.

The evil Lord Herington, who remains until the end of the play a one-dimensional character, is a real protagonist of the play, but he is without any important opposition regarding his immoral behaviour. Neither his nor Jenny's character develops, and none of them is/ or becomes a human being who would try to see his/her actions from a distance so that they could see the real nature of their mental and physical state. This is also valid for other characters in the play. Whereas the reader notices how "Things fall apart" and how "The best lack all conviction, while the worst / Are full of passionate intensity" (W. B. Yeats in his poem "The Second Coming"), Linhart's characters do not.

Jenny Love is presented in Linhart's play as a naive girl, who is platonically in love with Eduard Sandwell. She passively waits what is going to happen to her after she had been kidnapped. Jenny hates Herington and she is in many ways as helpless as Ophelia is in *Hamlet*. Her mother calls her "an angel" (2.2.; 142/338), an image which was also often used in Shakespeare's plays and in his poetry (e.g. Romeo addresses Juliet "bright angel", 2.1.26 etc.). Although Jenny does not fit Hamlet's description of a perfect human being ("how like an angel in apprehension", *Hamlet* 2.2.309-310), she nevertheless satisfies the basic ethical quality of this simile: she is a kind, lovely, innocent person. Her mother, Lady Sara, feels guilty, because in crucial moments when Jenny is terrorized by Lord Herington, Sara thinks that she has not cared enough for Jenny after her husband had left them. Sara is shocked to see that Jenny would gladly die, if death was her only chance not to become Herington's "property". Sara accuses Sudderley that he delivered Jenny into the hands of the Devil (3.4; 156/348). When Sara brings Jenny the bad news that Lord Herington will take Jenny to his house in Edinburgh, where Jenny would be completely dependent on his mercy, and when Jenny states that this will be her death, Lady Sara appropriately uses for herself a contrasting image to the one she had used for Jenny, she calls herself "an angel of death" (2.2.; 143/339). Before her death Jenny's mind is disturbed, she is like Ophelia before drowning and

in her phantasmagorical dream she hopes that Eduard can provide wings to carry her over “the rocks” to freedom. This image is linked with the precipice above the sea, and her mother reminds Jenny that then she may “possibly have to look the Scottish bear in the mouth” (3.4; 156/348). Shakespeare uses this metaphor in *King Lear* in the scene when the hero is caught in the storm in the open countryside. Kent and the Fool, who accompany Lear, try to persuade him to use the shelter in order and protect himself from rain. But Lear, who had been badly treated by his daughters, Goneril and Regan, and is hurt by their filial ingratitude, answers Kent with the following words:

... where the greater malady is fixed,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou’dst shun a bear;
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
Thou’dst meet the bear i’th’mouth. When the mind’s free,
The body’s delicate ... *King Lear* 3.4.8-12

Like *King Lear*, Jenny places her mental state above everything else: if she must fight for her life she would rather look “the Scottish bear in the mouth” than become Herington’s “property”; she is rather prepared to face death than to be “owned” by Herington. The image of “the rugged Russian bear” is used by Macbeth when he sees (Banquo’s) Ghost at the banquet (3.4), but the former image from *King Lear* is closer to the meaning of the scene in *Miss Jenny Love* than the one from *Macbeth*.

Linhart also uses here a metaphor when Jenny expresses her hope that her beloved Sandwell might provide wings for her so that she could be taken like in a storm over all the rocks (ZD 3.4; 156/347). Both images are also connected with Jenny’s imagined jump into the abyss, though still bring her freedom. The second image used by Linhart is also similar to the image used by the Earl of Gloucester who wishes to end his life by a jump from the cliffs at Dover. But Gloucester’s son Edgar makes his blinded father “jump” in such a way that Gloucester falls on the even ground and is thus saved (4. 6). However; both Gloucester and Jenny are saved only temporarily, and their tragic fate seems to be more predictable than the fate of those who caused their tragedies, although the evil-doers are also punished in both plays.

In the final scenes of Linhart’s play Jenny can be compared to Shakespeare’s Ophelia. Both heroines unsuccessfully search for love, for happiness. Ophelia is rejected by Hamlet and used by her father, Polonius, for his own political purposes. She goes insane and she drowns. Jenny is at first maltreated by Herington (5.6) and later, when she loses consciousness, she is not always aware of people who encircle her (5.7 – 5.10). Being only half conscious, Jenny hopes, like Ophelia, that “all will be well” (*Ham.* 4.5.67), that Eduard’s presence will set her free from the “devil” and that she will be reunited with Sandwell. Linhart even includes a grotesque situation which is very close to black comedy: Jenny holds Herington’s hands and speaks to him as if he were Sandwell (ZD 5.6; 176/361). Ophelia does not die on the stage and her death is only reported by the Queen (4.7). Linhart uses the final meeting between Jenny and Herington to make him decide that she is going to die because “he had loved her so much” (*ibid.*) But the playwright does not allow Herington to perform this murder, and Herington is stabbed by Jenny’s father. Jenny “embraces with her final look her father, her mother and her lover” (5.10; 181/364), and she dies overwhelmed by her feelings. Similarly, *King Lear*

wishes to protect Cordelia after she has died and he brings her to the camp in his own hands (5.3), and Jenny's father tries to protect her from Herington. A few moments later Jenny tries to protect her father from the law, she would not allow the officer to take her father to prison and it is he who – in spite of all his sins – gives her the last kiss (5. 8; 5.10; 179, 182/363, 365). If we compare Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Jenny in Linhart's tragedy we can see many similarities between their characters: for example, they both lack self-awareness and their personal integrity; emotionally, they completely depend on their lovers even though they also show their filial obedience. These heroines are not mentally sane before their deaths whereas Desdemona's reactions are completely rational before she is smothered by Othello (5.2). Iago's wife Emilia describes the couple with a simile, which fits the moral values of Jenny's and Herington's character: "O, the more angel she, / And you the blacker devil" (*Othello* 5.2.130-31). Just as Othello was suspected to have used "mighty magic" to win Desdemona (1.3), Herington cannot explain his obsession with Jenny as a kind of normal female – male attraction, but he assigns Jenny unnatural qualities: "Oh, you, Magician! Goddess! Fury! Let me use the odour for you! I wish to make sacrifice to you!" (2.4; 144/340). Of course, the reality is just the opposite, it is both lovers and not their "beloved" who have lost the sanity of their judgment.

Linhart's portrayal of Jenny is in complete contrast with Herington's character. Jenny's love for Sandwell is depicted as platonic, although Linhart never discovers the depth of their relationship. When Jenny compares her feelings towards her father with those towards Sandwell, who had often "left her alone in the dizziness of her absorbed delight" (3.5; 158/348), Lady Sara does not encourage Jenny's love for Sudderley, she is rational rather than emotional.

Lady Sara's character is somewhat illusive: although she worries about Jenny's fate she is also quite a practical person who thinks about her future when Jenny is still entrapped by Herington. All of them, Lady Sara, Jenny and Sudderley dream about leaving Scotland (3.4; 157/348), but whereas Sudderley fosters an illusion that the whole family will begin a new life in America, Lady Sara mentions to Jenny that the King has set a price on Sudderley's head and that trying to leave Scotland together would mean his death. In a selfish way she does not even envisage the flight to America together with Jenny: she tells her that she wishes to go to America "to be safe from all the news" (3.5; 158/349). It seems that the image of America as "a promised land" represents for Jenny's mother her "complete independence", her "freedom", even from Jenny and Sudderley. It is interesting that immediately after Linhart's return from Vienna, when he did not have yet a suitable job, Linhart also thought about going to America to find there "freedom" and to earn there his bread rather than starve at home, as he reports in his letter to Kuralt in February 1781 (*ZD* 275/416). In spite of Lady Sara's frequent repetitions how much she loves Jenny, her love is not "pure", but it is somewhat selfish and incomplete. Actually all three characters (Jenny, her mother Sara and her father Sudderley) lack proper feelings of love and therefore Linhart's choice of their surname, Love, is rather ironic.⁴ Although "love" can be considered as the main theme of Linhart's play, it is basically

⁴ Professor Fraser suggests that "this surname (Love) is not a particularly Scottish name". However, certain Mr and Mrs Love, British actors, were active in the London Theatre in these years (in the 1770s, M.J.) at Drury Lane and at the Haymarket" (Fraser 2009).

lack of love which is the cause of this domestic tragedy. Jenny's love is shown mainly as platonic, Sudderly did not love his wife and his daughter enough, he killed Sara's brother and he abandoned the family. Even though the plot in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* cannot be taken as a straightforward parallel between King Claudius in *Hamlet* and Sudderley in *MJL*, they are both criminals, who killed a close relative of those who they proclaim that they love. On the other hand Herington's "love" for Jenny is sick, it is an abnormal obsession and therefore his actions are vile and extreme. Herington is even prepared to kill Jenny in order "to prove his love", just as Othello tries to explain his murder of Desdemona by saying "and I will kill thee, / And love thee after." (5.2.18-9). Although Desdemona asks Othello not to kill her and she says: "That death's unnatural that kills for loving" (5.2.43), Othello does not listen to her and smothers her. Herington plans to act in the same way, but he is stopped by Jenny's father, who tries to save Jenny and he thus commits his second murder.

Although Lady Sara brings to Jenny the message that Herington intends to take her to his house in Edinburgh, the real "angel of death" is Lord Herington, whose life was spent in his abnormal love for Jenny and in killing people who opposed him.⁵ In *Macbeth*, before the hero is slain by Macduff, he is told that he should be prepared to meet "the angel whom thou still has served" (5.8.14-16), i.e. the angel of death. Because of Lord Herington's murders several persons rightly call him "the devil" (e.g. Sandwell, 1.1; 133/332; Lady Sara, 3.4; 154/346; 3.6; 159/349). Herington even dares other people to make him the Devil (1.6; 38/355), and he compares his eloquence to that of Satan (1.6; 140/336). If he were "a man", if he listened to Jenny's pleas for freedom then he would lose Jenny and therefore he rather remains to be "Devil" (3.1.; 151/344). He asks Hell to give him the utmost power so that "his soul will fall into this precipice and enjoy the surplus of delight which it had prepared" (5.3; 173/359). When Herington sees that his end is near he complains to Hell about the loss of power and asks Hell to rage in him – as in any kind of a wild beast – to "crown" his wild deeds (3.7; 177/362). But just as Macbeth cannot accept the news that Fleance had escaped the murderers (3.4), so is Herington unhappy until Sund tells him the lie that Sandwell was murdered (5.2; 172/359).

Among the characters who oppose Herington we notice that he has an uneasy relationship with Lady Sara. He complains about her arrival at Sudderley's estate where she has followed Jenny and he tells Sudderley that he does not wish to see Sara in Edinburgh. He tells Sudderley that if Sara comes to Edinburgh "she will lose her sight because I (Herington, M.J.) will throw at her a handful of Herington's glitter" (*MJL* 1.4;

⁵ A. T. Linhart intended to write a play on major John André who was a historical character (see above) and therefore I was intrigued by the possibility that Linhart's portrayal of Lord Herington might be based on a real person too. "There was a Lord Harrington, the second earl of Harrington, who had been a soldier and a diplomat. He died in April 1779 (*sic!* M.J.) and it is possible that his death was reported in Austria. He had fought in the War of the Austrian Succession in the 1740s, so it is possible that Linhart, looking for an English name hit on this one." (Fraser 2009.) Although the year of Lord Harrington's death coincides with Linhart's stay in Vienna, when Linhart was writing *Miss Jenny Love*, there is not enough evidence that Lord Harrington was a model for Linhart's Lord Herington, because as much as we know Lord Harrington had an unblemished character and therefore it is possible that Linhart's choice of this name was incidental. As regards the spelling of this name my explanation has been given above. Some kind of Linhart's personal involvement in an emotionally difficult situation as I have tried to indicate in my explanation of some of his poems may still be a possible reason for the genesis of this play.

137/334). Herington obviously thinks that he can buy everybody. He tells Jenny's father that he will make Jenny live like a princess (3.2; 153/345), although Jenny is afraid of Herington, she even hates him. Sudderley answers Herington that this will not make Herington "an honest man", and that he would rather see Jenny happy than be married to a man whom she does not love, and who is evil. The announced blinding of Lady Sara if she comes to Edinburgh to save Jenny brings to the reader's mind the blinding of the Earl of Gloucester. Herington is just as evil as Gloucester's daughter Regan and her husband, Duke of Cornwall (*King Lear* 3.6-7), are. However, it seems that in the above mentioned scene such a gruesome act is not (yet) in Herington's mind.

Lord Herington has to persuade himself before he decides to kill his opponents that he is a man whom nobody can contradict and that he is cruel enough to do anything to achieve his goal. However, he does occasionally hesitate, for example, when he forces Sandwell's former friend Warford to kill Sandwell, because he has noticed that Warford does not wish to be loyal to him any more (1.6; 140/336). His sadism creates in his mind such a morbid, gruesome image as that of "his nuptial bed, which will be made of bones of people he had killed" (2.4; 144/339). But when he sees that he has failed in his attempt to win Jenny Herington decides that "the marriage torch should be blown out" and that Jenny should die so that she could not enjoy Sandwell's love. This scene between Jenny and Herington can be compared with the scene when Othello is determined that Desdemona should die, because Iago has persuaded him that she loves Cassio. Othello says that he will "Put out the light, and then put out the light" (5.2.5). A similar image is used by Macbeth after Seton has informed him about the death of Lady Macbeth: "Out, out brief candle!" (3.5.23). Just as the marriage knot between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is sealed with Duncan's blood and deaths of other people likewise Herington plans that his bond with Jenny will be "coloured with blood" (2.4; 144/339). Iago never regrets his evil plotting and the deaths he has caused and although Othello wounds Iago "that demi-devil" (5.2.300), Othello's message to Iago is: "I'd have thee live-/For, in my sense, 'tis happiness to die" (5.2; 288/89). Such a threat is also expressed by Herington who despises Sudderley's "feminine blood" and has decided that he will not kill Sudderley: Lord Herington tells Sudderley that he wishes him to see the suffering of his daughter and therefore his revenge will be more cruel, he will let Sudderley live and thus "pierce his father's heart" (3.2; 153/345). In both cases, in *Othello* as well as in *Miss Jenny Love*, the avengers find death a lesser evil than living.

A number of parallels between the English tragedy of blood and Linhart's play *Miss Jenny Love* can also be made as regards the villain and his servants – that is, his "tools", his "instruments". Lord Herington knows that it was his "own and the devil's eloquence" which made Warford the instrument of his desire to kill Sandwell (3.1; 151/336), but he nevertheless wants to use Warford for his evil purpose. Although Herington's servant Sund is a real diabolical character, very much like Bosola in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Sund primarily reminds us of Iago and his plotting in *Othello*. The final dramatic situation in *Miss Jenny Love* and in *Othello* is practically the same: Iago is taken prisoner and Othello dies, and in *MJL* Sund is taken away by the guard, and Lord Herington dies. Sund is a character very much like the villains in Jacobean drama; he is a less complex character than Shakespeare's Iago in *Othello* or Edmund in *King Lear*, but these villains are nevertheless appropriate prototypes of people whose

malice has no limit. Linhart's villains are very similar to Shakespeare's evil characters in these plays.

Among characters in this play the most ambiguous and morally instable and weak are Sandwell's former friend Warford, and Jenny's father, Sir William Love, alias Sudderley. Both of them have betrayed people who have trusted them: Warford had betrayed his friend Sandwell and Sudderley his wife Sara and his daughter Jenny. They are both weaklings who only oppose their master when they find themselves in a very crucial situation. Warford has bought Herington's friendship by allowing Herington to use him as Sandwell's murderer but at the moment of his own crisis Warford is so much filled with despair that he is willing to commit suicide rather than continue living his shameful life or standing up to Herington. When Lady Sara sees this she is rather touched by Warford's emotions and her friendliness to him cannot easily be explained (2.5-8). Warford believes that he is a killer (although his attempt to kill Sandwell had failed), and wishes to find out the truth about himself and the world. He is a split personality, and he may be linked with several characters in Shakespeare's tragedies. Warford asks himself a typical Cartesian question: "Where am I? Where have I been?" (2.9; 149/343), which are exactly the same words as the ones spoken by King Lear when he wakes up in the French camp after he had been brought there by Cordelia (4.7.52). Like King Lear Warford is not certain whether the situation in which he finds himself is real or is it just a dream, an illusion. Further on, Warford is not certain if his willingness to murder already makes him a murderer. This is also the question which bothers Macbeth before killing King Duncan. Lady Macbeth answers him: "th'attempt and not the deed / Confounds us" (Mac. 2.1.10-11). Warford's own reply to this question is practically the same: "The willingness is already the guilt! If the act fails, the guilt remains! Only the aim has not been achieved!" (2.9; 149/343). Warford's long monologue before his meeting with Sandwell and Heartwich is a kind of pastiche of the monologue spoken by King Claudius in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* when the King admits his "foul murder" (3.3.52). Both, Claudius and Warford, realize that before God "the action lies / In his true nature" (3.3.61/62). Although Warford's meditation takes place at midnight in a wild, rocky landscape (4.1; 161/351) the land is peaceful and he "wanders around sightless, discovering everywhere the abyss, a deep, immense abyss"; this is a scene which could take place in *Macbeth*. It is not only the imagery which is in Linhart's play similar to Shakespeare's imagery in his great tragedies but also Warford's feelings of hopelessness and despair, which are felt by the Earl of Gloucester and King Lear before their deaths too.

VIII.

Anton Tomaž Linhart wrote his first play *Miss Jenny Love* when he was only twenty-three years old. Although the play was published already in 1780, it was almost completely forgotten and neglected until 1918, when the text was found in the National Library in Vienna. Because the text was written in German it was not whole-heartedly accepted by Slovene literary historians until after the end of World War II, in 1950, when *Miss Jenny Love* was translated into Slovene by Bratko Kreft and published (together with the German original) in Linhart's *Zbrano delo* (Collected Works). Most Slovene

critics have pointed out that *Miss Jenny Love* is artistically a much weaker play than Linhart's comedies and therefore it has been much less discussed than *Županova Micka* (Molly, the Mayor's Daughter) and *Ta veseli dan, ali Matiček se ženi* (This Happy Day, or Matiček Gets Married). The critics' preference for Linhart's comedies is quite natural, because both of them – although they are also adaptations of foreign plays – were so masterfully transformed into Slovene social and cultural environment that in comparison with *Miss Jenny Love*, which takes place in Scotland, they are much closer in spirit to Slovene audiences, and what is even more relevant, they are also dramaturgically much more successfully written.

Miss Jenny Love was performed at the one-hundredth anniversary of the Slovene Dramatic Society on 20 October 1967 at the Slovene National Theatre Drama in Ljubljana, and the performance was dedicated to the memory of Anton Tomaž Linhart. The original translation by Bratko Kreft was slightly revised for the performance and the play was the result of a joint production of professional Drama actors and students of the theatre Academy in Ljubljana. On 28 May 1979 the play was produced at the theatre in Nova Gorica where it was directed by Branko Kraljevič. The two-hundredth anniversary of Linhart's publication of *Miss Jenny Love* was celebrated by a double-bill including *MJL* and *Županova Micka*. This production was prepared by Andrej Inkret under the title *Play Linhart 1780–1789* (SLG Celje, the premiere was on 16 Nov. 1979), and directed by Franci Križaj. All productions were reviewed by well-known Slovene theatre critics, among them by Josip Vidmar, Vasja Predan, Lojze Smasek, Jože Snoj, France Vurnik, Slavko Pezdir and some others. There are two common features which appear in their reviews, namely that Linhart as the beginner of Slovene drama should be produced more often, but that due to the dramaturgical weaknesses of *Miss Jenny Love* the theatres should stick to the production of Linhart's comedies.

In spite of the advantages which place Linhart's comedies on a higher level, a number of Slovene critics and literary historians have analysed the text of Linhart's tragedy *Miss Jenny Love* particularly from the perspective of its "debt" to German philosophical, literary and political movements in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Although there are some minor differences among Slovene critics regarding their views, they have firmly based Linhart's *Miss Jenny Love* in the framework of the then predominant literary achievements, especially the Sturm und Drang movement. Janko Kos persuasively proves that Linhart's tragedy definitely belongs to the European thought of the eighteenth century expressing the playwright's views of the world and that Linhart can definitely be placed among the European thinkers of the Enlightenment period. Ivo Svetina accepts Taras Kermauner's statement that this is the first Slovene tragedy, although this assertion may still seem somewhat questionable to some Slovene literary historians and critics. Although Igor Grdina is persuaded that *Miss Jenny Love* shows the influence of the Sturm und Drang movement (e.g. escalating monologues, the location of the scenes, the exclusion of reason-base cause-effect logic; Grdina 2005: 568), he nevertheless points out that Linhart's whole work is strongly embedded in the European spiritual sphere. Among the early researchers of Linhart's work and especially of his play *Miss Jenny Love* we can find a lot of similarity concerning this play in views taken by Alfonz Gspan, Dušan Moravec and even Mirko Zupančič, whose remarks about the insufficient psychological delineation of characters, the play's loose

structure and emotionally overstressed characters are acceptable. Luka Vidmar's attempt to link Linhart's play with George Lillo's play *The London Merchant*, is worth taking into consideration, although he overestimates this influence particularly if Lillo's play is compared with Linhart's "borrowings" from Shakespeare's plays.

It is really quite surprising that a large majority of Slovene literary historians and critics has not taken under close scrutiny the adaptations of Shakespeare's texts, which were practiced in England since 1660. Their aim to see productions of Shakespeare's plays in Austrian and Central European theatres only as a result of the theatrical activities limited to this region is incomplete because Slovene critics have not taken into consideration theatrical links which existed between England and Europe too in the discussed period. Besides, the intertwined relations between Shakespeare and authors of the revenge tragedy and the Restoration comedy, as I have shown with a number of parallels and "borrowings", also throw light on Linhart's tragedy *Miss Jenny Love*. Therefore the neglect among Slovene critics of the influence Shakespeare had on Anton Tomaž Linhart is rather unusual particularly because it was limited to the genesis of the play rather than "its contents, form and style" (Gspan 1950: 493). The numerous examples quoted in my study show that it is impossible to deny Shakespeare's influence on Linhart's play as regards the structure of the play, its numerous (Shakespearean) monologues, Linhart's use of metaphors and figurative language as well as a number of similar (or the same) essential philosophical questions which are implied in particular dramatic units. Even though these component parts of Linhart's drama do not provide an artistic accomplishment which would place *Miss Jenny Love* among really important Slovene dramatic achievements, Linhart nevertheless made with this play the first – and also difficult – step towards Shakespeare's orbit; it was a step which led him to his great success in his later plays, in his comedies.

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GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY DETECTIVE STORY: MATTHEW GREGORY LEWIS AND MINETTE WALTERS COMPARED

Vesna Marinko

Abstract

One of the most shocking Gothic novels was written by Matthew Gregory Lewis in 1796. His Gothic novel *The Monk* contains all the typical Gothic elements such as a ruined castle, aggressive villain, women in distress, the atmosphere of terror and horror and a lot more. This article analyses and compares to what extent the Gothic elements of the late 18th century survived in the contemporary detective story *The Ice House* (1993) written by Minette Walters and how these elements have changed.

Today the detective story is very popular with readers searching for mystery, suspense and thrill because “it often begins with an unsolved crime of some sort” (Rzepka 2005: 9). The readers are challenged by the fact that nobody knows whodunit and they are sure they will beat the detective of the story and find the ‘doer’ before the detective does. But many fans are unaware of the fact that the origins of the detective story come from the late 18th century Gothic world of horror and terror.

The Gothic period started before the first Gothic novel appeared in 1764 when Horace Walpole wrote *The Castle of Otranto* and coincided with the period of Romanticism which started in the late 18th century (Frank 1987: xix). *The Monk* was not one of the first Gothic novels but definitely one of the most shocking ones because it was “inverted, parodied, or exaggerated the features it cannibalized” (Miles 2002: 53). Matthew Gregory Lewis wrote it when he was only nineteen years old. The novel was under “heavy fire from reviewers and critics” claiming that the book was indecent, a blasphemy, plagiarism, and a subversion but on the other hand exhibited “the irresistible energy of Genius” (Howard 1994: 225).

In *The Monk* Lewis exaggerated and condemned the development of different kinds of secret liberal and revolutionary societies before and after the French Revolution of 1789 and the revival of the Spanish Inquisition in 1768 (Hennesy 1978: 24). His novel contains all typical Gothic elements that represent the genre: a ruined castle, an aggressive villain, oppressed women, sudden apparitions, ancient prophecies creating an atmosphere of mystery and suspense, dead bodies, and juicy Gothic vocabulary making the reader shudder with feelings of terror and horror.

Matthew Gregory Lewis was born in London and educated at Westminster School and Christ Church, Oxford. He studied modern languages and in 1794 went to the Hague to the British Embassy where he produced, in ten weeks, his romance *Ambrosio*, or *The Monk*. Lewis also obtained a seat in the House of Commons as a Member of Parliament for Hindon in Wiltshire. After a few years he devoted his life fully to literature, and his plays (*The Castle Spectre*, *Alfonso*, *King of Castle*, *The Captive*, *The Wood Daemon*) enjoyed a long popularity on the stage. He wrote numerous operatic and tragic pieces (e.g. *The Bravo of Venice*). When his father died he left him with large fortune, and in 1815 he set off for the West Indies to visit his estates. A second visit to Jamaica was undertaken in 1817, in the hope of becoming more familiar with the condition of the slave population. Unfortunately he got ill with a fever which resulted in his death during the homeward voyage (Kiely 1979 : 98).

The story of *The Monk* concerns Ambrosio - a highly-respected monk in Spain who falls prey to temptation through his lust, pride, and inexperience. His ruin is caused by a demon in disguise of a beautiful woman, Matilda. She encourages him to follow his desires and by using magic spells helps him seduce the innocent Antonia. Antonia turns out to be his sister but that does not stop him from raping and killing her. Ambrosio is delivered into the hands of the Inquisition but he escapes by selling his soul to the devil. However, the devil has no mercy and the sinful monk awaits his prolonged torturous death. The subplot deals with the destiny of two lovers, Agnes and Raymond. Agnes is a nun and after being found pregnant she is accused of violating her vow of chastity. She is punished by being locked in the funeral vault and has to witness the decay of the body of her baby.

Out of the Gothic world comes the detective story. According to Scaggs (2005: 7) the literary criticism places the beginnings of the detective story in the hands of Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849) who is characterized as the ‘father’ of the genre. Much later, in 1993 the detective story *The Ice House* was written by Minette Walters. Walters always wanted to be a writer. She used to read shunned girls’ story books when she was young. Her most popular authors were Biggles and Agatha Christie. She sent her plays to BBC radio but was rejected. Her efforts in magazine publishing were more successful and she was soon writing 30.000 word hospital romances. After having two children she turned her attention to crime fiction and wrote *The Sculptress*, *The Scold’s Bridle*, *The Ice House*, *The Shape of Snakes* and many others (Minnete Walters’ Official Site: Biography).

The Ice House is a detective story about three women living in a country house. On their property in the Streech Grange a faceless corpse of uncertain age is found in the ice house. Chief Inspector Walsh cannot wait to make a case of it. The lady of the manor is Phoebe Maybury and she is still haunted by Walsh’s investigation of her husband’s strange disappearance ten years ago. She and her two friends - a sensitive, charming artist Diana Goode and pretty Anne Cattrell, seem as surprised as the police. While Walsh strives to accuse Phoebe of murdering her husband, the sexy young Detective Sergeant McLoughlin turns his attention to the interesting and attractive Anne. In the end the body turns out to be a drunkard who died of natural causes.

The detective story has its own specific elements such as a detective, an unsolved mystery and an investigation by which the mystery is solved. According to Rzepka (2005: 10) there is another special element called ‘the puzzle-element’ – the mystery

is presented as an “ongoing problem for the reader to solve” and to engage his own reasoning abilities. But in the detective story there are many other elements that have their origins in the Gothic novel of terror and horror.

According to Botting (1996: 158) much of the writing linked to Gothic in the early part of the twentieth century was carried over from later nineteenth-century styles:

Objects of anxiety take their familiar forms from earlier manifestations: cities, houses, archaic and occult pasts, primitive energies, deranged individuals and scientific experimentation are the places from which awesome and inhuman terrors and horrors are loosed on an unsuspecting world. (Botting 1996: 158)

Many of the Gothic elements can still be found in the contemporary detective story while others have changed or even disappeared. The setting for example changed quite a lot. The Gothic action usually took place in an old, sometimes ruined castle which often contained secret passages, trap doors, dark staircases, hidden rooms and ruined parts of the castle. The caves near the castle created the feelings of claustrophobia and mystery (Williams 1995: 39).

The castle, which stood full in my sight, formed an object equally awful and picturesque. Its ponderous walls, tinged by the moon with solemn brightness, its old and partly ruined towers, lifting themselves into the clouds, and seeming to frown on the plains around them, its lofty battlements, overgrown with ivy, and folding gates, expanding in honour of the visionary inhabitant, made me sensible of a sad and reverential horror. (Lewis 1977: 165, 166)

The contemporary detective story usually places its characters into an old house, a mansion, or even into a new house and the feeling of claustrophobia and mystery arises from darkness, shadows, stormy weather and strange reflections of the light. In *The Ice House* the main characters live in a village cottage.

Streech Grange was a fine old Jacobean mansion built of grey stone, with mullioned, leaded windows and steep slate roofs. Two wings, later additions, extended out at either end of the main body of the house, embracing the sides of the flagged terrace where the women had taken their tea. Stud partitions inside made each of these wings self-contained, with unlocked doors on the ground floor giving access to and from them. (Walters 1993: 53)

Atmosphere of Gothic mystery and suspense came from the threatening feeling or fear enhanced by the unknown. Protagonists usually did not know their parents and could not say where they came from (Day 1985: 123). Cavallaro (2002: 150) claims that in the age of reason children were dismissed as “undeveloped adults, as irrational and only randomly sentient beings” whereas “Romanticism rehabilitated childhood as a time of metaphysical wisdom superior to the worldly knowledge available to the socialized self” (Cavallaro 2002: 150). In *The Monk* the unknown mysteries are the protagonist’s (Ambrosio’s) parents and why they had left him. Ambrosio does not know where he comes from but ever since he was found in front of the monastery as a small baby and raised by the monks, he was considered to be ‘a saint’.

In the detective story mystery and suspense are the consequences of a murder or a series of murders where nobody knows who the killer is and usually there is not just one but several suspects. Symons (1972: 12) explains that for Gerladine Pederson-Krag “the murder represents parental intercourse, the victim is the parent, and the clues are symbolic representations of mysterious nocturnal sounds, stains, incomprehensible adult jokes”. To satisfy infantile curiosity, the reader becomes the detective and tries to resolve “the inadequacy and anxious guilt unconsciously remembered from childhood” (Symons 1972: 13). Walters places murder in the ice house on the piece of land where the three women live and of course they are the first three suspects.

In the world of Gothicism many other inexplicable events may have happened. There was usually an ancient prophecy connected to the castle or its inhabitants. Lewis (1977: 44) created the legend of ‘the bleeding nun’ who came every night at one o’clock to scare people because she broke her monastic vows and killed her lover to be with his brother. The prophecy was confusing, partial and obscure and the protagonists were all terrified when they saw the prophecy realized (Harris 2008: 1).

In modern days there are no ancient prophecies but there are legends that are transmitted by word of mouth and do bring up an interest at the beginning but in the end they have no such power over readers as an ancient prophecy did. According to Botting (1996: 170) “Throughout Gothic fiction terror and horror have depended on things not being what they seem.” This is especially true in the case of the legend of Minette Walters’ *The Ice House*, which tells that one of the three women living in the cottage house was married to a man who disappeared 10 years ago and everybody is convinced that she murdered him and that she is a witch.

Just like dreams the Gothic world, too, combined reality and fantasy. Omens, portents and visions were never excluded from the Gothic novel. The statue of the lord of the manor fell over and signified his soon-to-come death. The lady of the castle had a terrible dream and no matter how hard she tried to avoid the situation the dream soon became reality. Lewis describes his apparition ‘the bleeding nun’ very precisely:

Her face was still veiled, but no longer held her lamp and dagger. She lifted up her veil slowly. What a sight presented itself to my startled eyes! I beheld before me an animated corpse. Her countenance was long and haggard; her cheeks and lips were bloodless; the paleness of death was spread over her features, and her eyeballs, fixed steadfastly upon me, were lustreless and hollow. (Lewis 1977: 170)

Today a character may see a shadowy figure stabbing another shadowy figure and explain to himself it was just a dream but in the end it turns out that the whole scene had been real. Visions have no place in the contemporary detective story. Their only ‘heir’ is an imitation of a vision (Harris 2008: 1).

Another element of the Gothic novel was the element of the supernatural. These were the most dramatic and amazing events that occurred in the novels. Ghosts were walking, talking and even bleeding just like Lewis’ ‘bleeding nun’. Giants appeared or a painting of a deceased fell of the wall just as the protagonist was trying to escape from a suit of armour suddenly coming to life. In *The Monk*, Ambrosio first strangles his own mother and then rapes and stabs his sister. Miles (2002: 53) explains that Lewis

included 'the explained' and 'the unexplained' supernatural, but by reversing their proper order. He makes a mockery of both: first there is a natural explanation (Agnes frightening the servants by dressing up as the ghost of the Bleeding Nun) and then comes the supernatural cause (the real Bleeding Nun turns up).

The element of the supernatural disappeared from most of today's detective stories. Sometimes it occurs but is soon given a logical explanation (Harris 2008: 1). To the reader this explanation is usually more of a disappointment than anything else.

The gothic world did not exist without high and overwrought emotions:

"Happy man!" he exclaimed in his romantic enthusiasm, "happy man, who is destined to possess the heart of that lovely girl! What delicacy in her features! What elegance in her form! How enchanting was the timid innocence of her eyes! And how different from the wanton expression, the wild luxurious fire, which sparkles in Matilda's! Oh! Sweeter must one kiss be, snatched from the rosy lips of the first, than all the full and lustful favours bestowed so freely by the second." (Lewis 1977: 54)

The narration was usually highly sentimental especially when women appeared but even men were allowed highly sentimental and uncontrollable emotions. Characters were often driven by anger, sorrow, surprise, and of course terror and horror. Their nerves were weak and they suffered from feelings of impending doom. Women often panicked, screamed and cried their eyes out, whereas men had frequent emotional speeches, kept running away from whatever haunted them, and were left breathless many times (Harris 2008: 1).

The contemporary detective is also surrounded by people with strong emotions which are not far from Gothic ones, but the detective represents ratio and the world in which emotions have no place because they cause distraction and disable the detective at doing his job properly. The detective solving the case in *The Ice House* is described as follows:

He was in his mid-thirties, of an age with the women, a dark, brooding man with cold eyes. In the twist of his lips, he had brought with him the irritability of the Police Station, concentrated, malignant. (Walters 1993: 13)

Gothic women were always in distress and the ones who appealed the pathos and sympathy of the reader. They fainted, were terrified, they screamed and they were often found sobbing because they were so lonely and miserable. The oppressed heroine was very passive and never did anything to prevent bad things from happening. She remained pensive and although she was the central figure of the novel she suffered more than any other character. She was often abandoned and had no one to protect her from the villain (Harris 2008: 1).

All this while Ambrosio was unconscious of the dreadful scenes which were passing so near. The execution of his designs upon Antonia employed his every thought. Hitherto he was satisfied with the success of his plans. Antonia had drunk the opiate, was buried in the vaults of St. Clare, and absolutely in his disposal. (Lewis 1977: 57)

In the detective story this situation changes. Women still do suffer under the reign of the man in power but modern women are never under so much pressure as their Gothic counterpart (for example Antonia) was. In the detective story the women have power to change things and act although they often fail after all. In *The Ice House* the women in distress are the three women who are accused of murdering the man who disappeared. Villagers attack them whenever they can, they rob their house, destroy furniture, and spread the gossip about the three women accusing them of being witches, lesbians and murderesses.

According to Murch (1958: 84) the Gothic villain in England first turned into a convict hero and then to a detective. The revolution of the female character rose with the second-wave feminism of the 1970s which produced a significant new character of the detective story, namely the female private eye. It was supposed to be initiated in Britain by P. D. James with *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman* (1972). This female character emerged at its strongest in the United States in the 1980s, when protagonists such as Marcia Muller's Sharon McCone, Sara Paretsky's V. I. Warshawski, and Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone "took on the alienated, anti-system traits of the private eye to convey women's need to confront their exclusion from power with toughness and independence" (*Detective Story* 2008: 1).

The tyrannical male of the Gothic novel was usually the lord of the manor, a father or guardian, a monk or a king. He was the one in power and everybody had to listen to him, especially women. He forced them to do things they hated – they had to marry someone they did not care about, give up their baby right after it was born, go to a convent and never (again) enjoy the pleasures of flesh or even commit a crime (Day 1985: 18). In *The Monk*, Ambrosio threatens his sister:

You are imagined dead; society is for ever lost to you. I possess you here alone; you are absolutely in my power, and I burn with desires which I must either gratify or die: but I would owe my happiness to yourself. (Lewis 1977: 60)

Contemporary women in detective stories no longer have to do such drastic things but they are still often tyrannized by males either by their father, brother or most often their husband. They are weak but have more power to do something about it than the villain's victims in Gothic novel had. Walters goes even further with women being tyrannized by males. Her women characters are tyrannized by a male who disappeared ten years ago – somebody who is no longer in their lives still has power over them because everybody is convinced this body to be the missing man murdered by the three women.

The Gothic language was itself a special Gothic element and had great power to create mystery, danger and suspense. The Gothic metonymies could voice the supernatural without ever bringing it to real life. Just like today the word rain often stands for sorrow and is present at funerals so did Gothic words create the metonymies of gloom and horror. The most common Gothic phrases are for example howling wind often blowing out lights, heavy rain with thunder and lightning, doors grating on rusty hinges, approaching footsteps, sighs, moans, owls, eerie sounds, lights in abandoned rooms, clanking chains, characters trapped in rooms, ruins of buildings, crazed laughter,

doors suddenly slamming shut, howling of distant dogs or perhaps even wolves (Harris 2008: 1). The goal of using these words was to evoke the feelings of fear, unknown, terror and horror.

The walls were soon shaken by the devouring element. The columns gave way, the roofs came tumbling down upon the rioters, and crushed many of them beneath their weight. Nothing was to be heard but shrieks and groans. The convent was wrapped in flames, and the whole presented a scene of devastation and horror. (Lewis 1977: 345)

The detective story lost at least half of these metonymies because in the 'real world' murder itself is a horrifying action and needs no other elements to appear as such. Another reason for not using metonymies typical of Gothic novels is the fact that in the detective story everything needs a logical explanation and it is not easy to explain unbelievable things.

Even the individual words had an impact on creating the atmosphere of terror and horror. Mystery rose from words such as diabolical, enchantment, ghost, haunted, infernal, magic, magician, miracle, omens, ominous, portent, preternatural, prodigy, prophecy, secret, sorcerer, spectre, spirits, strangeness, talisman, vision. Fear, terror and sorrow were the consequences of using such words as afflicted, agony, anguish, apprehensions, commiseration, concern, despair, dismal, dismay, dread, dreaded, dreading, fearing, fright, frightened, furious, gigantic, grief, hopeless, horrid, horror, lamentable, melancholy, miserable, mournfully, panic, rage, sadly, scared, shrieks, sorrow, sympathy, tears, terrible, terrified, terror, unhappy, wretched. (Harris 2008: 1)

Many of these words remain in the contemporary detective story but only those which do not express the presence of the supernatural or inexplicable events. Even the words which describe extremely strong emotions are avoided.

The elements of death and murder were very usual in the Gothic novel and their main goal was to create the atmosphere of gloom, terror and horror.

Sometimes I felt the bloated toad, hideous and pampered with the poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my bosom. Sometimes the quick cold lizard roused me, leaving his slimy track upon my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair. Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my infant. At such times I shrieked with terror and disgust; and while I shook off the reptile, trembled with all a woman's weakness. (Lewis 1977: 396)

Walters describes the dead body in a more scientific manner. She looks at it from the perspective of the detective's ratio. The detective must remain calm and focused. Walters gives attention to real facts rather than scary and terrifying emotions that would deeply shake everyone who has seen the body.

The head, still tethered to the upper torso by blackened sinew, was wedged in a gap in the top row of a neat stack of bricks. Dull grey hair, long enough to be a woman's, spilled out of the gap. Eyeless sockets,

showing bone underneath, and exposed upper and lower jaw bones gleamed white against the blackened musculature of the face. The chest area, anchored by the head against the vertical face of bricks, looked as if it had been skilfully filleted. The other half of the body lay unnaturally askew of its top half in a position that no living person, however supple, could have achieved. The abdominal region had all but disappeared though shreds lay about as mute witnesses that it had once existed. There were no genitals. The lower half of the left arm, propped on a smaller pile of bricks, was some four feet from the body, much of the flesh stripped away, but some sinews remaining to show it had been wrenched from its elbow. The right arm, pressed against the torso, had the same blackened quality as the head with patches of white bone showing through. Of the legs, only the calves and feet were immediately recognisable, but at a distance from each other in a grotesque parody of the splits and twisted upside down so that soles pointed at the icehouse roof. Of the thighs, only splintered bones remained. (Walters 1993: 28, 29)

One of the most highly valued capacities of the Gothic novel and its elements was the power to transform fears of terror and horror into pleasure. Due to the fact that “what we really want are those desires and objects that have been forbidden” there will always be a need for terror and horror in man’s life (Bruhm 2002: 263). In the detective story the closest to terror and horror are the elements of death and murder.

In analysing and comparing the Gothic elements found in the 18th century Gothic novel *The Monk* and elements in the contemporary detective story *The Ice House*. We have shown that some of the Gothic elements were transferred and are still used in the contemporary detective story while others changed and were adapted to the new circumstances. The article first discusses typical Gothic elements of the Gothic novel, and then presents similar elements found in the contemporary detective story. The comparison of both elements has been made on the basis of how often they occur, with what intensity and if or how they have changed. The setting in the detective story for example is still important, murders happen as frequently as before but they are no longer described in typical Gothic words. Whereas the Gothic novel challenged reader’s emotions, the detective novel challenges the reader’s ability to use logic and find the murderer. In the detective story women are allowed to have strong emotions whereas the detective presents ratio and often appears very ‘cold’. Omens, portents and visions no longer play a role in the modern detective story and supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events are always given a logical explanation. In the detective story women are still tyrannized by men but have more power to do something about the situation. Terror and horror are the leading elements in both genres and therefore inevitable and eternal. They are the ones that make the world keep turning, the brains working and the readers satisfied.

Many 18th century Gothic elements are present in the contemporary detective story but many of them have been adapted to the present situation. The elements of the detective story make sure that the story stands on solid ground and could have happened

whereas the Gothic elements created an implausible story where strong and excessive emotions were given all the freedom the readers needed to enjoy the novel.

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WILLIAM MORRIS AND THE CRITICAL UTOPIA OF HIGH FANTASY

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Abstract

The novels *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894) and *The Well at the World's End* (1896) by William Morris are considered the formative works of the type of literature which has been labelled high fantasy. The latter is one of the commercially most successful genres of fantasy literature. The two novels are analysed from the perspective of critical utopianism as articulated through a distinctive type of aesthetic structure which was established in these works and has become characteristic of the high fantasy literature. The author of the article suggests that it is this complex of aesthetic structure and its inherent utopian impulse which may be one of the important factors in the perennial popularity of high fantasy.

The term fantasy is one of the more ambiguous, albeit quite frequently employed terms of modern literary criticism. Theoretical model established by Todorov and further developed by others proposes that fantasy should be comprehended not as a genre, but rather as a strategy (Olsen 2) or a mode of writing which has different generic realizations (Jackson 35). This type of approach defines fantasy as a literary mode situated “between the opposite modes of the marvellous and the mimetic” (Jackson 32). The position of fantasy at a collision point between modes of the mimetic and the marvellous is said to cause a textual instability through which fantasy texts hyper-reflexively examine their own status of a literary artefact. Consequently it functions subversively, re-examining the set extra-literary socio-political categories that constitute our consensus reality. Some critics point to the problematical differentiation between mimetic and fantastic modes of writing, since every literary representation of that which is in a certain historical moment considered as extra-literary reality is in essence always a coded representation or recreation based on a selective and arbitrary combining of information (Burcar 2). A mode of writing always enters into a dialog with the consensus reality, whether critically examining it and challenging the symbolic order upon which it is founded, or distancing itself from the problems of socio-political sphere and even serving as a fortifier of the mentioned order. In this context, some ascribe to the fantasy the function of subversion, while the marvellous is considered as conservative or even reactionary.

High fantasy, if observed through the optics of the threefold scheme of literary modes described above, can be considered a generic realization of the mode of the

marvellous. Its other literary realizations include fairy tale, romance, utopia, science fiction, satire and surrealist texts (Olsen 18). Thematically it is associated with magic and supernaturalism (Jackson 33). The narrative events of such texts are usually backed by a coherent ideology (Olsen 18) and the narrative situation is often set in a chronotopically distant and autonomous fictive universe. The characters in the marvellous texts are “larger-than-life, ideal, abstract, and in symbolic relationship to each other” (Olsen 21). Texts feature an impersonal, authoritative, confident and omniscient narrator. As a mode, the marvellous is said to be compensatory, having a passive relation to history (Jackson 33; Olsen 18) expressed in nostalgic longing for an idealized version of the past, its morals and hierarchy. Interestingly, this parallels the marvellous with the mimetic in the sense that both modes are internally stable, lacking the element of metafictional self-reflection.

The literary compound term ‘high fantasy’ was first used by Lloyd Alexander in a 1971 essay *High Fantasy and Heroic Romance* in which he presents the view of high fantasy as a modern literary form that draws heavily upon the mythology and establishes itself within the tradition and the conventions of the heroic romance. As its founders he mentions, among others, William Morris and J.R.R. Tolkien. In a somewhat sentimental manner he emphasizes, as its central characteristic, the power to touch “areas of feeling that no other form touches in quite the same way” (Alexander, “High Fantasy and Heroic Romance”, par. 26). He explicates this feature as being the result of appropriating the material of myth, legend and the Jungian collective unconscious.

The central characteristic of high fantasy, as it is defined today, is that it is a fiction whose narrative events are separated from empirical consensus reality and set entirely in a secondary world, dealing with matters that affect the destiny of that world (Clute 466). A secondary world is defined in this context as “an autonomous world or venue which is not bound to mundane reality ... which is impossible according to common sense and which is self-coherent as a venue for story” (Clute 847). High fantasy in this taxonomy is diametrically opposed by low fantasy, which is set in a simulacrum of consensus reality modified by elements of the fantastic (Stableford 198). The “heterocosmical” (Stableford li) or secondary world fantasies can also be positioned within the taxonomy developed by Farah Mendlesohn who established a trisection model for the application to the field of fantasy literature. One of its three principal categories is the immersive fantasy (Stableford 214). It consists of works in which the whole narrative is set in a secondary world. An important condition and consequence of this immersion is the fact that literary characters “accept the fantastic entities with which they are surrounded as aspects of their normality” (Stableford 214). The implied reader is to share the characters’ acceptance of the secondary world as a given coherent artefact and not to question its ontological status. This displacement from consensus reality, realized through literary construction of autonomous secondary worlds, is one of the main reasons behind the notion of escapism often associated with high fantasy literature.

While every literary text and its constructed fictive reality are intrinsically connected with consensus reality, there are structural differences in the relation to the latter. Rosemary Jackson parallels high fantasy with the tradition of Victorian romance fantasy, emphasising its conservative and repressive function in service of the ruling ideology

(155). Northrop Frye also acknowledges this characteristic of romance as a projection of ideals of the ruling social class, but at the same time suggests that, in any given historical period, romance also exhibits, what he calls, a “proletarian element” (186), a perennial internal impulse towards social change. A similar observation was made by Jack Zipes who, proceeding from the philosophy of E. Bloch and his theory of fairy tales, observes the emancipatory impulse of fantasy and fairy tales. He proposes that these “harbour unfulfilled wishes in figurative form and project the possibility for their fulfilment” (138) and suggests that, while they are not to be understood as substitutes for action, they nevertheless can serve as indicators. Fairy tale and fantasy can thus offer a corrective to the consensus reality, a utopian perspective critical of existing socio-political order. Jackson claims that the writing which employs the mode of marvellous actually moves away from this subversive impulse, expelling the emancipatory desire and channelling it into the creation of benevolent, religious universes and displaced nostalgia (9). In a similar manner, many critics dismiss the secondary worlds of fantasy as essentially escapist devices. Zipes, on the other hand, points to the fact that an escape into a secondary world of fairy tale or fantasy performs the function of estrangement or separation from the limitations of one’s mundane reality, inducing a feeling of possible liberation (141). This naturally does not imply that there exists a sort of universal transcendental category of a better reality. Since every text of literary fantasy is determined by the context within which it is produced, this critical utopia of fantasy texts is always a product of an individual author, placed in a historical, social, economic, political and psychological frame. That being said, it is also imminent that some of the impulses that feed into the utopian drive of these texts originate from the collective aspirations, values and desires of the social group that the author is associated with.

Although William Morris wrote quite a few works which can be considered prototypical works of modern fantasy, it is his novel *The Wood Beyond the World* that is considered to be the first example of high fantasy. The novel tells a story of Golden Walter who travels to the sea and arrives to an unknown land inhabited by an alien race of the Bear people. Here he meets a sorceress who is worshiped as a goddess by the mentioned people. She imprisons Walter, but he manages to escape with the help of her maid who also possesses some magic powers. After their escape Walter becomes a ruler of the world’s chief kingdom while his female companion initiates a social and cultural revolution of the Bear people.

Walter is lured to the sea by what seems as a longing for an unattainable idealised love, which rapidly concretizes into a bodily desire as he arrives to the Wood Beyond the World. Here he is entangled in a game of seduction with the evil Mistress. Although in love with her maid, he is nevertheless attracted by the Mistress and this culminates in a sexual intercourse. Walter’s succumbing to the Mistress is not regarded as a serious trespass neither by him, neither by his would-be true love. After the Mistress is dispensed with and the couple escapes the Wood, they are free to enjoy the consummation of their love.

These liberal views of love and sexuality also carry more profound underlying implications. As Walter travels from the lands of his home to the lands of the Wood Beyond the World, he also passes from patriarchal, male-oriented society into the land

ruled by an earth goddess. The gender roles are subverted here as Walter becomes a thrall to the Mistress. For a protagonist of the novel Walter is rather passive and women characters possess the initiative throughout the larger part of the novel. Gender roles are restored as the lovers descend from the Bear Mountains to the kingdom of Starkwall where Walter assumes the role of a king. Morris seems to parallel civilization with the male principle and technology, while the nature and pre-civilized way of life and social order are associated with the female principle and magic. He is also aware of the institutionalized status of male sexual domination in the civilized society. The Maid thus loses her magical powers as she engages in a sexual intercourse with Walter, symbolizing her subordination.

Described narrative events are played out on the fully fleshed framework of the secondary world. The latter is not a mere background to the events, but plays an important functional role in concretizing author's critical utopian vision. It is only in a fictional universe, imaginatively displaced from the consensus reality, that liberation from the chains of established social, sexual and psychological practices is possible for Morris. In a realm where magic is intrinsically woven into the fabric of the world, the female principle is able to assume equal position along its male counterpart. The beginning of the novel takes place in a medieval-like world, but as Walter travels to the Wood beyond the World, he also travels back in time as the Christian medieval society is replaced by the tribal society of the Bear people and the cult of mother Earth. The concrete utopian quality of the author's vision requires a secondary world which is cohesive and concrete, lest the utopianism recedes to the realm of allegorical and symbolic. This is achieved by providing the secondary world with a sense of spatial, temporal and socio-political depth. The former is achieved in the novel by deploying naturalistic descriptions of the physical aspects of the world. This is especially effective in mapping the surface of the world as Walter observes the unknown land from high viewpoints, mountains and ridges. It is also one of the formal techniques that were adopted by many following authors of fantasy and provides the fictional world with a concrete, physical quality. Other aspects of the secondary world are the historical, social and political dimension, established by depiction of the land's inhabitants and their customs. The old man who receives Walter and his crew in the new land is thus more of a narrative function than a character, providing newcomers (and the reader) with an extensive report of the Bear people. The novel concludes with a brief chronicle of events that occurred in the land after the death of Walter and his queen. *The Wood Beyond the World* is a prototypical work of high fantasy. In the form of a novel, it created a cohesive secondary world, estranged from consensus reality by the use of the marvellous.

The Well at the World's End builds on the elements established in *The Wood Beyond the World*. Expanding the range and depth of its predecessor, it stretches for over 400 pages, representing the longest work of modern literary fantasy before Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. It is a story of Ralph, the youngest son of the king of an idyllic small kingdom of Upmeads, who sets out to explore the world. On his journey he encounters an assortment of other characters while travelling east in search of the elusive and mysterious Well at the World's End, which is rumoured to provide those who drink from it with immortality and eternal happiness.

The novel introduced a plot structure which has become essential of high fantasy; the narrative pattern of quest taken from magic tale or the *Märchen* (Sullivan III 305). Suggested simplicity of the brief synopsis is deceivable. The messages and implications of the story are multi-layered and highly complex. Richard Mathews, for example, points to the systematic reversal of the traditional Christian mythos in the novel, suggesting that Morris criticizes institutionalized Christianity; its repression and limitations imposed on humanity's imaginative, mythical and mystical options and the displacing of attention from the concrete and material world to the afterlife (48). The quest, which could at first be perceived as a version of the quest for the Holy Grail, symbolizing deliverance and eternal bliss in heaven, culminates in the physical act of drinking from the well, which improves tangible conditions of the concrete, material fictional world. Critical stance towards institutionalized Christianity is observable throughout the novel. First instance of it appears at the very beginning of the story, when Ralph receives an amulet from a woman who explicitly forbids him to have it blessed. As Ralph travels east, he gradually leaves behind the Christian society and passes into a world of customs and traditions that predate Christianity (Mathews 49).

The theme of relation between male and female principle, introduced already in *The Wood Beyond the World* reoccurs here. On his travels, Ralph encounters two female characters that have profound influence on him and the course of his quest. Each of these encounters marks a stage in hero's path, the process of his 'growing up'. The first character is Lady of Abundance, who is obviously superior to Ralph and is also the book's strongest female character. Though the narrative is focalized through the perspective of the main hero, she relates a story of her past which is narrated by a first person narrator, thus providing additional perspective on the narrative events, while also revealing her as emotionally and intellectually more complex character than Ralph. She initiates him into sexual experience and is responsible for his emotional development. Only after his experience with her, is Ralph prepared to encounter his female counterpart Ursula, who appears as his equal. Their union "symbolizes an integration of the male and female aspects of the psyche" (Mathews 50).

By introducing female characters who are equal or superior to the male hero, the novel expresses implicit criticism of established gender roles and reveals the existence of alternative possibilities. These cease to possess merely allegorical quality and acquire a more explicit and concrete utopian character when incorporated into the structure of an internally authentic and cohesive secondary world. This is shaped with an unprecedented detail and complexity, from its temporal and spatial features, to its historical and socio-political attributes. Ralph's journey traverses the lands from the homely west and all the way to the east most extremities of the fictive universe.

As the journey progresses, the spatial dimension and sensory impressions of the secondary world are conveyed with an unusual, almost naturalistic detail. The surface of the land is meticulously mapped; the device often employed to this end being the hero's view from different high vantage points; hills, mountains and ridges. Descriptions of the landscape and its features are not superficial or formulaic; different woods, hills, plains, rivers and wastes possess their own distinctive features. Geography and landscape on the whole change perceivably as the hero travels further east. Attention to detail is demonstrated in the descriptions of much of the secondary world's material

culture, from descriptions of weapons and richly adorned clothing, to minute details of buildings smelling “of the new-shaven oak (for the roof was not yet painted)” (Morris 1994: 155). The journey is recounted in detail by making extensive use of the cardinal directions, which increases spatial perception and orientation through the geography of the secondary world.

Another important facet of this world is the temporal dimension, both in the sense of the organization of narrative time, as well as in providing the internal historical frame of the secondary world. While the former is actually functionally connected with establishing the spatial aspect mentioned above, the latter puts the narrative events into a broader perspective and context. The main plot is interrupted by accounts of the history of different lands, kingdoms and places that the hero travels through. Lady of Abundance thus gives an account of her past life in which individual experience interweaves with political history. Gradually, these fragments combine to form a larger complex and furnish the richly crafted geography of the novel’s secondary world with a sense of historical depth. This is not only an aesthetic device, nor is it motivated by a desire to provide the fictive world with any kind of glorious or mythical prehistory. Its character is unmistakably political. The history of this secondary world a history of border skirmishes, occupation, colonisation, civil wars and political intrigue. The socio-political order of the fictive world in the moment of Ralph’s quest is a continuation of the historical development as chronicled by various characters of the novel. This is a world of politics whose lands, kingdoms and towns are not isolated sub-worlds but are a part of the global socio-political dynamics of the fictive universe. It is not a static background but a chessboard for the power play of world’s different figures. The Burgh of the Four Firths wages an exhausting and merciless war against the Brotherhood of the Dry Tree, while the kingdom of Goldburg maintains a delicate equilibrium with Lord of Utterboll. Even the idyllic little kingdom of Upmeads is involved in a neighbourly dispute over a patch of a no-man’s land with an evocative name The Wood Disputable. This political framework is firmly rooted in socio-economic foundations of the fictive world. The dynamics of political relations are not based on romantic ideals or notions of honour and nationality, but receive their main impetus from economic factors; struggle for land, workforce and natural resources.

Although essentially based on a medieval society and material culture, the secondary world of *The Well* is by no means uniform. It contains kingdoms of enlightened absolutism, towns led by the clergy or merchant guilds, militant and materialistic slaveholding civilizations, farming communities, tribal societies and barbaric kingdoms led by tyrannical warlords. Ralph visits churches, monasteries, castles, merchant manors, farms, tribal villages, slave markets and pagan shrines. The differences among various social groups, civilizations, cultures and their representatives which he encounters are graphically described, at moments colouring his travels with a kind of picaresque quality.

Described temporal, spatial and socio-political dimensions are not independent of each other, but are systematically intertwined to form a complex totality. This kind of interrelation and integration of various aspects of the alternative fictive universe and its logical organization provide the secondary world with a high degree of internal authenticity, cohesiveness and integrity. The structure could perhaps be observed through the

optics of the theoretical model developed by Darko Suvin although, strictly speaking, he applied it to the study of science fiction. He defines science fiction as “a literary genre or verbal construct whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author’s empirical environment” (qtd in Roberts 7). If we apply this to *The Well*, we can observe that its secondary world is estranged from the empirical or consensus reality of the reader/author. This estrangement is performed mainly through the elements of the marvellous and magical, which render the fictive world, at least in this aspect, radically different from consensus reality. Nevertheless, the imaginary world is presented as empirical in the sense of being constructed by following certain principles of cognitive logic. Though imaginatively displaced, the secondary world is organized around some of the basic postulates, along with the temporal and spatial order, which are not arbitrary and unstable but fixed and having the character of empirical laws and axioms of the consensus reality.

The secondary world in *The Well* proceeds from being merely a setting or a background for the plot, to being one of the central elements of the novel. This generates a shift from the individual character of Ralph to the community, or rather, communities of the secondary world. Ralph and his quest are still a central part of the novel, but they become linked to a greater communal project; the socio-political fate of the secondary world. As he travels east, Ralph observes the social and political structure of the world, often perceiving it as wrong and unjust. As the act of drinking from the restorative well is completed, the novel continues with an account of the long journey back to the Upmeads, during which Ralph and Ursula witness all the previous wrongs and evils of the world corrected. Though this may appear anticlimactic and unnecessary from the strictly narrative perspective, it has an important function in the broader utopian context of the book. Mathews writes that “Ralph and Ursula drink not for themselves but for the sake of the world and of life, and their quest is finally completed and meaningful only if it increases happiness and beauty beyond themselves” (52).

Utopianism of *The Well* is fundamentally dependent on and expressed through the aesthetic structure established in the novel. The plot structure is integrated with the structure of secondary world to form a larger unified complex. Critical utopia of *The Well at the World’s End*, “displaces the affairs of human culture from the superstructure” (Uedin qtd. in Zipes 140), severing them from the symbolic order of the consensus reality, and rearranges the elements of the mentioned reality in framework of an imagined fictive universe. Perhaps even more significant than the displacement of the mentioned elements, is the possibility of their dislocation and shifting through the activity of literary characters. In *The Well*, Ralph and Ursula thus cause a restructuration of the socio-political order by drinking from the magical well. The quest pattern is integrated into an elaborately and systematically realized construction of the imagined universe. By completing his journey, the hero not only grows up and experiences personal transformation, but also causes a shift and reorganization in the structure of the secondary world.

Though far from being programmatic or outlining “a graphic plan of what the future world will be like” (Zipes, 138), the utopianism of *The Well at the World’s End* is nevertheless substantive and concrete, critically commenting a tangible cultural and

socio-economical order. The structural relation of such secondary world to the real one is not symbolic or allegorical, but is in fact much closer to mimetic representation (Rosebury 10). Utopian impulse of *The Well at the World's End* is thus somewhat different from the one in another generic realization of the marvellous - the fairy tale, being less simplifying or encapsulating in the sense of allegory. It is articulated through estranged and marvellous, but structurally logical and coherent literary secondary world.

The latter is constructed upon models of medieval culture and society; the fact which can be attributed to Morris's literary influences, chief among which came from Malory and Icelandic sagas, as well as to his political views and philosophy. Morris was a socialist but thought feudalism superior to capitalism. He believed that society based on self-interest was not the only possible form of society. In feudal society he saw models of social organization in which an individual was not yet alienated from the products of his labour. This world, although having its many injustices and brutalities, did not incorporate the large scale social and economic evils of the industrial world (Wilmer xxiv). This peculiar character of Morris's political and philosophical beliefs is clearly demonstrated in *The Well*. The narrative situation is placed in a quasi-medieval world, but one which is, within its limitations, actually quite liberal and progressive. An ideal model of society as perceived by the protagonist of the book and concretized by the kingdom of Upmeads is indeed a medieval and a hierarchical one, but one in which lower classes also possess a high degree of personal freedom, are able to dispose with the products of their labour and are not marginalized on the basis of their social position. In fact, manual labour in this secondary world is highly regarded and even Ralph is described as "deft in all manner of sports and crafts, such as up-country folk follow, and though he were a king's son, he had made a doughty yeoman" (Morris 1994: 280).

While this could be, and often is, dismissed as a sentimental and nostalgic longing for past values and ideals realized through romantic escapism and mannerism, some critics here also detect a more profound expression of deep social discontent. According to Bloch, the socio-economic development brings about certain non-synchronization in the lives of people; a fracture between the material conditions of people and their consciousness (qtd in Zipes 139). This is a consequence of social development that does not fully resolve the contradictions of the past society as, for example, in transition from manual forms of labour to automation and complex technology (Zipes 140). In the process, the needs and wishes of certain social groups are not satisfactorily integrated into the new socio-economic order, which causes the mentioned non-synchronous longing for the past (Zipes 140).

Although not a representative of the lower classes that Bloch had in mind, as a socialist, Morris was without doubt acutely aware of the problems that were experienced by these social groups in the capitalist society. *The Well* may have also been used to voice these, as well as some of his own personal concerns and desires. In the same manner that the secondary world of Morris's fantasy is more than only an aesthetic or mannerist device and a means of escapism, the choice of the medieval template for the construction of the secondary world is probably not coincidental, but grounded in certain aspects of modern social conscience. The quasi-medieval secondary world of *The Well* is, for Morris, therefore not "a refuge from the present ... [but] helps him to understand the present and construct, in imagination, an alternative future" (Wilmer xxvii). Although

the reference point of his literary work is in the past, his concern is with the present and the future (Williams 159). This seeking of answers in the imaginatively reconstructed past of humankind is perhaps best encapsulated by the course of Ralph's quest. As he travels east, to the sunrise, to the beginning and to the origins, the society and culture that he encounters become increasingly primitive. Mathews interprets this as a message from Morris that "the future time is redeemed and reclaimed only by overcoming and finally transforming human history. The narrative is a repudiation of human history, fallen and corrupt, which can be redeemed only by looking beyond its source" (51). The well at the world's end is thus, paradoxically, located at its beginning.

The type of literary fantasy that Morris established with his works *The Wood Beyond the World* and *The Well at the World's End* has become one of the staples of modern fantasy literature. After the success of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, which created a thriving popular market for fantasy writing that has lasted to this day, this kind of literature was retrospectively classified as high fantasy. It is defined by what Brian Rosebury suggests are two kinds of structure integrated into a single aesthetic complex (27), the type of which already appears with Morris. The first component is the "plot-based structure" (Rosebury 27), which repeats the quest pattern employed in *The Well*. The other is the "comprehensive structure of the invented world" (29), meaning the cohesive and internally authentic secondary world structure as established in *The Well*. Both of these are integrated in an overarching, all-inclusive structure (Rosebury 27). As in *The Well*, this does not possess only an aesthetic function, but is also an expression of a critical utopian impulse.

High fantasy maps the gap between the alienating forces of capitalism and the aspirations of an individual for a meaningful experience. It employs the structure of a secondary world to achieve imaginative liberation from the cultural and socio-political constraints and create a meaningful and coherent alternative universe in which an individual has not yet lost his power to influence the world through activity. The thematic grounding of the secondary world in a medieval-based template, as employed already by Morris, conveys criticism of contemporary socio-economic order and could be interpreted through the optics of Bloch's concept of non-synchronization, as described above.

Although one could speculate that the basic premise of the high fantasy utopianism is generally humanistic, this claim would require an extensive research. The task is rendered extremely difficult if not impossible by the sheer quantity of texts that emerged in the aftermath of the success of Tolkien's high fantasy trilogy. This created a set of reader expectations and contributed to the fact that a great majority of subsequent works have been more or less imitative, causing a lack of innovation and a production of formulaic fiction. A characteristic of the high fantasy literature is the existence of the so called mega-text; a common collection of special language conventions, narrative formulae, plots, icons and collective images (Luckhurst 7). Literature based on such a limited foundation is obviously subjected to repetition and exhaustion. It is therefore questionable to speak of high fantasy genre today as anything more than a commercial label promoting the sales of published material. At the same time, the perennial popularity of the high fantasy literature demonstrates its unyielding attraction for readers. And though the majority of commodified writing that is published under this label may be

relatively poor in literary and aesthetic value, it perhaps receives its main appeal from the fact that its characteristic aesthetic and narrative structure is nonetheless conveying a feeling of liberation and a certain kind of inherent utopian impulse, however exhausted this may be.

Jackson claims that this kind of utopianism does not actually engage with divisions inside human culture, since the secondary worlds like those of the two Morris's novels are autonomous and located outside human (154). They promote passive relation to history and encourage counter-productive sentimentalism and longing (Jackson 33, 155). The subversive and critical component of such utopianism, although commenting upon central problems of human society, is thus blunted by the very realization through the form of high fantasy. While not necessary reactionary, the high fantasy does seem to approach the criticism of the consensus reality somewhat tentatively.

Interestingly enough, it is perhaps exactly this pedestrian quality of the high fantasy critical utopia that accounts for its general social acceptance, dissemination and commercial success. The benign character of high fantasy utopianism is most evidently manifested by the fact that this literature was readily adopted and exploited by the very same system that is an implicit target of its criticism. It is ironical that literature which received one of its fundamental formative impulses from the resistance against the capitalist socio-economical order has turned into one of its most successful literary products. But, as Zipes writes, perhaps "The very strength of the system is also its weakness, and fantasy, even as it is being instrumentalized, demands a sensual and spiritual fulfilment which runs contrary to the exploitative goals of capitalism" (149).

The two analysed novels by Morris have introduced a type of aesthetic and narrative structure which has become inseparably associated with the kind of literature labelled high fantasy. The fictive universe in which the story is situated is detached from the reality of the reader. It is a realm of marvellous and magic, similar to those of fairy tales, but executed and realized with a much higher detail and complexity. Liberating the reader from the confinements of his or her mundane reality, the high fantasy offers an immersion into a world whose limits seem to be placed further, allowing the incorporation of magical and numinous. At the same time, this secondary world is structured around and governed by internal logic similar to the one of empirical reality, providing a comfortable degree of familiarity. In Morris's novels, this structure allows an explicit expression of criticism towards certain aspects of the extra-literary reality, while at the same time suggesting the existence of viable alternatives. Regardless of whether the utopian vision offered by these works is labelled as regressive or progressive, the fact remains that it suggests a corrective to perceived faults of consensus reality. The secondary world of these novels can be considered such a corrective; often being itself imperfect or faulty, but allowing the possibility of being corrected as in *The Well at the World's End*. Perhaps it is this underlying mechanics more than the thematic structure and content of the works, that which accounts for the perennial attraction of high fantasy writing. And while the latter, with its thematic reliance on preindustrial, semifeudal and hierarchical models of society may be perceived, and justly so, as regressive and sentimentalist, the underlying critical message it conveys is nevertheless again gaining significance. Finding itself in somewhat of a blind alley of capitalist economic development, humanity may yet be inclined to look upon the

warnings of the utopian visions articulated through works of high fantasy with a different disposition.

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LEATHERSTOCKING TALES: 20th CENTURY SLOVENIAN TRANSLATIONS

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Abstract

This article examines Slovenian translations of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* published from 1926 onwards. By analysing the domestication and foreignisation procedures, it uncovers how these translations testify to the narrowing of the gap between Slovenian and American cultures. The notes in particular are highlighted since they are revealing also about the importance of each translation for Slovenian cultural context.

INTRODUCTION

The first translation of the *Leatherstocking Tales* which took place at the threshold of the 20th century represents an important landmark in the bridging of the gaps between the culture of the source text and that of the targeted Slovenian readers.¹ The importance of these translations results primarily from three facts. First, James Fenimore Cooper was the first American author who was introduced to Slovenian readers with a whole series of novels. He therefore became the first widely known author from the New World. His status with Slovenian readers was to some extent similar to the status he gained in the United States of America where the creation of the "*Leatherstocking* saga cemented his position" (Reuben: 2008) as America's first great novelist. Second, these translations were of major importance for the Slovenian audience since they continued the familiarisation process started in the 1830s by the works of the Slovenian missionary Friderik Irenej Baraga. However, even though Baraga lived among the Ottawa and Ojibwa Indians and studied their culture, his perspective was that of an 'outsider'. Cooper, as an American, offered a new standpoint, that of an 'insider'. Hence the translations of his novels revived the interest in Native Americans and in those aspects of American reality which were linked with multicultural coexistence. In addition, despite the pronounced abridgement of the texts, these five translations, published in 1900 and 1901, widely

¹ The article "The first translations of *Leatherstocking Tales* in Slovenian" by Darja Mazi – Leskovar in *Acta Neophilologica*, 40, 1-2 (2007): 75–88 provides more detailed information on the earliest translations of this James F. Cooper's series.

expanded the range of themes which the later development of the fiction in the USA established as typically American. On the other hand, these adaptations convey only a few of the many ethical issues which are also a distinctive feature of *Leatherstocking Tales* and which were to be fully revealed to Slovenian readers only in the later translations of these novels.

The 20th century translations of *Leatherstocking Tales* will be analysed as to the “translation of culture which aims at making the experience of other peoples understandable” (Di Luzio, Guenther, Orletti 2001) to the target readers. The term culture in this context refers to the complex literary context in which the narrative is set, and also to the entire personal and social framework which determined the life of the author, James F. Cooper, and his source readership (idem.). Since throughout the 20th century an important section of American culture has been progressively losing its foreign connotation for Slovenian audiences, it is expected that the analysis of translations will show to what extent the translations testify to the changed relationship between foreignisation and domestication translation strategies. The former strategy refers to the keeping of the elements foreign to the target culture and the latter evokes the replacing of the unknown and strange with the elements familiar to target readers. It will be thus of particular interest to establish if the translations are increasingly faithful to the original texts and at the same time accessible for the contemporary readers.

THE 1926 TRANSLATION OF *THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS*

The Last of the Mohicans, the narrative in which Natanael Bumppo, the main hero of the *Leatherstocking Tales*, is called Hawkeye, presents the scout in his manhood. The most popular novel in the series with American readers thus proved to be the favourite also with the Slovenian audience. However, like the whole saga, *The Last of the Mohicans* also ranks among novels praised on the one hand and despised on the other. Among the authors who considered it a masterpiece are Alexander Dumas and Joseph Conrad. Opposing views are also held by literary critics; Denis Donoghue, for example, argues that he finds this novel, together with the others of this saga, “nearly unreadable” (Donoghue 220). However, the same critic quotes renowned literary figures who argued the opposite, thus in favour of his work. (Donoghue 219). Twenty century critics reconsidered in particular *The Last of the Mohicans* and uncovered “the book’s general artistic direction” (Merchant 87) which was exploited also by the film industry.

The 1926 translation of *The Last of the Mohicans* is titled *Zadnji Mohikanec* which is a literal translation of the English title. Hence, the first novelty is the deforeignisation of the previous title of the Slovenian translation which read *Poslednji Mohikanec Natanael Bumppo*². The omission of the hero’s name Natanael Bumppo brings the Slovenian title in line with the original and in addition it eliminates the unnecessary reinforcement of the foreignisation effect which is achieved already with the indication of the main hero’s ethnicity. The translator Alojz Benkovič introduced a subtitle, *Indijanska*

² The Slovenian term ‘poslednji’ is a synonym with ‘zadnji’ hence the 1900 and the 1926 translations of the English adjective ‘the last’, appearing in the title, perfectly correspond to the context of the title of this narrative.

povest iz leta 1757 (An Indian tale from the year 1757), which gives the temporal and spatial framework to the narrative. This subtitle may be considered as another proof of the translator's intention to prepare the prospective reader to tackle a narrative distant in place and remote in time.

The translation is an adaptation, which is stated on the title page. The term 'adaptation' has no negative connotation since closeness to the source text may not always assure the necessary balance between comprehensibility and foreignness. (Anderman and Rogers: 2003). However this translation of *The Last of the Mohicans* clearly shows that the foreignness of the source text for the targeted readers decreased considerably from the beginning of the century. One of the consequences of this new situation is the length of this translation: it is double the length of the 1900 translation. Notwithstanding, it is obvious from the Contents page, which opens the book, that the text is still significantly reduced from the original: the 33 chapters of the source text are rendered in 18 chapters of the translation. The new, adapted chapters are not introduced by quotations, which is understandable since the quotation introducing each of the original chapters refers to the content of that particular chapter. Another difference regarding the chapters is that the original chapters are only numbered, while those in the adaptation are numbered but in addition each has also a title. For example, the first chapter is entitled "Odhod" (Departure), the second "Izdajalec" (Traitor) and the third "Pribežališče" (Refuge). These titles may be viewed as a domestication device, uncovering the basic points of the plot of this frontier adventure story set in the context of the war. There are battles between English and French forces for the new territories, the constant rivalry between Indian tribes and the confrontation of combinations of the two races with other combinations. Hawkeye tries to bring two daughters of Munro, the commander of the English fortress, to a safe place while also helping the Mohicans in their fight with the Delawares. Nevertheless, the only protagonists mentioned in the titles of the chapters are Indians. The titles of the last two chapters, "Delavarsko maščevanje" (The Delawares' vengeance), and "Žalovanje" (Mourning), clearly predict the tragic end where the English father mourns one of his daughters and the Mohicans' chief Chingachgook deplores the loss of his only son Uncas, the last of the tribe.

The adaptation of the novel required blending of the main passages of the original chapters. For example, the first significant exchange between an Indian and a white man in the source text occurs in the third chapter, while in the Slovenian translation the dialogue between Hawkeye and Chingachgook is included in the second chapter. Nevertheless, despite the reductions, the target text contains several passages which are not needed for the mere development of the story. Even though this article deliberately bypasses an analysis of translation devices and concentrates exclusively on the presentation of foreignisation and domestication devices, the example below is given to illustrate that the adaptation enables the readers to share a few stylistic features of the source text. In the third chapter of the original, there is a longer speech in which Chingachgook meditates upon the fate of his tribe. Among others, he says, "Where are the blossoms of those summers! – fallen, one by one: so all of my family departed, each in his turn, to the land of spirits" (25). The translation includes the rhetorical question and the comparison which are translated as "Kje je cvetje preteklega poletja? Odpadli so cvetovi drugim za drugim. Tako so šli tudi moji sorodniki, drug za drugim v deželo

duhov“(11)³. The retranslation into English shows that the point is made and that the only difference in meaning occurs in the question, which in Slovenian asks about the blossom of the ‘last’ summer. Thus the plural noun ‘summers’ is put into the singular and, accordingly, ‘those’ is replaced by ‘last’.

Another important novelty of this translation is the introduction of notes which have a double function. Most perform a domestication role, however a longer note has another purpose since it refers to the specific Slovenian context. In line with the goals of this paper, I will give first the overview of the most important types of notes which testify to the domestication strategies applied in this translation.

On the first page the key information about historic facts which Cooper used for the setting of his novel is given in the form of a note. The readers are informed that the war between England and France on the American continent lasted from 1688 to 1763 and that the Independence of the USA was proclaimed in 1776. The note has been given an additional domestication stress, since it connects the year 1926, e.g. the year in which this translation was published, with the Declaration of independence. It reads, “150 years ago the USA proclaimed its independence”. The translator did not translate the two notes that Cooper wrote for his source American readers, the first explaining why several geographical names were in use for certain geographical entities and the second highlighting the issues related to the recognition and honour bestowed on individuals who fought wars in that period. Contrariwise, the Slovenian notes bring the explanation of the realia (Robinson: 222), i.e. of the words and phrases that are grounded in a specific culture and which are typical of the original and its target culture. In the case of *Leatherstocking Tales* this is the North American culture, including the Native Americans’ and the white Americans’ cultures. These terms are either translated with Slovenian words, like ‘blockhouse’ which became ‘kladara’, or with words which are a kind of adaptation of the terms used in the target culture. The latter are mostly related to Native American expressions which have been adopted by White Americans. They retain the foreignizing function despite the adaptation to the Slovenian alphabet. Hence, tomahawk is written as ‘tomahavk’, moccasins become ‘mokasine’ and a scalp appears as ‘skalp’. The pronunciation of the slovenized terms⁴ follows the Slovenian pronouncing pattern of the vowels and consonants in question. All these terms are also explained so that their meaning and function became obvious to the then average Slovenian reader. The explanation of the term ‘moccasins’ illustrates the explanation pattern applied in the novel. The term is translated as indicated above and explained in footnotes as “Indian boots with a zipper” (10). The word ‘mokasin’ entered the Slovenian language and so did most of the other translations of the realia encountered in this adaptation. They contributed to the extension of the zone of translatability between the Slovenian and English languages⁵ and thus to the expansion of the cultural space which is a prerequisite for the expansion of the dialogue between the two literatures and cultures, as Apter explains in the Introduction of her book *The Translation Zone* (Apter, 2006).

³ All translations of the Slovenian passages by the author of this article.

⁴ A few have been slovenized already in the first translation of *Leatherstocking Tales*.

⁵ These terms, however, did not appear exclusively in the translation of the narratives of James F. Cooper but also in the translations of other authors of the so called “western stories”. E. g. in Karl May’s *Eri* (1901) and in the later translations of Zane Grey.

In addition to the footnotes explaining historical and geographical data and the realia which were alien to the Slovenian culture, the translator introduced a footnote that refers to the Slovenian cultural history. He connected a specific, target culture commentary to the content of the third chapter of the source text. In the context of the original, Hawkeye and Chingachgook talk about their traditions and about the ways in which two cultures met. In the target text this section is included in the second chapter where it is introduced with the following words:

Potem ko sta se prijatelja že dolgo časa razgovarjala o dogodivščinah svoje dežele, je nazadnje rekel belokožec:**)

»Povej mi kaj o svojem rodu. Pravičen mož si med Indijanci. Ker sem prepričan, da si podedoval njih dobre lastnosti, potem so morali biti tvoji očetje pač pogumni vojščaki in modri možje« (10).⁶

The term “belokožec”/paleface which is marked with two asterisks, calls attention to the following footnote:

Slavnoznaní slovenski misijonar, škof Friderik Baraga, ki je 25 let živel med Indijanci (rodu Čipeva in Otava), je izdal leta 1843 pri Blasniku v Ljubljani molitveno knjigo za Indijance v čipevanskem jeziku. Iz nje navajam kot vzgled Češčena si Marijo: Kičitva Marie, gaganodamavihin, či vi mahkavendamiid-Kije – Manito, kaginig či mino – ijivebisiian”, to je: Češčena si Marija, milosti polna, Gospod je s teboj, blažena si med ženami. – Op. prel (10).⁷

The translator thus established a comparison between the Hawkeye's attitude towards Indians and the standpoint of Frederick Baraga. The views of the literary hero who has been considered as the first mythic frontier individualist are hence compared to the positions defended by the Slovenian missionary, linguist, ethnology researcher and writer. Such a reminder of the facts related to Slovenian history has a strong domestication effect and it may be perceived as a kind of translator's intervention aiming at convincing the reader that the white scout was right to use the respectful tone when talking to Chingachgook. The flashback view of the note from the perspective of the subsequent chapters and of the end of the narrative, additionally confirms that the note is not out of context. Particularly the closing paragraphs of the novel prove that both men share similar values. The last pages of the adaptation provide the wording revealing the spirit of brotherhood that unites the two representatives of the two races. Hawkeye can console his mourning friend by saying that “he who made us all, whatever may be our color or our gifts, has placed

⁶ After the two friends have talked for a long time about what had happened in their country, the paleface** finally said, “Tell me something about your tribe. You are a man of honour among Indians. Since I am convinced you have inherited positive traits from your forefathers, they surely must have been brave warriors and wise men” (My translation).

⁷ The famous Slovenian missionary, bishop Frederick Baraga, who lived for 25 years among the American Indians (with the Chippewa and Ottawa Indians), published a prayer book in Chippewa in 1843 at the Blasnik printing house in Ljubljana. I quote the start of The Hail Mary, as an example: Kičitva Marie, gaganodamavihin, či vi mahkavendamiid Kije – Manito, kaginig či mono – ijivebisiian” which means: Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. You are blessed among women – note of the translator (10). (My translation).

us to journey in the same path” (373) because they are united through a similar vision of life and death.

The footnote about Baraga is particularly significant since he was the one who put the Chippewa language in a written form. In the light of today’s endeavours to prevent the disappearances of languages, his contribution to world culture is invaluable. The fact that today Chippewa is used also in other media is the sign of vitality that was evoked also with Baraga’s linguistic work.⁸

THE 1960s TRANSLATIONS OF *LEATHERSTOCKING TALES*

The 1960s saw the translation of the entire *Leatherstocking* series, translated with the title *Usnjena nogavica*. In 1963, *Stezosledec ali morje sredi kopna* (*The Pathfinder or Inland Sea*) was the first to be published. In 1965 it was followed by *Prerija* (*The Prairie*). In 1966 *Lovec na jelene ali prvi bojni pohod* (*The Deerslayer or The First War*) was published. All these translations were the work of the same translator, Gojmir Kokol, therefore it suffices to present one of them in order to uncover the domestication and foreignisation strategies applied. Thus the application of the two translation strategies in the translation of *The Prairie* will be presented. The translator introduced *The Prairie* with the author’s introduction, though this was not the one which James F. Cooper wrote for the first publication of the novel (1827)⁹, but the one which accompanied the 1832 edition. It is the introduction that also accompanies the text of the 1964 Signet Classics edition. A good reason for the selection of this foreword is also that it discloses James F. Cooper’s vision of the *Leatherstocking Tales*. By learning from the author that *The Prairie*, *The Pioneers* and *The Last of the Mohicans* represent a unity within the larger entity, the translator is able to present the series as a whole and therefore more accessible for critical consideration. The domestication of the text, seen from the author’s standpoint, thus becomes possible.

On the other hand, the translator must have been aware that the average Slovenian reader could not be expected to be familiar with the geographical and historical facts which seem to play a relatively important role in the novel. Among these are particularly the ones related to the fictional setting. However, related to such a documentary background that appears to be used by James F. Cooper, it has to be stressed that despite the fact that contemporary perceptions of history allow us to see history also as a story¹⁰, the readers are expected to be aware of the borderlines between myth, history and literature. Even books which have been praised for historical accuracy remain fiction and “reinterpret the past” (Schwebel: 195). Thus *The Prairie* reinterprets the period in which the story evolving on multiple layers is set. The travelling of a group who would have been lost in the wild nature and massacred by the hostile Indians, had they not

⁸ Ojibwe—otherwise anglicized as Chippewa, Ojibwa or Ojibway and known to its own speakers as Anishinabe or Anishinaabemowin—is an Algonquian language spoken by 50,000 people in the northern United States and southern Canada. (<http://www.native-languages.org/ojibwe.htm>).

⁹ More information regarding this introduction can be found in the article “The first translations of *Leatherstocking Tales* in Slovenian” by Darja Mazi – Leskovar in *Acta Neophilologica*, 40, 1-2 (2007): 75–88.

¹⁰ Stressed in the contributions at the 2008 IBBY World Congress entitled “Stories in History – History in Stories”.

been helped by Natty and his Native American friends, is much more than a movement in space and time. Despite the many factual details related to geography, history and biology, this novel presents also a mythical journey, a journey inwards that is made by the characters.

This complete translation is characterised by three novelties. It inserts the literary quotations that introduce each chapter, it contains all the notes that James F. Cooper included into a text that was aiming at American source readers, and additionally it includes the notes that the translator considered to be helpful for the target Slovenian audience. The literary quotations in the translation keep the role they have in the original. Although the citations in the translation keep the role they were assigned in the original, that is, to trigger interest, some contribute to the domestication and others to the foreignisation of the translation. The ones taken from the literary sources which are well known to the educated Slovenian readership, as for instance, from Shakespeare's plays, have a domestication function. Conversely, the few whose authors are not generally known in Slovenian cultural context, reinforce the foreignizing effect.

James F. Cooper's footnotes reflect the author's expectations regarding the understanding of the novel's cultural context by a domestic audience, however, from the standpoint of the non-source readers they can be divided into two groups. The first group represents those notes which seem to be essential for the in-depth understanding of the narrative, regardless of the cultural background of the reader. The second type of annotations appears to address the cultural context of source readers that has hardly any connotation with the cultural framework of Non-American readership and, additionally, does not seem to be essential for the understanding of the narrative. Both types appear throughout the text. For example, in Chapter 1, Cooper incorporated three notes. The first addresses the issue of the naming of the river Mississippi and its importance, hence the geographical aspect that plays its role in the story. The second, clarifies the term 'New States' and the admission of member states in the American Union. The third one conveys the information about Colonel Boone, "the patriarch of Kentucky" (10). All three appear on page 10 of the original, published by Signet Classics in 1964. The first two footnotes may be ranked among those which may be worth considering since they deliver information that appears to be part of the general knowledge about the USA. The third one, on the contrary, may not be of particular interest for non-source readers, however, it does appear in the Slovenian translation. In the following chapters, Cooper explains only a few terms, among these rank the words 'trapper' and 'to plunder' that apparently were not generally known by the source readers.

The notes included by the translator can also be ranked in several categories. Besides those which are culturally marked there are others related more to the author's style, which is characterized by the frequent usage of latinized terms and technical expressions. This foreword is a perfect example of these two types of footnotes. First, it brings the explanation of the term 'alluvial' (5), which exists in Slovenian in the form of the word of Latin origin, and which has also a Slavic synonymous counterpart. The second footnote explains the word 'prairie' by giving the Slovenian translation first, i.e. *prerija*, and then follows a detailed explanation:

Prerija – za angleško *prairie*. Beseda, sposojena iz francoščine, ta pa jo je prevzela iz latinščine *pratium* (lat.) – travnik. Vulgarno latinsko *prataria*, starofrancosko *praerie*, dandanašnji torej *prairie* (Op. Prev.) (6)¹¹

Such a thorough etymological explanation presents the translator as a linguist who is aware of the importance of the meaning of terms for real cultural encounters of literary works. The translator's footnotes also involve the explanation of the many technical terms from the realms of zoology, botany, geology, for instance: *belua* (133), *ferae* (137), *ursus horridus* (137). In the context of discussions on natural sciences in Chapter 17, it presents very briefly the importance of the founder of the Liné classification: Linnaeus Caroulu – the Swedish botanist Linné (1700-1778). Then there are terms related to law and order, such as *compactum* (136) and ethics and religion, such as *profanation* (314). Among the cultural annotation that the translator considered necessary are also a few items related to European history, like the one presenting the importance of the Spanish king Ferdinand V (1452-1516), under whose flag Columbus 'discovered' America (330). Moreover, the translator did not only manage to render the humour that is based on the word-plays, puns and cultural context but also succeeded in 'explaining' the gist in the footnote, as it is the case with the term 'physical', in Chapter 17.

The translator's notes contribute to the domestication of the text so that expansion and clarification (explicitation) are well grounded (Hansen, Malmkyaer, Gile: 5). Without a further close analysis of the translation, which would undoubtedly be extremely interesting, it can be concluded that the 1965 *Prerija* is an important contribution to the literary encounters between Slovenian and American literatures. Even more, since the translations of the whole of the *Leatherstocking Tales* series follow a similar pattern, it can be claimed that the 1960s translations contribute significantly to the cultural encounters between the Slovenian literary audience and American culture.

THE 1970s TRANSLATIONS

In the 1970s a new translation of the *Leatherstocking Tales* was published. Compared to the advances achieved in the 1960s, the 1973 translation presents a step backwards. The 1960s translations provided a balance between domestication and foreignisation and thus intercultural referencing between American and Slovenian traditions. Hence, they undoubtedly satisfied the expectations of various types of readers, also the most demanding ones. The 1970s translations, on the contrary, cannot satisfy the expectations of Slovenian readers, primarily because they are not based on the original but on the German adaptations of the originals. The Slovenian publisher decided for the adaptation done by Fritz Steuben and published by Herder KG Freiburg.

It is not the content and the spirit of the texts that are to be questioned, even though the original texts are considerably reduced to a third of the original length, but what surprises the reader are the references evoking German cultural sphere. For example, in the book *Naseljenci* (1973), which is the translation of the German book *Die Ansiedler*

¹¹ *Prairie* – English *prairie*. The word is borrowed from French which borrowed it from Latin: *pratium* (Lat.) – prairie. Vulgar Latin *prataria*; Old French *praerie*, consequently, modern *prairie*

(the adaptation of *The Pioneers*¹²), Slovenian readers can read that the narration took place in 'the state of New York which is approximately as large as the Federal Republic of Germany'¹³ (5). Such an adaptation of the original can be relevant only for German speaking readers and is rather irrelevant in the text addressing Slovenian readership. Another example of German culture oriented adaptation can be found in the translation of *Der letzte der Mohikaner* (the adaptation of *The Last of the Mohicans*) entitled in Slovenian *Zadnji Mohikanec* (1973). The opening sentence reads:

Medtem ko se je Friderik Veliki sedem let vojskoval za Šlezijo, so se onstran Atlantskega oceana borili za posest polovice zemeljske celine.

Translated into English:

While Frederick the Great was fighting for seven years for Schlesien, a battle for half the globe was taking place on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean (5).

James F. Cooper, on the contrary, started his narrative with the following sentence:

It was a feature peculiar to the colonial wars of North America that the toils and dangers of the wilderness were to be encountered before the adverse hosts could meet in murderous contact (1).

Such German references present a double foreignisation of the text and are therefore a hindrance to the reception of the narrative. Translation and the (re)production of culture go hand in hand; therefore domestication in the form of a target text-oriented approach is necessary, as it is obvious also from the contributions in *Translation studies* (Munday: 2002). Accordingly, the German adaptation may be good reading for the targeted readers rooted in the German tradition, especially since classics reduced to a size more accessible for non-demanding or non-mature readers tend to be read more than in the complete editions. Since translation theories claim that readers have the right to be offered translations that facilitate encounters with texts containing cultural signs foreign to domestic semiotic place, Slovenian audience cannot be expected to confront two foreign cultural contexts. Besides, the introduction of the German 'intermediary' causes an additional distortion of the original. If it is a truism that translating requires not only the knowledge of the source and target languages, but also a deep insight into the source and target cultures, the 1970 edition can be considered a failed attempt at international cooperation.

In the 1990s, the 1970s process was 'corrected' by another publisher. Individual books from the *Leatherstocking Tales* were edited anew. They are based on the 1960s translations which are in turn based on the American original. In 1993, *Lovec na Jelene ali prvi bojni pohod* (*The Deerslayer*) was published in the series "World Classics" which proves that James F. Cooper's work reached the place it deserves also in Slovenian.

¹² Even the original title is not given in the correct form: *The Pioneer* instead of *The Pioneers*.

¹³ Dogodki se odigravajo v državi New York, ki je približno tako velika kot Zvezna republika Nemčija.

CONCLUSION

The survey of translations of *Leatherstocking Tales* reveals that from the threshold of the 20th century to the last decade of the millennium, the Slovenian quality book market drew attention to James F. Cooper's work in 1926, and in the 1960s, 1970s and 1990s. The relative scarcity of publications of this American saga may appear surprising, but it should be seen in the larger socio-political framework which was marked by the First World War and the passage of Central Slovenian territory from the Austrian monarchy to the Old Yugoslavia; and later by the Second World War and the integration of Slovenia into the communist Yugoslavia. The period between the two wars was characterized by a relatively small number of translations from American literature, as is stated in the Slovenian Encyclopaedia¹⁴. The duration of the post-WWII period, marked by its anti-Americanism, may be one of the reasons why the translation of the entire text of the *Leatherstocking Tales* was not published before the 1960s. The 1970s abridged edition is the result of international cooperation between a Slovenian and German publisher. Although this edition may be visually more attractive due to its vividly coloured cover and smaller format, it cannot address the Slovenian audience properly since the adaptation is a translation of the German adaptation. Hence, it does not comply with the basic principle of translation requiring that the text be adapted to targeted readers. This translation can be considered as a proof that also in the history of translation of *Leathersocking Tales*, as elsewhere, new translations are not always synonymous with more reader friendly and technically better translated texts.

According with the goal set in the introduction, this article highlights only the domestication and foreignisation strategies and avoids a close analysis of other translation devices. Particular stress is set on the nature and function of footnotes which reveal the possibility of intercultural communication between Slovenian readers and the American author. The 1926 translation of *The Last of the Mohicans* is presented in detail since it involved a considerable extension of the text and the introduction of the cultural information aiming at the general public and younger readers. The translation testifies that the third decade of the twentieth century saw an important opening of Slovenian literary space to American classics. The 1926 edition does not particularly address younger readers..

The five narratives included in the saga were first translated in their integrity in the 1960s. The entire translations are a good proof that the zone of translatability between English and Slovenian expanded so much that the cultural repository stored in one of the most influential series in American literature could become also an integral part of the Slovenian literary environment (Stanovnik 18-19). These translations are a perfect example of the work of a translator who did not only transpose the narrative into another cultural environment without sacrificing the original, but also enriched the original text with several multi-disciplinary commentaries. The domestication was limited to the necessary minimum and translations have also become interesting reading for a demanding mature audience. Consequently, the need for a new abridged adaptation

¹⁴ Janez Stanonik, "Ameriško-slovenski odnosi. Kulturni odnosi", 69-73.

that could address a less demanding readership arose in the 1970s. However, the edition did not meet the expectations of the Slovenian reading public since it was a translation of the adaptation targeting German cultural sphere.

The Leatherstocking Tales may have lost their topicality but the translation of the series remains important not only for Slovenian literary lore but also for Slovenian cultural history. Each of the translations repositioned the subject of Native Americans, so intrinsically linked with American history, even though not mirroring it more than can be expected from literature. All translations make it possible to reconsider the Slovenian involvement with the history of the USA, and particularly that of Native Americans. The translations of *Leatherstocking Tales* may thus be considered as “a means of rendering self-knowledge foreign to itself” (Apter 6). It can also be seen as a way of taking Slovenian readers out of the “comfort zone of national space” (Apter 6) where certain facts related to the cultural history of the nation have been evaluated according to the “pre-given domestic arrangements” (Apter 6). In this light the 1990s edition of *Leatherstocking Tales*, based on the 1960s translations, can also be seen. The fact that the novel *Lovec na Jelene ali prvi bojni pohod (The Deerslayer)* (1993) was published in the series called “World Classics” proves that *Leatherstocking Tales* can powerfully address the contemporary audience. It furthermore demonstrates that the series has been acknowledged as deserving to be placed among canonical works in Slovenian cultural context, as well as in an American context, even though today the books are read particularly by young readers.

Despite the fact that the start of the 21st century was not marked by any new edition of *Leatherstocking Tales*, the interest in American Indians was considerably revived in the year 2007, when Slovenski etnografski muzej (The Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana) organized the Edward S. Curtis’ photographic exhibition of North American Indians. The event was of particular importance also from the point of view of national cultural history, due to the presentation of Frederick Baraga’s collection of objects from North America in its most ‘natural’ context. Baraga’s collection is entitled *Kabinet čudes (Cabinet of Curiosities)* since it was called so at the time when the museum artefacts were sent by Baraga to the Museum of the Province of Carniola in 1836. The collection comprises handicrafts, household equipment, vessels and war-related items, all illustrating the objects mentioned by James F. Cooper in *Leatherstocking Tales*. These objects had been made and used by the inhabitants of the Ochipwe from the Lake Superior, one of the regions presented by the exhibition and also one of the literary settings in *Leatherstocking Tales*. From a literary standpoint the most interesting exhibits were Baraga’s books, among which also the book in Chippewa, mentioned in the 1926 translation of *The Last of the Mohicans*.

Since the exhibition was well covered by the media and aroused considerable public and expert attention, it is obvious that the interest for Native Americans is still alive¹⁵. Hence, the contemporary convergence of the media which allows the featuring of old issues from a 21st century perspective, may contribute to the revival of interest in

¹⁵ This was proven also on the occasion of the screening of a feature length documentary *The Strange Case of Bunny Weequod* (Drew Hayden Taylor, 2000) at the Media Institute of the University of Maribor in April 2009. The film in Chippewa was followed by an animated discussion about the image of Native Americans in Cooper’s novels and in contemporary films.

literary works featuring Native Americans. Among the latter, Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* rank particularly high.

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COMIC STRIP AS LITERATURE: ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS* IN SLOVENIAN

Jerneja Petrič

Abstract

Until recently comic strips were predominantly categorized as either juvenile distraction or some odd adult enthusiasts' hobby. The genre experienced a minor revolution in the 1990s when on the one hand the mass visual media began to explore its rich potential whereas on the other hand the medium's ability to offer "tremendous resources to all writers and artists" (McCloud 212) came under scrutiny, prompting authors like Art Spiegelman to wage an experiment. His biographical Holocaust graphic novel *MAUS I* and *II* (1986, 1991) became a bestseller and Pulitzer Prize winner. The paper looks into its 2003 Slovenian edition from the point of view of the undividable entity of drawing and lettering within a panel. It also touches upon certain translation solutions – how closely they correspond to the source text in terms of syntax and transfer of information - but it is not a detailed contrastive analysis as such.

American literature abounds with works that depict the lives of Jewish immigrants, particularly those from Eastern Europe, and their efforts to assimilate themselves by juggling the demands of traditional Jewish life with the pressures of mainstream, non-Jewish society. It also abounds with works that portray the lives of second- and third-generation American Jews who are still trying to achieve an identity. For, as Horace Kallen said, "Men change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies, to a greater or lesser extent: they cannot change their grandfathers" (Kallen 231). After WW II, however, the theme of the Holocaust significantly increased the diversity of Jewish American literary production. It has become a recurring topic in the works of both Jewish and non-Jewish authors such as Saul Bellow and William Styron.

In my paper I am going to write about the work of a contemporary Jewish American author Art Spiegelman who chose to reconstruct the horrible reality of the Holocaust in the most unlikely form of a comic strip; *MAUS I* was published in 1986 and its sequel *MAUS II* in 1991. Fully aware that the word 'comic' traditionally connotes cheerfulness, Spiegelman attempted to redefine the role of comic strips by first suggesting and then persistently using the word 'comix' (a derivation from "co-mix, to mix together" words and panels) instead of comic strip (Spiegelman 1999: 74).

Spiegelman is a second-generation American Jew, born in 1948 in Stockholm where his parents, the survivors of Auschwitz, lived at the time. The family emigrated to the United States when he was three. His youthful interest in comic strips soon outgrew the common childish appetite for that particular art form, prompting him to draw his own comics already as a teenager. Due to his parents' traumatic war experience he was unable to enjoy a carefree childhood. The parents had had to cope with so many losses; worst of all being the loss of all their loved ones, in particular their young son Richieu. The trauma cast a deep shadow over the whole family. Art's mother suffered from depression and committed suicide even before he graduated from college. The traumatized, guilt-stricken son drew and wrote down his incomprehension and resentment in a cathartic comix that he symbolically titled *Prisoner on the Hell Planet. A Case History*. It first appeared in *Short Order Comix #1* (1973), a magazine co-edited by Spiegelman and Bill Griffith and was later included as a 'comix' within a 'comix' in *Maus I*.

The 'graphic novel' (Eisner 141)¹ *Maus* tells the story of Art (whom his father repeatedly refers to as Artie), a second-generation Jewish American son of Polish immigrants Vladek and Anja, survivors of Auschwitz, Dachau and Birkenau. In an attempt to patch up their broken relationship, Artie begins a series of interviews with his father in order to write and draw a comic book based on the story of his parents' life and particularly their Holocaust ordeal. Conversations with his widowed father, now remarried to Mala, another Holocaust survivor, reveal a traumatic story that began so promisingly in pre-war Poland with Vladek marrying Anja, the daughter of a well-to-do Polish businessman, accumulating capital, and fathering a son, Richieu. When the Nazis occupied Poland, his perfect world began to disintegrate piece by piece until he was left with nothing except his own and Anja's bare lives. They miraculously survived but tragically lost their son Richieu. After the war they emigrated from Poland to the United States where they were struggling to start all over again. They had another son Art, whom they called Artie. Vladek gradually found a way back to normal life whereas the burden of the past proved too heavy for Anja. She finally broke down completely and killed herself. Her suicide was a terrible blow for her remaining son. He suffered a nervous breakdown and estranged himself from his father. In the graphic novel the two stories alternate; both are stories of struggle and survival, Vladek's in wartime Poland and Art's in modern New York. When the novel begins, the father-and-son relationship has reached its lowest point; consequently Art's ties with his Jewish roots are severed as well.

Spiegelman's multi-layered graphic novel juxtaposes the survivor's (Vladek's) with his son's (Artie's) story. It is an attempt to pay homage to his parents and, by extension, to all the victims of the Holocaust. His choice of very simplified anthropomorphic animal figures (human bodies with faces of mice, pigs, dogs, frogs and deer depending on who they are meant to represent) was deliberate so as to make it easier for the reader to identify with them; his choice of iconic representation of characters having the purpose of giving a specific story a universal appeal. Scott McCloud says, "The cartoon is a *vacuum* into which our *identity* and *awareness* are *pulled*" (36). In a sense Artie resembles Styron's Stingo, the narrator of *Sophie's Choice* (1979), in his

¹ As a literary historian I prefer to use this term rather than 'comic strip' or 'comix'.

struggle to understand what it is like to be in the victim's shoes. In the end, however, he is forced to resign himself to the fact that the horrors of the Holocaust can never be fully comprehended by the 'outsiders'.

Even nowadays comic books have a reputation for being predominantly juvenile reading. After all, says Skinn, "[c]omics promote literacy by making reading fun" (9). In his textbook *Understanding Comics: the Invisible Art* (1994) Scott Mc Cloud recalls that he had a very clear idea of what comics were when he was young, "**Comics** were those *bright, colorful magazines filled with bad art, stupid stories, and guys in tights*" (2). But he goes on to vigorously reject this common prejudice, "Comics offers *tremendous resources* to all writers and artists. *Faithfulness, control, a chance to be heard far and wide without fear of compromise...* It offers *range and versatility* with all the potential imagery of *film* and *printing* plus the *intimacy of the written word*" (212). Skinn indicates that comic strip writing reached its dead end in the 1990s; however, the genre experienced an unprecedented reversal once it "realized the potential it was born with" (10). McCloud goes to great lengths to explain the complexity as well as the potential of the art form that only began to thrive at the turn of the century. According to him, the comic strip artist needs to bypass human inability to communicate directly from mind to mind (194). This is why "[i]n *comics* the conversion follows a path from *mind to hand to paper to eye to mind*" (195). Furthermore, he calls attention to the deceptive simplicity, particularly relating to the black-and-white drawing style of some modern graphic novels, such as Spiegelman's *Maus*: "As I write this, in 1992, American audiences are just beginning to realize that a simple *style* doesn't necessitate simple *story*" (44). Indeed, Spiegelman managed to prove that even this popular medium can deal with a subject matter and theme of great sophistication.

Reading comics or graphic novels presupposes full cooperation of the reader who needs to interpret both the graphic (visual) and the verbal components. "The reading of the comic book is an act of both aesthetic perception and intellectual pursuit," says Eisner (8). Indeed, as Wolf reminds us, recent research has shown "that the reading of words is but a subset of a much more general human activity which includes symbol decoding, information integration and organization" (Wolf in Eisner 8).

Ever since 1927, the year Slovenia (then a part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) got its first comic strip (Sitar 9), the art form has flourished, albeit with a strong connotation of trashy literature. According to Sitar, the comic strip in Slovenia has long since lost its pejorative undertone (10). On pages 143-5 of his historical overview of comic strip artistry in Slovenia, he speaks about the students' fanzine *Stripburger* (established in 1991) that promoted Slovenian and international comic strip artists including Art Spiegelman (145). Sitar does not mention any particulars concerning Spiegelman's appearance in *Stripburger*; however on page 148 he briefly (albeit not quite accurately) remarks upon a 2006 "*reprint* (my italics) of the comic strip classic, Spiegelman's *Maus*" in Slovenian. The first Slovenian edition is not mentioned at all (sic!).

The purpose of this paper being a comparison of Spiegelman's *Maus* with its 2003 Slovenian translation, let me now first concentrate on that particular element of comics that, according to Eisner, "functions as an extension of the imagery" (Eisner 10), namely the lettering. "Lettering, treated 'graphically' and in the service of the story, functions as an extension of the imagery. In this context it provides the mood, a narrative bridge,

and the implication of sound” (10). However, comics also use non-verbal language. Not just the right typeface and the size and the shape of the lettering matter in a comic book or a graphic novel but also the panel shape and border ranging from straight to wavy edged to scalloped to jagged to no frame at all – each of the above used to convey sound, emotion of a character or the general atmosphere of the panel. As such “[t]hey make an effort to generate the reader’s own reaction to the action and thus create emotional involvement in the narrative” (59).

Eisner emphasizes the singular nature of comic writing, “It is a special skill, its requirements not always in common with other forms of ‘writing’ for it deals with a singular technology” (123). Comic books have traditionally been done by a single artist who drew the panels and wrote the text. However, due to time pressure, comics may also be created by a whole team of people, which generates the dilemma of the authorship of the finished work (*ibid.*). Eisner opts for the writer and artist being the same person (127, 132) in order to avoid the difficulties of coordination among several artists as well as the embarrassing issue of authorship.

According to Eisner the first page of a story functions as an introduction that is a “launching pad for the narrative” and establishes a frame of reference. “Properly employed it seizes the reader’s attention and prepares his attitude for the events to follow. It sets a ‘climate’. It becomes a ‘splash’ page proper rather than a simple ‘first page’” (Eisner 62). Let us compare the source book’s ‘splash’ page and its Slovenian equivalent.

On pages 5 and 6 Artie remembers an event from his childhood that took place in Rego Park, New York around 1958; in Slovenian translation the event took place in 1958. Artie came home in tears. He had been roller-skating with friends when one of his roller-skate came loose. He and his playmates had been racing toward the schoolyard when it happened and the others did not want to wait for him but called him ‘rotten egg’ instead for being last. Artie found his father sawing a plank in front of their house. When he complained to him about his friends his father sneered at the word ‘friends’, saying, “FRIENDS? YOUR FRIENDS?...”, “If you lock them together in a room with no food for a week...”, “...then you could see what it is, friends!” (Spiegelman 6).

The graphic novel’s page spread was not changed in the Slovenian edition of 2003. The captions and balloons were first cleaned out and filled with Slovenian lettering. The distinction between small letters used for the text inside the captions and the capitals used for the spoken text in the balloons was preserved. Nevertheless the Slovenian page layout looks very different from the original already on first sight. The balloons and captions were not hand written but ‘filled’ with set type. Whereas hand written letters have the emotional potential of making an extremely powerful effect on the reader, the set type done by a machine cannot induce such emotional response, “PRIJATELJA? TVOJA PRIJATELJA?”, “ČE BI JU SKUPAJ ZAPRLI V SOBO BREZ HRANE ZA EN TEDEN...”, “...POTEM BI ŠELE LAHKO VIDEL, KAJ POMENI BITI PRIJATELJ!” (Spiegelman 2003: 6). Whereas Spiegelman’s original uses bigger letters to indicate Vladek’s emotional emphases, its Slovenian counterpart does not. The transfer of information from English to Slovenian is therefore incomplete. Artie’s stammering complaint (he does not stammer in Slovenian) provokes Vladek’s turbulent response. In Slovenian it is much more neutral.

On a general level Spiegelman's use of the lettering style is systematic and -- after reading a few pages -- predictable. On the splash page(s) (5-6) he uses small letters to fill the captions and capitals to fill up the balloons. Later on, however, Art's captions use small letters and upper-case ones in the balloons whereas Vladek's captions and balloons use capitals only. Just small letters are further used in balloons and captions to emphasize the feeling of smallness and insignificance in *MAUS II*, Chapter Two (AUSCHWITZ (TIME FLIES)), i.e. the part dealing with the publication and publicity of Art's book following his father's death (41-6). When Artie turns on the tape recorder and Vladek's voice resumes his wartime story both captions and balloons return to upper-case lettering. In addition to this small letters are used on page 99 of *MAUS II* in a footnote translation of a Polish sentence, in Vladek's maps (map of Poland, I, 60), partly in drawings of hideouts (I, 110, 112), Nazi official proclamations (I, 54, 82) the map of the concentration camp in Birkenau (II, 51), Vladek's camp calendar (II, 68), and, last but not least, to mark the dates on the gravestones of both parents and end the book with his own signature (II, 136).

In the *Prisoner on the Hell Planet: A Case History* (I, 100-3) Spiegelman uses an entirely different graphic style both in drawings and the lettering. The panels are darkly expressionistic, the characters no longer anthropomorphic but human beings, the hand-drawn lettering is tight, upright, using small-size capitals. The Slovenian edition uses pale capital fonts that give the page a much less sinister look. As for the panel integrated lettering, some of it was translated and some not.

I first chanced upon *MAUS* in 2002 thanks to an American Fulbright professor who selected this graphic novel for the Ethnic American literature class that he was teaching at the time. Not a great fan of comic books, I began reading it with a slight diffidence but was pulled into it after only a few pages. Being a literary historian I read it as I would normally read a novel i.e. concentrating on the text. After having read Eisner's and McCloud's books on the history and theory of comics I realized there was a whole new dimension to Spiegelman's work that went practically unnoticed on my first reading. The second time I did it right, absorbing both the drawings, photographs and the text. When word came around about a Slovenian translation of *MAUS* being in progress I was curious: how does one go about translating a comic book? Can it be done by one person only? *MAUS* was translated into Slovenian by Oto Luthar. It appeared in 2003 in two books (*MAUS I* and *MAUS II*) and then, surprisingly (the Slovenian market is small, after all) again in 2006 in a single volume. My paper will concentrate on the 2003 edition.

MAUS I: A Survivor's Tale. My Father Bleeds History was translated as *MAUS I: zgodba o preživetju. Krvava zgodovina mojega očeta*. The subtitle was freely translated by Luthar as "A story of survival. The bloody history of my father". In doing so the horror implied in the source text was downgraded. The word 'survivor' implies personal experience, i.e. a person who has had a very unpleasant experience and is still affected by it (Collins Cobuild 2001) whereas the Slovenian equivalent stands for a dangerous situation in general during which it is possible that people might die (*ibid.*). The phrase "my father bleeds history" generates the impression of the protagonist's extreme suffering, whereas the Slovenian counterpart 'bloody history' implies suffering in general.

As expected, the verso of the title page looks different in Slovenian as it provides information concerning the current edition of the book. Besides the translator's name it lists the proofreader (Helena Majcenovič), the plastic editor (Mateja Belak) and the printing editor (Milojka Žalik Hozjan). The book was published by Založba ZRC in Ljubljana.

Spiegelman's original (I will refer to it as 'the source book' rather than 'the source text') is handwritten and hand drawn using hand tools whereas Luthar's translation reprinted the original panels (a couple of them were moderately changed, as will be shown later) whilst resorting to computer fonts to fill the balloons and captions. In my opinion the decision to separate the text from the imagery was not a good one; as already pointed out, only hand-written letters have the power to support as well as upgrade the meaning of the images.

The Slovenian edition maintains the difference between using small letters and capitals in the balloons and captions as well as in panel-integrated lettering. But computer print cannot reproduce the wide range of emotions expressed in numerous panels. Let me illustrate this with an example from *Mouse I*: In 1944 Vladek and Anja had to leave their bunker in the ghetto of Srodula after the Gestapo had emptied the town of its Jewish population. They sneaked to Sosnowiec where they were hoping to find shelter with Janina, Richieu's former governess. Having realized who it was standing in her doorway, she exclaimed, "YOU'LL BRING TROUBLE! GO AWAY! **QUICKLY!**" (136). Spiegelman's hand-drawn letters capture the panic of the woman and underscore the ugliness of her character expressed already in the drawing itself. Vladek and Anja then knocked on the door of their one-time janitor but were spotted by "an old witch" who recognized Anja and screamed "THERE'S A JEWESS IN THE COURTYARD! POLICE!" (137). Spiegelman placed large, uneven capitals in a sharply jagged balloon. The word 'police' uses large round letters, Spiegelman's 's' – the half-swastika he uses consistently throughout the book (not reproduced in Slovenian either) – gives the pig-faced Polish woman's shrill exclamation a special edge. In short, the lettering style in the above case is suggestive of terror, anger and there is an implication of violence. The letters and the icon are inextricably intertwined. In Slovenian the text has been freely translated as, "ŽIDJE NA DVORIŠČU! POLICIJA!" (Jews in the courtyard! Police!) although Vladek previously explained that of the two of them it would be impossible for Anja to hide her Jewish origin. The Polish 'witch' obviously meant her and not the Jews in general. Visually, the Slovene equivalent lacks the emotional dimension of the source text.

As we will see, the most inconsistencies occurred where letters were part of the graphic design of a panel. Some panels display German inscriptions – instructions, orders, prohibitions etc. – that, appropriately were not translated into Slovenian (e.g. I, 105). However, in the case of English panel-integrated text the authors of the Slovenian edition either translated it, partly translated it or left it in the original. If they did, it required some alteration of the original panel, i.e. the English inscription had to be erased and replaced with the Slovenian equivalent. The result was sometimes but not always good. For example, each chapter is introduced by a single 'chapter panel' containing a handwritten title which has been translated and the panels partly re-drawn. In

the source book the title page is numbered whereas in Slovenian numbers have been erased although page numbering continues the same in both versions. 'Chapter panels' use slimmer, sometimes smaller and sometimes larger capitals in Slovenian than in the source panel. I believe the size of the letters is important: large, broad and round letters reinforce the meaning as well as contribute to the menacing atmosphere, e.g. in the panels Chapter four: THE NOOSE TIGHTENS (ZANKA SE ZATEGUJE) and Chapter Five: MOUSE HOLES (MIŠJE LUKNJE); due to the change in the lettering style the Slovenian panels appear less threatening, the foreshadowing less intense. Contrariwise, in Chapter Two, Slovenian letters are larger than those in the source panel: The HONEYMOON (MEDENI TEDNI). Small rounded letters used in the source panel give the impression of powerlessness in the face of the huge swastika on the Nazi flag that dominates the panel.

The translation of the title panel of *PRISONER ON THE HELL PLANET. A CASE HISTORY* required redesigning as well. The source panel presents, in its left-hand corner – a hand drawn male hand clutching a real photo. It shows Anja and Artie on the shore of Trojan Lake, N.Y. in 1958. Anja, in bathing suit, is standing, looking seriously into the camera, holding her hand maternally on the head of her crouching son. Artie, some 10 or 11 years old, is fully dressed and smiles happily. To the right of the photo the title is spelled out, top to bottom, one word at a time (except 'AT THE'). The words PRISONER and PLANET use broad-rimmed white-centered capital letters, whereas the key word HELL is printed in large, handwritten letters that look like flames. The background to the lettering and the photo is black nocturnal sky interspersed with stars, planets and the moon. The letters, except for the 'burning' HELL cast deep shadows that vanish into the universe. In Slovenian, the background sky is darker and there are hardly any stars. The translation of the title *UJETNIK PEKLENSKEGA PLANETA. PRIMER IZ ZGODOVINE* was printed both in set type (UJETNIK and PRIMER IZ ZGODOVINE) and handwritten letters for PEKLENSKEGA PLANETA. The former word being very long, it had to be printed slantwise, left to right. It uses much smaller capitals than the original word and leaves out the effect of 'burning', too. The other letters were meant to cast shadows – the way they do in the source panel – but they are hardly visible. Last but not least, 'A CASE HISTORY' should be regarded as a primarily medical and not historical term; the appropriate equivalent being 'ŠTUDIJA PRIMERA'. To sum up, Spiegelman's title panel foretells a far-reaching, 'burning' problem that will cast a deep shadow over Art's whole life. The source panel induces the feeling of extreme suffering normally associated with sinners burning in Hell. The Slovenian design of the above panel is far less telling than the source panel.

The Slovenian edition offered some good solutions as well, e.g. in *MAUS I*:

Page 13: Vladek is pedaling on his home trainer in front of a huge poster displaying a scene from the motion picture *The Sheik*. Both key words SHEIK and PICTURE are adequately translated and integrated in the panel as ŠEJK and FILM.

Page 20: Vladek is slamming the door to Lucia's (his girlfriend before he met Anja) face. The huge inscription SLAM is written across the closed door, Lucia lying on the floor. The Slovenian equivalent looks good indeed with large expressive TRESK spelled out across the slamming door.

Page 46: Pavel, Artie's shrink and Auschwitz survivor, yells "BOO!" so as to frighten Artie in an attempt to demonstrate what Auschwitz felt like. In response Artie shrieks "YIII!"; in Slovenian they are adequately replaced by "BUU!" and "AIII!"

Page 74: Vladek is moaning in his sleep – "AAWOOWAH!" is translated and adequately redesigned as "AAUUUUVA!" On the same page, in the last but one panel PSHT, the sound of spraying the insects, is correctly rendered as PŠŠŠ.

Page 80: The sound of distant warfare is represented with a large BOOM over-arching the camp rooftops. Slovenian version uses the same lettering style to rewrite it as BUUM.

Page 100: *Prisoner on the Hell Planet*: Having discovered Anja's body, Vladek shrieks, "SHE'S DEAD! A SUICIDE!" His words are spelled out in black, uneven letters against a dark gray background. The Slovenian equivalent "MRTVA JE! SAMOMOR!" captures the sense of horror both in terms of meaning and visually.

Page 136: Vladek and Anja seek shelter with Richieu's former governess Janina (a Pole) but she won't let them in and slams the door in their face telling them to go away. Big lettered panel-integrated SLAM! is adequately translated and hand written into the panel as TRESK!

Let us look at some good solutions from *MAUS II*:

Page 59: Vladek is describing to Artie the repeated selections the Nazis were performing to eliminate the weakest prisoners. He remembers a sick Belgian who cried and screamed all night. His scream "AAWOWWAH!" is printed in huge capitals across the panel. In Slovenian they were adequately replaced by handwritten "AAAUUUVAA!" And then again in the last, smaller panel on the same page.

As already mentioned, in some cases the authors of Slovenian edition chose not to translate or just partly translate the panel-integrated lettering. Let us look at some examples from *MAUS I* first:

Page 47: Vladek is shooting KPOK! KPOK! KPOK! The source panel was copied without changing the gun sound to POK! POK! POK!

Page 48: Vladek shoots at a 'moving tree'. The sound his gun makes is written as PNG whereas the 'target' gasps "AKH!" There is no translation, however PENG and "AH" would sound much more natural in Slovenian.

Page 98: Vladek is dividing long nails from short ones, throwing them into separate metal containers. The long nails say PLUNK and the short ones PLINK. In Slovenian, however, they make opposite sounds (PLINK, PLANK).

Page 107: Vladek is telling about "ONE OLDER GUY, HE WAS MAYBE 50, JUMPED TO THE LAKE, IT WAS A FAR SWIM". The onomatopoeic SPLASH arches above the jumping body. In the subsequent panels the resulting shooting of German soldiers is verbalized as KBANG! KBANG!, the letters integrated in the panel. The Slovenian translator should have used ČOF for SPLASH and BUM! BUM! for the shooting explosions.

Page 111: The commotion of the collapsing barn is heard as KABOOM! In Slovenian KABUMM! does not make much sense. TRESK! or BUUM! would be a much more natural, reader-friendly solution.

Page 111: Vladek is drinking milk for the first time after God knows how long. He makes greedy sounds, forgetting the world around him: SLUPP! SLUPP! should be replaced by Slovenian onomatopoeic SRK! SRK!

Page 112: American soldiers make a signal to inform fellow soldiers of having found a cache of Nazi ammunition: BANG! BANG! In Slovenian 'A' should change to 'E': BENG! BENG!

Page 119: Vladek recalls the devastating consequences of eating a 'homemade' cake that contained soap powder: the nocturnal silhouette of the barracks is pierced with exclamations of anguish emanating from sufferers through open windows: "OW! GROAN OY! OUCH!" Slovenian translation is rather curious: "OUE! GROAN (sic!) JOJ! AUČ!" If one could still accept the first (though I would prefer "AU!" in its place) the exclamation 'groan' does not exist in Slovenian. Its meaning being 'moan' or 'grunt' I could think of the nearest Slovenian equivalents as "O JEJ JEJ!" or "O JOJ JOJ!" or "JOJMENE!" The last interjection, "AUČ" is a relatively young addition to Slovenian vocabulary, obviously of English derivation. Since very few people spoke English during WW 2 the Slovenian "AU!" would sound more natural.

Page 124: Vladek is hiding behind a corner and hears loud shooting -- TAKKA, TAKA, TAK -- probably from a machine gun. Slovenian language does not use doubled letters so the nearest onomatopoeic approximation would be TOKA, TOK, TOK.

Below is an example from *MAUS II* where the translation changes the style of lettering and leaves out a sentence:

Page 105: In the commotion of the last days of WW 2 the prisoners suddenly realize: "THE WAR IS OVER!" In the source panel this inscription is written in large, broad, black-rimmed letters with plenty of white inside, joyfully overlapping and leaning every which way, floating above the heads and raised hands of disbelieving prisoners. The Slovenian translation uses black-rimmed but narrower, elongated, serious looking, erect letters. The effect is that of a matter-of-fact, sober recognition of a fact without an emotional undertone. Apart from that the caption above the same panel has been omitted, probably overlooked ("IT WAS COMMOTIONS AND RUMORS THEN SHOUTS").

Let us now move to the 'contents' of the balloons and captions. In the source book their size was determined by the quantity of lettering to be placed inside. In the Slovenian translation the balloons and captions were 'emptied' first to make room for the translated text. As the length of Slovenian phrases and sentences differs from English the balloons are occasionally too big. In such cases the editor simply increased the letter size (e.g. *MAUS I*, p. 16) to solve the dilemma. The translator was further confronted with the difficult task of having to translate Vladek's Polish inflected English. Although Vladek takes pride in his English proficiency already in his years of successful business career ("...BUT I TOOK PRIVATE LESSONS...I ALWAYS DREAMED OF GOING TO AMERICA" (I, 16), his English never loses its foreign accent. His syntax is a mixture of English and Polish and Yiddish. This means there are two Englishes in *MAUS*; in contrast to Vladek, Artie acts out his part in impeccable standard English. By neutralizing Vladek's stylistically marked English the translator lowered the value of Slovenian edition. Not knowing how to deal with Vladek's funny language, he frequently resorted to reduction, summarizing Vladek's complex sentences or simplifying them. For example, on p. 17 (*MAUS I*) Vladek says in a caption, "IT PASSED MAYBE A WEEK UNTIL LUCIA AGAIN CAME AND SAW THE PHOTO..." In Slovenian, "POTEM JE ENKRAT ZNOVA PRIŠLA LUCIJA IN VIDELA FOTOGRAFIJO" (Then Lucia

came once again and saw the photo). The meaning is preserved but the juiciness of the original is lost. In my opinion the Slovenian edition of *MAUS* is an adaptation rather than a translation proper.

In order to illustrate the above thesis, I will compare pages 74 and 75 of the source book (*Maus I*) and its Slovene equivalent: Vladek has run away from a German concentration camp and is reunited with his large family.

(Source text, balloon) WHEN I FIRST CAME HOME IT LOOKED EXACTLY SO AS BEFORE I WENT AWAY...

(Slovenian translation) KO SEM SE PRVIČ VRNIL, JE BILO VSE NATANČNO TAKO, KOT TAKRAT, KO SEM ODŠEL. (When I first came back, everything was exactly the same as when I had left.)

(Source text, caption) IT WAS STILL VERY LUXURIOUS. THE GERMANS COULDN'T DESTROY EVERYTHING AT ONE TIME.

(Slovenian translation) ŠE VEDNO ZELO NOBEL. NEMCI NISO MOGLI NAENKRAT UNIČITI VSEGA. (Still very classy. The Germans couldn't destroy everything at one time.)

(Source text, caption) IT WAS TWELVE OF US LIVING IN FATHER-IN-LAW'S HOUSEHOLD...

(Slovenian translation) DVANAJST NAS JE ŽIVELO V TASTOVEM GOSPOD-INJSTVU... (There were twelve of us living in father-in-law's household.)

(Source text, caption) IT WAS ANJA AND ME, AND OUR BOY RICHIEU...

(Slovenian translation) ANJA, JAZ IN NAJIN SIN, RICHIEU... (Anja, myself and our son, Richieu.)

(Source text, caption) ANJA'S OLDER SISTER, TOSHA, HER HUSBAND, WOLFE, AND THEIR LITTLE GIRL, BIBI...

(Slovenian translation) ANJINA STAREJŠA SESTRA TOŠA, NJEN MOŽ WOLF IN NJUNA HČERKA BIBI... (Anja's older sister Toša, her husband Wolf and their daughter Bibi.)

(Source text, caption) AND IT WAS ANJA'S GRANDPARENTS. THEY HAD MAYBE 90 YEARS BUT VERY ALERT...

(Slovenian translation) ANJINA STARA STARŠA. OBA BLIZU 90, AMPAK OBA ČISTO PRI SEBI... (Anja's grandparents. Both close to 90 but both quite alert.)

(Source text, caption) AND, OF COURSE, MY FATHER-IN-LAW AND MY MOTHER-IN-LAW...

(Slovenian translation) IN SEVEDA TAST IN TAŠČA... (And, of course, father-in-law and mother-in-law.)

(Source text, caption) AND ALSO THE 2 KIDS FROM YOUR UNCLE HERMAN AND AUNT HELEN: LOLEK AND LONIA

(Slovenian translation) POLEG TEGA PA ŠE OTROKA TVOJEGA STRICA HERMANA IN TETE HELEN: LOLEK IN LONJA. (And besides this the children of your uncle Herman and aunt Helen: Lolek and Lonja.)

(Source text, balloon) HERMAN AND HELA WERE LUCKY. THEY WERE VISITING THE N.Y, WORLD'S FAIR WHEN THE WAR CAME. THIS SAVED THEM.

(Slovenian translation) HERMAN IN HELA STA IMELA SREČO. KO SE JE ZAČELA VOJNA, STA BILA RAVNO V NEW YORKU. TO JU JE REŠILO. (Herman and Hela were lucky. When war started they were in New York. That saved them.)

(Source text, balloon) AH, GRANDMOTHER – YOUR STEW IS EVEN TASTIER THAN I REMEMBERED.

(Slovenian translation) OOO...STARA MAMA – TVOJ KOMPOT JE ŠE BOLJŠI, KOT SE SPOMNIM. (OOO, grandmother, your compote is even tastier that I remember.)

(Source text, balloon) NO – IT'S NOT LIKE BEFORE THE WAR VLADEK – I CAN'T GET THE FOODS I NEED.

(Slovenian translation) NE, NE VLADEK, SPLOH NI TAK KOT PRED VOJNO... SPLOH NE MOREM DOBITI PRAVEGA SADJA. (Ne, ne, Vladek, it's not like before the war...I can't get the right fruit.)

(Source text, balloon) EACH OF US GETS COUPONS FOR 8 OUNCES OF BREAD A DAY, AND A TINY BIT OF MARGARINE, SUGAR AND JAM PER WEEK. THAT'S *ALL!*

(Slovenian translation) VSAK OD NAS DOBI BONE ZA KOŠČEK KRUHA IN REZINICO MASLA, NEKAJ SLADKORJA IN MARMELADE NA TEDEN... IN TO JE *VSE!* (Each of us gets coupons for a piece of bread and a slice of butter, some sugar and jam per week. And that's all!)

(Source text, balloon) SO HOW DO WE MANAGE?

(Slovenian translation) KAKO POTEM SPLOH SHAJATE? (So how do you manage then?)

(Source text, balloon) I'VE DONATED A LOT TO THE *GEMEINDE* – THE JEWISH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION – AND WOLFE WORKS THERE... SO WE GET A LITTLE EXTRA.

(Slovenian translation) VELIKO SEM DAROVAL JUDOVSKI SKUPNOSTI, PA TUDI WOLF DELA TAM... ZATO DOBIMO VSEGA MALO VEČ. (I've donated a lot to the Jewish community, and Wolf works there... So we get a little extra.)

(Source text, balloon) AND THERE'S THE BLACK MARKET. WITH MONEY YOU CAN ALWAYS GET ANYTHING.

(Slovenian translation) PA ŠE ČRNI TRG. ZA DENAR LAHKO DOBIŠ *VSE!* (And the black market. You can get anything for money!)

(Source text, balloon) IT'S DANGEROUS THOUGH. THE NAZIS TAKE YOU OFF TO A WORK CAMP FOR BREAKING ANY MINOR LAW.

(Slovenian translation) JE PA NEVARNO. NACISTI TE ŽE ZA NAJMANJŠI PRESTOPEK ZAPREJO V TABORIŠČE. (It's dangerous though. The Nazis shut you off in a camp for breaking any minor law.)

(Source text, balloon) WORSE – EVEN IF YOU *DON'T* BREAK ANY LAWS!

(Slovenian translation) PA TUDI ČE NE NAREDIŠ NIČ, TE ZAPREJO! (Even if you don't do anything, they lock you up!)

(Source text, balloon) ...AND THOSE THAT WERE TAKEN AWAY – THEY'RE NEVER SEEN AGAIN!

(Slovenian translation) ...IN TISTI, KI SO JIH ODPELJALI, NISMO VIDELI NIKOLI VEČ! (We never saw those who had been taken away again.)

The conception and writing of *Maus* was affected by the limitations of the graphic novel medium. This determined the scope of the story as well as its depth. Spiegelman proved that even this 'childish' medium could deal with a sophisticated subject matter and theme. The 2003 Slovenian edition of *Maus* falls short of the original particularly in terms of its limited possibilities for viewer identification. Although the original page layout – the arrangement of page margins, panels, gutters and captions -- was not changed, the translator and his team prepared a Slovenian edition that passed on the information but allowed for only a limited aesthetic response in the viewer-reader. The question is whether the Slovenian translator "abdicated the 'writing role'" (Eisner 123) due to his lack of recognition of the seriousness of Spiegelman's intention or was he pressured into publishing the book as quickly as possible? The Slovenian viewer-reader can interpret the hand drawn panels whereas the use of the rigid set-type reduces the emotional weight of the text. Typesetting "[h]as a mechanical effect that intrudes on the personality of free-hand art. Its use must be carefully considered because of its effect on the 'message' as well" (Eisner 27). Be that as it may, a second Slovenian edition followed in 2006. This time the lettering was hand-drawn - the translator was the same as in the 2003 edition (Oto Luthar) – whereas the specifications concerning the current publication cite Lucijan Bratuš, Ciril Horjak², Sebastjan Kurmenšek and Art Spiegelman as the authors of Slovenian lettering.

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² Sitar's *Zgodovina slovenskega stripa* (The History of Slovenian Comic Strip) includes only Ciril Horjak's original work but does not mention his part in the publication of the second edition of Slovenian *Maus*.

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“MAKIN IT RIGHT” THROUGH THE POETRY OF ALF TAYLOR

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Abstract

Although Australian indigenous poetry is often overtly polemical and politically committed, any reading which analyses it as merely propaganda provides only a small window on it. By presenting the verse of Alf Taylor collected in *Singer Songwriter* (1992) and *Winds* (1994) and discussing it in the context of the wider social and cultural milieu of the author, my essay aims to show its thematic richness of indigenous poetic expression. Indigenous poets have, on the one hand, undertaken the responsibility to strive for social and political equality, as is generally believed, while on the other, they have produced powerful self-revelatory accounts of their own mental and emotional interior, which urges us to see their careers in a perspective much wider than that of social chroniclers and rebels.

Since the 1970, Australia has witnessed an upsurge in all fields of indigenous creative expression. Books such as Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987), Philip Noyce's 2002 film version of Doris Pilkington's *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* (1996) and Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria* (2006), which won the 2007 Francis Miles Award for the best Australian novel of the year, have had wide public appeal and made a significant impact on the Australian public. They all stem from the authors' heartfelt desire to illustrate the cataclysmic indigenous people's situation in Australia during and after the era of colonisation, and function in a variety of ways; among the most important being an explicit call to the white populace in Australia and worldwide to halt social injustice.

Given that poetry has attracted more indigenous Australians than any other mode of creative writing, this genre, too, has provided an important impetus for their cultural and political expression. By considering verse as a “verbal discourse in which message is dominant and the aesthetic function is subordinate,” as Mudrooroo Narrogin defines indigenous poetry in his book of criticism *Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature* (1990), many poets (e.g. Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Jack Davis, Kevin Gilbert, Mudrooroo Narrogin, Lionel Fogarty, Romaine Moreton and Michael J. Smith among others) have adopted this medium as a means to express collective grievances against the forced socio-political agenda of more than two hundred years of colonisation, attacking government policies on the social ills within the Black Australian community (35). Although their provocative and empowering articulations of racial injustices have undermined the status quo and contributed to positive change in Australia, this is by no

means to suggest that Australian indigenous poetry can be dismissed as merely engaged writing. Whereas some poets indeed use their talent primarily as a political tool, others view this genre as a means of celebrating and preserving the beauty of nature; still others believe that poetry is an outlet for emotional release, concentrating on the exploration of more subjective topics of human existence. For the purposes of this discussion, the poetry of Alf Taylor will serve as the focus for my argument that Australian indigenous poetry deals with an array of subjects, depending on the author's apprehension of the scope of literature, and that lot of contemporary indigenous verse demonstrates the dual role of the author: that of critical commentator and that of private expressionist.

I met Alf Taylor, a Western Australian Nyoongah poet and writer, at the University of Western Australia in 2007, while he was working on the manuscript of his life story "God, the Devil and Me."¹ A gentle, warm, and very open-minded man, Taylor was always in the mood to tell a joke or spin a yarn. His writing, too, - the short fiction in particular - abounds with humour. "Without humour, I would have been dead [...]. Laughter was my sunlight and roses while locked in New Norcia," he explained to Anne Brewster in an interview for the 2007 issue of *Aboriginal History* (Brewster 169). Born in the late 1940s and growing up in the Spanish Benedictine Mission at New Norcia, Taylor represents an older generation of writers, members of the "Stolen Generation." Although he is reportedly one of the most productive contemporary indigenous authors and the only one to have published a substantial piece of writing about New Norcia, he has received only scant critical attention.² As a poet, Taylor has written two collections, both published by Magabala Books: *Singer Songwriter* (1992) and *Winds* (1994). The former was republished in *Rimfire: Poetry from Aboriginal Australia* (2000), together with *The Callused Stick of Wanting* and *Calling Thought* by Romaine Moreton and Michael J. Smith respectively. Taylor's short fiction is collected in *Long Time Now*, published by Magabala Books in 2001.³

Taylor seems to have turned to poetry for various reasons, including his desire to cope with the traumas of racial suppression and his painful upbringing: "Only love/ And/ The pen/ Can quell/ This flame/ That/ Burns within," he writes in the poem "This Flame" (*Winds* 39). For him, writing has become a kind of sustaining addiction, a way of establishing his personal and economic identity and above all, a necessary condition of existence. "Now I can talk about the life of the child, and I'm free of hurt, free of resentments, regrets. In other words ... bearing a grudge," Taylor reveals to Brewster in 2006 (170). Like many others, he was taken from his parents and put in a mission, where Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal language was considered "a mortal sin" (Brewster 166). Although writing has made him comfortable in the social and emotional spheres of ordinary life, and provided therapeutic value for him, it would be wrong to believe that he deals only with the experiences of being Aboriginal. Like his companions in *Rimfire*, Romaine Moreton and Michael J. Smith, Taylor has developed an array of

¹ Excerpts from this manuscript were published in the anthology of indigenous writing, *Those Who Remain Will Always Remember* (2001), and in the literary journal *Westerly* (2003 and 2005). The first *Westerly* excerpt was awarded the Patricia Hackett Prize (2003).

² The only critical essays worth mentioning have been written by Anne Brewster, who presented on Taylor's work also at the Universities of Tübingen and Maribor (in 2006).

³ The book is available in Spanish translation.

themes. By chronicling the ongoing suffering of his peoples and their capacity to survive in a hostile environment, his poems provide an invaluable insight into the socio-economic subordination of indigenous Australians. On the other hand, they examine the omnipresent themes of love, friendship, human joy and anguish. As Philip Morrissey notes in his introduction to *Winds*, "Taylor presents us with an Aboriginal subject [...] bound by a network of affective webs to family, lovers, places and strangers" (vii). In contrast with his short fiction, his verse is only rarely tinted with humour. Rather, his meditations are often pervaded by a spirit of sadness and sometimes even despair. This is particularly true of poems in which he deals with such typical factors of Aboriginal life as solitude, isolation and loss.

In terms of structure, because of Taylor's highly accessible mode of writing, his lines often seem pedestrian, particularly if assessed by strict rules of formalism. Admittedly, and as indigenous poets are often reprimanded, Taylor indeed seems to feel comfortable in the short line lyric with a meter of four stresses or fewer, or in free verse which often lacks fluidity.⁴ His poems are penned in a colloquial language, and his evenly measured end-rhyming lines are sometimes hardly virtuosic, as in the following excerpt:

Food will be bought
Cheap clothes sought.
Better put money here
gotta have a beer. ("Pension day," SS, 95)

Although Taylor's writing varies in accomplishment, his reputation as a poet is decidedly not that of a technical perfectionist. His verse is impressive because of the directness and sincerity that springs from his deeply felt personal experience. In his poems, he returns to his painful childhood and adolescence, to his hard-won struggles with alcohol and an attempted suicide, reviving memories of his tribe, parents, friends, youthful love, and heartfelt yearnings. Compared to Moreton's poetry, which is by her own admission very often received as "confronting and challenging," Taylor's poems are more lyrical, generated by his urge to reach a significant metamorphosis in his psyche, and as a means of reconciliation with his own past (Brewster 59). Generally speaking, they are also less poignant. As Taylor reveals in his interview, "the pencil is my weapon [...]. But I try to write from a neutral corner and go between the centre of that uneasiness, because I don't want my readers to be uncomfortable when they read" (Brewster 175). However, as this discussion will have shown, several of Taylor's poems stir strong feelings of guilt, shame and remorse in non-indigenous readers.

One would search in vain to find any kind of arrangement or logical sequence of poems in Taylor's collections. They follow each other like uncontrolled thoughts,

⁴ Many critics concur that a failure to achieve high standard English, symptomatic of much indigenous writing, has to be attributed to the limited formal education of these authors and their lack of confidence when entering a field that was previously monopolised by the white elite. Another aspect is political; for many indigenous Australians the English language is still synonymous with colonial authority, so they are reluctant to purify it of tribal and colloquial speech patterns. For more information see Igor Maver's »Contemporary 'New' Aboriginal Poetry in English.« in *Essays on Australian and Canadian Literature* and Adam Shoemaker's »The Poetry of Politics: Australian Aboriginal Verse« in his *Black Words, White Pages: Aboriginal Literature 1929-1988*.

moving back and forth from childhood to adulthood, and veering from public to private realms. Both collections start in *medias res*, bluntly exposing the brutalising effects of indigenous socio-economic subordination in Australia. *Singer Songwriter* opens with the poem “Black skin,” an embittered voicing of the miseries suffered by the Black community. The poem’s tone oscillates between despair and anger. A sense of hopelessness is achieved by the overwhelming presence of the colour black, which has a negative connotation in colour symbolism and is linked with death and sorrow. The yoking of rhyming companions (tomorrow/ sorrow, hope/ rope) establishes a feeling of farce:

Black skin see no tomorrow
black skin head in sorrow
black skin fight
black skin see no right.

Black skin cry
black skin die
black skin no hope
black skin grabs rope. (“Black Skin,” *SS*, 79)

“People of the Park,” the opening poem in *Winds*, begins and proceeds as an idyllic description of a tribal gathering “in the softness of the park/ [where] drinks/ circle the tribe/ laughter, music/” (1). It is not until the end of the poem that the poet overturns this one-dimensional cliché and surprises the reader with the heart-breaking claim:

People outside
The circle
Think
The people
Of the park
Have
Got no tomorrow. (“People of the Park,” *W*, 1)

Several other poems included either in *Singer Songwriter* or *Winds* also deal with the impact of racial exclusion. In “Sniffin,” for example, Taylor meditates on widespread drug use as a means “to get away/ from that shadow/ of pain” (*SS*, 107). Many indigenous people seek refuge in heavy drinking, as Taylor regretfully observes in poems such as “The trip,” “Dole cheque,” “A price,” “Last ride,” “Hopeless Case,” “Ode to the Drunken Poet,” “Horror,” and others. It must be also because drinking was once an escape for the poet from thoughts of his cruel upbringing that he writes, “These are the people/ of no life/ and no hope” (“No hope,” *SS*, 125), unreservedly taking the side of those who disapprove of this kind of escapism. That these poems are highly illustrative of the poet’s own situation is also clearly evident from the following confession: “I was quite lucky to realize that alcohol does not solve any problems; it adds problems to problems” (Brewster 174-6). Similarly, Taylor lists the effects of drinking in “Gerbah”: “The time he’s forty body wrecked his life nearly done./ Dead brain cells and a burnt out liver,/ lays in a cold sweat and starts to shiver” (*SS*,

128). The poem proceeds as a deductively reasoned analysis, piling up arguments, exhortations and postulations, and ends with an appeal to the youngsters to learn and obtain education:

With no schoolin what have they got?
A dole cheque and a bottle, that's what.
Schoolin is a must for today
For the kids so that they can help pave the way. ("Gerbah," *SS*, 128)

Very much in the same vein regarding both theme and structure, Taylor reflects in "Leave us alone." Thematically, as in "Gerbah," the poet stresses the importance of obtaining education; structurally, both poems are written in six evenly measured four-line stanzas, with rhyming end-stressed syllables. In contrast to several of Taylor's poems characterised by pessimistic tonalities, and despite an undercurrent of satirical bitterness, "Leave us alone" offers an optimistic view and can be regarded as an exemplary instance of protest poetry, articulating an indictment of injustice and advocating change:

Challenge problems, not running away,
Forget about the booze and family fights,
Let's stand up as individuals and make it right. ("Leave us alone," *SS*, 134)

A rallying cry to his peoples to jointly strive for their rights, which underlies the recurrent themes of alcoholism, unemployment, poverty, and deaths in custody in Taylor's verse, is also heard in "We blackfellas." In this poem, structured as sustained argument and exposition, Taylor criticises the debilitating role of the media in their portrayal of indigenous peoples and concludes with the conviction: "We blackfellas must stand/ as one/ as the fight still goes on" (*SS*, 129).

Different in form, but not in content, is "Better tomorrow." By presenting a contrastive picture of a mother struggling to cope with difficult circumstances and escape the inevitable "alcoholic tomb," the poet works strategically to arouse the addressee (indigenous readers) towards action to change the situation: "Let's/ Get away/ From this/ Sadness and sorrow/ Let's look/ For a/ Better tomorrow" (*W*, 27).

In an accusatory and disconcertingly direct poem in clipped line lengths, "No names," Taylor reveals his deep concern about numerous deaths in custody. He is critical of non-indigenous Australians, who are aware of the shocking statistics, but do not react to them. Taylor hints at their unresponsiveness with a set of rhetorical questions underpinned with sardonic bitterness: "Who is/ to blame?/ Who is/ to blame?/ Lots of questions/ but no names (*SS*, 110).⁵ The poet's experimentation with language's syntactic markers, such as direct address to the reader, rhetorical questions, satirical antithesis, etc. to establish the point of view and to evoke emotional and cognitive states in the readers, ensures his verse maximum participatory effect. In "Why," for example, Taylor employs rhetorical questions to lay bare different aspects of contemporary cultural and economic inequality and to stir intense feelings of guilt and shame: "Why/ Is he/ Liv-

⁵ It has to be borne in mind that it was not until February 2008 that Prime Minister Kevin Rudd opened a new chapter in Australia's tortured relations with its indigenous peoples by apologising to them for the years of tyranny and suppression.

ing/ In this room/ Infested with/ Alcohol, drugs/ And pills/ [...] he just can't/ take it/
No more/ But why" (W, 20).

Taylor also deals with the theme of incarceration and deaths in custody in "Alone in the cell" (SS, 99), this time on a very personal level. The poem, taking a stanzaic pattern with regular end-syllable rhymes, is a first-person meditation on his experience of being imprisoned for not paying a parking fine. The reader learns of the author's despair, which led him to failed suicide by hanging himself in the cell. Despite its intimate character, the poem transcends the narrowness of the individual and takes on the quality of generic tragedy. "Locked Away" (W, 4), another poem generated out of his own experience of incarceration, is more lyrical ("Butterflies/ Are free/ Why/ Can't we .../
Over/ The distant/ Horizon/ Tomorrow/ greets us/ with sorrow"), but no less effective in exposing the treacherousness of contemporary cultural politics in Australia.

The Stolen Generation is touched upon particularly in "The mission" and "Fair skin boy," both published in *Singer Songwriter*. Whereas the former takes the form of five stanzas, each with four end-rhyming lines, the latter is a short clipped line lyric, with occasional end-syllable rhyme. Like Taylor's writing in general, the form of the poems issues not from an ideal aesthetic blueprint, but from the generative urgency of the author to address his own and his peoples' experiences honestly and movingly. "The mission" opens thus:

After prayers at night I go to bed
lying awake with memories in my head.
I can still see my mother kneeling on the ground
sobbing, Don't take my child, I want him around.
and closes:
I know one day I'll be free,
free from religion and free from rules.
Free to make up my own mind and free to be cool
but I know the damage has already been done
as I see myself lying drunk in the hot morning sun. (SS, 115)

Reading this poem is certainly not a passive activity; despite its technical weaknesses, it deeply engages non-indigenous readers and evokes feelings of moral indignation, anger and empathy tinged with guilt and remorse.

As if they were not written by the same author, poems such as "You are," "Moments of paradise," "Love," and "A love affair," celebrate love and devotion. Stemming either from the poet's joyful longing for his beloved or nostalgic heartache, and characterised by a delightful lightness of verse or elegiac tone, they allow Taylor to exchange his role as protest poet for that of intimate explorer of the conflicted labyrinth of heart. For example, the narrative lyric "You are," proceeds beautifully as a sequence of romantic metaphors that reveal the poet's playful state of mind ("You are a/ cool gentle breeze/ on a/ hot summer day./ You are/ a warm fire/ in the/ freezing month/ of May./ A warm sun/ on a/ cool morn./ a trickle/ of water/ to a/ parched throat/ ...") and leave the reader utterly unprepared for its dour conclusion: We are, in spite of everything, very lonely beings, or as Taylor says: "It is/ only me/ who could see/ in my mind" ("You are," SS, 80).

The same holds true for “The petal” (*SS*, 88), a short melancholy piece that celebrates nature. Inspired by its beauties, the poet reminds the reader of the inevitable passing of all living things (“Bruised and battered/ it starts/ to cry./ Caught in the brush/ it eventually/ dies”). On the other hand, the poem with the indicative title “Let’s,” shows the poet’s concern with the degradation of the environment. Displaying some typical characteristics of Taylor’s verse, such as irregularities in rhythm and rhyme, colloquialism, narrative diction, and his use of various syntactic devices, the latter takes the form of a series of imperatives that urge us to “look after/ mother earth/ [...], so our children/ won’t have to hide/ from the midday sun” (*SS*, 136). Like his poetry in general, the poem clearly demonstrates Taylor’s manner of writing, whereby the content determines the form, and not vice versa.

Apart from a few exceptions, Taylor relies heavily on his Aboriginality for texture, diction and rhythm so it is hard not to notice his indigenous sensibility even in poems that are acutely personal, like the love lyrics “Her name” and “The shadows,” for example. Intertwining joy with melancholy through variable refrains and metaphors, “Her name” reads:

The wind
 Brought
 Her name
 To me
 Silently
 Through the leaves

 The grass
 Tingled my body
 With her name
 As I
 Picked up the spear
 And began
 To hunt game (*W*, 32)

Hinting at injustices endured in the past, “The shadows” (*W*, 40) celebrates the healing power of love (You/ Will help/ To keep/ The shadows/ Of sorrow/ Nipping/ At the/ Pores/ Of my tomorrow).

A survey of Taylor’s poetic achievements can perhaps best be completed by noting “Makin it right,” where he writes:

I’ll try and make things right
 through writing and poetry
 I just might
 but we’ll all have to pull together.
 Never mind how far apart
 someone somewhere gotta make a start. (*SS*, 112)

Indeed, by articulating the multiple forms of trauma within the indigenous community, and advocating the community’s unconquerable spirit in the face of

adversity and loss, Taylor has had an important role in documenting and improving the situation of the indigenous minority in contemporary Australia. Beyond that, and although he is generally more concerned with theme and content than with the nuances of structure, language and texture necessary for complex artistic expression, the two collections discussed in this article break new ground in our appreciation of Australian indigenous verse. Writing out of the intense presence of his whole self and embracing a poetic mode that allows an apprehension of, and participation in the quality of his experience, Taylor has produced works that impress with their magnitude, compassion and power. As an intimate exploration of secret inner worlds, his poetry will continue to engage and delight our imagination; in its role of acute critical commentary, it is both challenging and compelling, ensuring maximum participatory effect not only by evoking strong feelings of culpability in non-indigenous Australian readers, but also by stimulating readers all over the world to draw parallels across national lines and consider Taylor's social and political critique in the context of their own national traumas.

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PRODUCTIONS OF EDWARD ALBEE'S PLAYS IN SLOVENIA AND THE CRITICS' RESPONSE

Polonca Zalokar

Abstract

The article focuses on Edward Albee's four plays belonging to the theatre of the absurd which have been performed in Slovene theatres so far. The author analyses Albee's *The Zoo Story*, which has been produced four times, his *American Dream* and *A Delicate Balance*, which have been performed only once, and Albee's most known work in Slovenia, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, which has been produced six times in Slovene theatres. The continuation of this article focuses on each of Albee's above mentioned four plays including their production details, directors, actors, the comparison of critics' opinions and an estimation of how Slovene audiences accepted them according to the number of spectators and critics' responses.

INTRODUCTION

After the end of the Second World War the theatre in the United States was divided into two groups. Martin Gottfried, the author of *A Theater Divided*, names them (without any political connotation) the right and the left wing (Gottfried 1967: 3). At first sight they do seem to convey certain political significance because this division is also based on different ideological forces, as well as on the artistic perception of the contemporary world as shown in these plays.

The right wing of the American theatre was „the establishment”, to be more precise, Broadway, with its successful, safe, expensive, professional productions of conservative kind of plays, traditional styles of design and performances, right-wing actors who were actually professional followers of director's instructions (or „professional ashtray carriers”), uninformed public and right-wing critics' circle (27- 35). The king of the dramatists whose plays were produced there was William Shakespeare with his great tragedies, his histories and comedies, then Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov (only with *The Cherry Orchard* and *The Three Sisters*), Bertold Brecht, George Bernard Shaw, Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière, William Inge, Neil Simon and among many others also Edward Albee. Successful musicals also played an important role (*My Fair Lady*, *The Sound of Music*, *Hair* etc.). This theatre was written with a capital letter (The Theater) and characterized

the American theatre as such. However, it was in the hands of the business people, it was all about show business. The motto of Broadway was simple: what mattered was financial success, art was of secondary importance. Every play was supposed to be finally also sold to Hollywood. To sum up, the fate of the nation's theatre was in the hands of businessmen.

The answer to the question why Broadway symbolized entertainment, financially safe productions and offered little space for innovations in the theatre, experimental theatre and seriousness could be connected with the country's historical and social background. In comparison to most European countries, the United States was a relatively young and prosperous country after the Second World War. Besides, the country had many natural resources. In less than two hundred years the country gained much economic success, and in the 1950s it was financially the strongest among all the countries which had taken part in the Second World War. Nevertheless, the country's culture was still far behind European culture due to its lack of national cultural tradition. American culture was mainly developing towards entertainment which was needed and wanted and was at that time still searching for its own identity. American theatre was in the same position despite some good plays which were written after 1945: Arthur Miller's *All My Sons*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*; Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, William Inge's *Come Back, Little Sheba*, *Picnic*. These three American dramatists presented the beginning of the golden age of the American theatre although there was not much innovation in their plays. Their works depicted some very good right-wing drama (19-20). Martin Gottfried's opinion is that their „playwriting [was] too old-fashioned, the realism too restricting, the language too dated, the structure too conservative, the humour too broad, the morality too backward, the points too obvious, the climaxes too artificial, the stories too ornate, the restrictions too rigid” (24).

Younger generations were beginning to criticize everything traditional, the political situation, the social situation, at the same time racism was on its way which presented the opportunity for novelties and the growth of the nation's culture. Film was becoming more and more popular and the theatre was slowly losing some of its popularity. The result of such dissatisfaction was the arrival of the left-wing dramatists and, generally speaking, left-wing theatre. Its advantages were that it had no roots; it was determined to contradict the traditionally oriented theatre; it was new and was therefore not burdened with experiences, it was, energetic, clever and restless. All in all, it had all the necessary conditions to start developing a new kind of art. The offshoot of the left-wing theatre was actually the reaction to the right-wing theatre.

The left wing's key word was „art” and artists who cooperated with this theatre wanted it to remain its sacred place. The left wing turned away from realistic and didactic plays that provided answers to social questions. The theatres belonging to the left wing presented the minority even though they included numerous resident smaller theatres, cafes, even churches, and it soon became known as off-Broadway and later also off-off-Broadway (the term off-Broadway refers to plays which were not presented or acknowledged on Broadway). Their directors were usually bright and talented young men who had become disenchanted with Broadway either because they could not get any work there or because they thought that art was more important than show business. The

left wing was antagonistic to the norm and it pushed for change. It resisted popularity and attacked traditional values and beliefs, their productions were not commercialized. The dramatists whose works were produced in these theatres during the first few decades after the Second World War, were, for example, Everett LeRoi Jones (*The Slave*), Jean Genet (*The Blacks*), Federico Garcia Lorca, Georg Büchner, Heinrich von Kleist, Gertrude Stein, Edward Albee, Jack Gelber, Jack Richardson, William Hanley, Murray Schisgal, James Dey, Arthur Kopit, David Mamet. The works of other dramatists who primarily belonged to the right wing were also produced here but the directions and their productions tended to be in the left-wing style.

The beginning of off-Broadway could be connected with the year 1952, the revival of Tennessee Williams's *Summer and Smoke* which was not very successful in 1948. The production took place in the former night club Sheridan Square and the actors were known as the Circle in the Square group. Their production was a success and after this production many other theatre groups prepared their productions. Off-Broadway theatres were mainly placed outside the area of Broadway, which lay between 41st and 52nd Street in New York. To be more precise, off-Broadway theatres were in Greenwich Village and the Lower East End in New York (Downer 1967: 171). Off-off-Broadway came into existence as the reaction to off-Broadway theatres when the latter had already become too conventional and traditional for new innovations. The most known off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway companies were The Living Theater, the Open Theater, La Mama Experimental Theater Club, Actors' Workshop, San Francisco Mime Troupe, Caffé Cino, Café La Mama and many others. The tradition of off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway is still present in the United States today. However, they are known under the name of *indie theater*, a term which was introduced by the dramatist Kirk Bromley.

Edward Albee's plays which belong to the tradition of the theatre of the absurd and were written from 1958 to 1968 were also first produced off-Broadway. Only some of them found place on Broadway. His first play, *The Zoo Story* (1958), was first produced outside the United States, in Berlin, at the Schiller Theater Werkstatt, and only after a successful production there, it was performed at the off-Broadway theatre Provincetown Playhouse in 1959. Albee's other plays were performed either in New York or Connecticut in off-Broadway theatres: The Jazz Gallery (*The Sandbox*), The White Barn (*Fam and Yam*), York Playhouse (*The American Dream*), Billy Rose Theatre (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *Tiny Alice*, *The Box*). Later some of his works were also produced on Broadway in the Martin Beck Theater and the Studio Arena Theater (*Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and *A Delicate Balance*).

Only four of the above mentioned Albee's plays belonging to the theatre of the absurd, have been performed in Slovene theatres so far. His first play, *The Zoo Story* has been produced four times so far, his *American Dream* and *A Delicate Balance* once and Albee's most known work, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, six times.

The continuation of this article focuses on each of Albee's above mentioned four plays including their production details, directors, actors, the comparison of their critics' opinions and an estimation of how Slovene audiences accepted these plays according to the number of spectators and critics' responses.

THE ZOO STORY

Albee's first one-act play, *The Zoo Story*, was first produced in Slovenia at the Eksperimentalno gledališče v Ljubljani (The Experimental Theatre in Ljubljana) in 1962, which was only two years after its first production in the United States and three years after its premiere in Germany. The second production took place four years after the first one in 1966, at the Akademija za igralsko umetnost v Ljubljani (The Academy of Dramatic Arts). The third production was prepared twelve years later in Celje at the Slovensko ljudsko gledališče (The Slovene People's Theatre) in 1978 and the last one at the Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča Maribor (The Slovene National Theatre Maribor) in 1997. From now on the Slovene names of theatres are used.

The first production of *The Zoo Story* took place in the Slovene experimental theatre, which was established in 1955. Its aim was to present those plays that resident theatres did not have enough interest in. This theatre presented the plays in a circle arena. It did not have a steady cast although its directors were professional. The productions were usually presented at Križanke (Viteška dvorana) or in the Mestno gledališče ljubljansko theatre in Ljubljana (The Municipal Theatre of Ljubljana) (Moravec 1967: 314).

Its premiere was on 18th May 1962. The play was translated by Marija Lužnikova, whereas the direction, script and costumes were taken over by Žarko Petan. The performance was repeated ten times, which was the usual number of repetitions in this theatre at that time. Neither a playbill nor a programme was issued.

Thirty-five years after this production the critic Venko Taufer wrote a theatre-review for the main Slovene daily newspaper *Delo* (30.1.1997: 8). He praises the play's first performance in Slovenia and its actors on the occasion of the play's production in Maribor in 1997. He is of the opinion that the main appraisal goes to the director, Žarko Petan, and the actor Tone Slodnjak, who acted Jerry. Taufer thinks that due to such a good performance, Albee has been thought of as one of the most celebrated playwrights in Slovenia.

The second production of *The Zoo Story* in Slovenia took place at the Akademija za igralsko umetnost v Ljubljani in 1966. Its director was Zvone Šedlbauer and the play was produced on the basis of the translation made by Lužnikova in 1962. The play was performed three times. No further details are available because no programme was published (Moravec 1967: 287).

The third production of Albee's *The Zoo Story* was performed at the Slovensko ljudsko gledališče in Celje in 1978. The play was directed by Bogomir Veras, who also acted as Peter, and Janez Starina, as Jerry. The directors decided for the same translation (by Marija Lužnikova). The play's set designer was Avgust Lavrenčič. The opening night was on 24th November 1978 and the play was performed twenty times. A short programme for the play and its production was written and published for this occasion (Kaufman, ed., 1983: 49).

One of the directors of the play, Bogomir Veras, states in the programme in his article „Kulturnemu animatorju in potrošniku (To the Cultural Animator and the Con-

sumer)" that both directors decided for this play to be shown because they agreed that a man's existence in an urban environment was not the case of big American and European cities only but also of Slovene ones. Veras is of the opinion that human anxiety is becoming more common despite newly introduced material wealth (e.g. cars), especially if it develops even further towards materialism and forgets about cultural aspects of life. Veras adds that people should be aware of their biological needs and should also pay more attention to their spirituality (Anon. 1978-79: 2).

France Vurnik states in his article „Bridka zgodba odtujenosti"(A Bitter Story of Alienation) (24. 10. 1978: 5) that although the play presents the American big-city life, it also applies to people's lives outside the United States. Jerry's alienation is thus authentic and deeply moving. Both Jerry and Peter are the figures of modern civilization. Vurnik also stresses that this Albee's play is thus not only a play about an American way of life but also about ours (24. 10. 1978: 5).

Such responses prove the fact that Slovene audiences as well as the director and the above mentioned actors agree that *The Zoo Story* is not an exotic play about man's alienation. It deals also with our problems and as such constitutes a relevant part of the repertoire of our theatre.

The last production of *The Zoo Story* was at the Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča in Maribor in 1997, thirty-five years after its first performance in Slovenia. The premiere was on 24th January 1997 and its director and set designer, Matjaž Latin, decided for a new translation of the play by Alja Predan. The dramaturg was Vili Ravnjak. Peter was acted by Davor Herga and Jerry by Jure Ivanušič. The performance was presented 22 times and seen by 1312 visitors. A playbill was printed for the opening night and the play was also included in the next season programme and was performed an additional seven times. The total number of visitors was 1562 (Vevar 1999: 55).

The play's director, Matjaž Latin, states in an interview entitled „Vsak ima svoj zoološki vrt" (Everybody Has Got His Own Zoo) given before the premiere that Albee is a playwright who analyses and dissects eternal relationships between people. According to Latin, everybody has got his zoo, either at home, at work or within himself. That is why Latin wants to point out the blockade and inability of communication between people, which is more and more present in their lives (Grizold 23. 1. 1997: 14).

The actor Davor Herga remembers that he learnt much about Peter during the rehearsal (Ravnjak, 1996-97: 1). On the outside Peter's life is good. Only through his conversation with Jerry, Peter finds out that he does not know much about his own family, that his friends are merely business partners and that he spends each Sunday alone. He has animal instincts but does not know how to defend himself and his family. In his opinion, the play speaks about contemporary situation in the United States and in Europe. Peter is a true representative of the Internet generation since he does all his work alone at home and knows his business colleagues only through the Internet. Both of his daughters also have a computer at home and so they leave him alone. He does not talk with his wife and he carefully plans his weekly life.

The actor Jure Ivanušič (Jerry) describes the character of Jerry as a person with numerous frustrations, which are the result of unsolved and unforgotten childhood memo-

ries: the loss of his parents and homosexuality (*ibid.*). As Jerry he wants to show the rage and inability of a man who is caught in his own problems and cannot solve them.

Another two positive critical opinions were written about the play. The first one, written by the critic Dario Svetej (28. 1. 1997: 17), who praises the two actors and the director who managed to intensify the play from the quiet beginning to Jerry's dramatic death. Another critic, Veno Taufer, points out in his article for the newspaper *Delo* (30. 1. 1997: 8) that Albee is deeply engaged in our understanding and sensitivity for the distress of a modern urban man. He especially praises the actor Jure Ivanušič. His stammering and faltering are not the result of Jerry's psychological state but his unbearable social situation.

The director's idea of Peter communicating with others with the help of the Internet makes this production really interesting and up-to-date. The fact that his daughters also possess computers in their rooms illustrates the picture of Peter thinking that material things make people alive and happy and that personal relations and physical contacts among people are unnecessary.

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Albee's next one-act play which has been produced in Slovenia is *The American Dream*. It was performed at the Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča v Ljubljani (The Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana) only a year after Albee's first one-act play, *The Zoo Story*. The premiere was on 19th January 1963 at Križanke (Viteška dvorana) two years after its premiere in New York. The play was translated by one of the most prolific Slovene translators, Janko Moder, and directed by Žarko Petan. The set director was Sveta Jovanović and the costume designer Anja Dolenčeva. The cast included Duša Počkaj (Mommy), Janez Albreht (Daddy), Vida Juvanova (Grandma), Slavka Glavinova (Mrs. Barker) and Boris Kralj (Young Man). A short programme was prepared and published describing the play's production and its author. The play was presented 18 times (Moravec 1967: 168f). In the next season the play was part of the programme presented abroad while the Drama theatre company was on its tour in Poland. The rest of the programme included Primož Kozak's *Afera (Affair)*, Albert Camus' *Caligula* and Félicien Marceau's *Eggs*. Albee's *The American Dream* was one of the best performances of the last three seasons and all the plays shown on the tour were highly praised (Predan 1975: 15).

An anonymous critic points out in the leading Slovene newspaper *Delo* before the play's premiere that Albee's work does not portray a modern American society only but it provides a much more general picture of contemporary society, which is becoming dehumanised (Anon. 18. 1. 1963: 6). The play's director, Žarko Petan, who directed many avant-garde plays in Slovenia during this period, is of the similar opinion (Zupančič 1962-63: 3). Petan thinks that the mechanization of humanity and its consequences, the danger that people will be equalled with objects and become their slaves one day, is a general picture of contemporary society.

On the other hand, the critic Vasja Predan thinks that both Albee's plays, *The Zoo Story* and *The American Dream*, are about classic American problems: dehumanization and slavery. However, the spectator cannot remain untouched by the future of mankind

(Predan 22. 1. 1963: 5). Another critic, Lojze Smasek, writes for the newspaper *Večer* (11. 4. 1963: 5) that Albee deals with the mistakes and diseases of his own country only because he is a patriot who wants to make America a better place. The destiny of the victims is tragic because other people make them dream the American dream about their superiority and disharmony between their wishes and the possibilities of realizing them. Josip Vidmar, one of the senior Slovene critics, thinks that *The American Dream* is a typical American play, a grotesque, which with its almost normal physical appearance calls our attention to the horrors lying below it (6. 2. 1963: 5). According to Vidmar, Albee's plays are typical American plays and are therefore exotic for Slovene audiences. However, another critic, Filip Kalan, states in his book *Odmevi z ekrana* (Echoes from the Television Screen) that Albee's *The American Dream* has had a profound effect on the theatre in Slovenia due to numerous discussions about the theatre and that it has accelerated the growth of new dramatic genres to which also *The American Dream* belongs (1969: 27f). Kalan also thinks that the play was really well received because of two actresses (Duša Počkajeva as Mommy and Slavka Glavinova as Mrs. Barker).

A DELICATE BALANCE

Albee's *A Delicate Balance* has been performed in Slovenia only once so far. Its premiere was at the Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča (the Slovene National Theatre) in Ljubljana on 8th February 1969. The play was translated by Maila Golobova. Its director was Miran Herzog, its set designer was Viktor Molka and the costume designer was Vida Zupan Benčičeva. The play was performed twenty-eight times (Clemenz 1973: 8). The cast was Štefka Drolčeva as Agnes, Jože Zupan as Tobias, Duša Počkajeva as Claire, Majda Potokarjeva as Julia, Angela Hlebčetova as Edna and Maks Bajc as Harry (Negro 1968-69: 461). A programme commenting on the play, its author, production and cast was prepared for its premiere including a translation of the interview with Edward Albee on his playwriting.

Jože Koruza wrote a critical response to the production two days after its premiere. He comments that the director faithfully follows Albee's text and that he presents it as a realistic drama (10. 2. 1969: 3). Koruza focuses on three characters: Počkaj's Claire, a woman about whom certain negative effects of alcoholism are already visible; Drolc's Agnes, who is a practical, decisive, matter-of-fact and embittered woman because of her husband's alienation; and Zupan's Tobias, a confused husband full of moral dilemmas. The other three characters gave average performances, whereas the whole production was in his opinion very successful.

Josip Vidmar writes a few days after the play's premiere about what he thinks that balance presents: sterile peace, harmony in a standard American family, and their best friends from the same social class (14. 2. 1969: 5). According to Albee, the life of the representatives of this social class is weary; it equals precarious living and is spiced with psychoanalysis, alcoholism, erotic reminiscences and suspicion. Such balance is based on an enclosed and infertile idyll between people who are focused on their own existence only and it is therefore short-sighted. Vidmar is of the opinion that the cast was average with the exception of Štefka Drolčeva as Agnes, Jože Zupan as Tobias and

especially Duša Počkajeva as Claire. Vidmar thinks Herzog's production was rather interesting.

Another critical response to the production of *A Delicate Balance* was published in *Mladina*. It was written by Andrej Trupej (24. 2. 1969: 9). He describes this play as a grotesque comedy about typical American middle-class family life. The family, in his opinion, is rich but bored, hollow and monotonous. Albee's heroes are enclosed in their own world and lonely. In his opinion, the play is based on the quartet and it does not stress the role of the newcomers. The best actresses, in Tropej's opinion, are Počkajeva, due to her acting of an intoxicated virgin who quickly finds entertainment in every possible situation, and Drolčeva, whose Agnes is a lonely wife and arbiter, while Jože Zupan was not convincing and Potokarjeva was too hysterical. Trupej stresses that this production belongs to the best Slovene productions of the season 1968- 69.

What surprises me is the fact that this play has been produced only once in Slovene theatres so far. Its theme is universal and raises questions about family matters and family friends which are eternal. This play is about a rich and bored family although the same relations could also be true for middle-class families nowadays. In such families relatively unimportant material things make their family members as well as their family friends more alienated, bored and envious. In these days when small unpredictable events can stir up a family, it would be interesting to study and observe the family members' reactions, especially the reaction of spoilt children, when unexpected events of a family life would cause the family's delicate balance to be disturbed.

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?

The last of Albee's full-length plays which have been produced in Slovenia is his most known and probably also the most successful play *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* It was first performed at Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča in Ljubljana in 1964, only one and half a year after its premiere in New York. The next productions took place at the Slovensko stalno gledališče v Trstu (The Slovene Permanent Theatre in Trieste) in 1980, at the Akademija za gledališče, radio, film in televizijo (The Academy of Theatre, Radio, Film and Television) in 1990, then at the Prešernovo gledališče Kranj (The Prešeren Theatre Kranj) in 1990, at Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča in Maribor (The Slovene National Theatre in Maribor) in 1995, and finally it came back to Ljubljana's Drama Slovenskega narodnega gledališča (Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana) in 1997.

The first production of Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in Slovenia is his third work which was presented to Slovene audiences. The first translation of this play was made by Maila Golobova, and it was directed by Mile Korun. Uroš Vagaja was the set designer and Alenka Bartlova the costume designer. The premiere took place on 1st February 1964. The cast was: Duša Počkajeva as Martha, Jurij Souček as George, Marija Benkova as Honey and Danilo Benedičič as Nick. The premiere was followed by 72 performances in 1964 and it became the most popular production of that season. The second place was taken over by Shakespeare's *King Lear* with „only“ 48 perform-

ances (Moravec 1967: 169f). A theatre programme was also prepared for the premiere commenting on the author, his play and its Slovene production.

Vasja Predan writes in the play-bill that this play is supposed to take the audience into the labyrinth of the new image of the American dream. Its aim is to provoke the audience, to awake its moral conscience, to insult and to inspire the audience's rebellion and resistance to the „rotten lemon“. Predan believes that Albee depicts a typical American family who cannot keep their intimate life to themselves anymore. The promised land of electronic civilization is presented through the spectrum of a dehumanised family with an imagined son in the centre igniting conflicts (Zupančič 1963-64: 176f). In his article, Predan praises the premiere, the cast, and especially the actors Počkajeva and Souček as well as the director, Mile Korun. He believes that this production could definitely be presented abroad. The vision of a world almost completely devastated and deformed with morally rotten relationships presented by Albee, is real (3. 2. 1964: 2). Three weeks after the premiere, Predan wrote another article for the fortnightly magazine *Naši razgledi* about this production (22. 2. 1964: 73). He calls Albee an *enfant terrible* of contemporary American drama, who is accepted in Europe both with open arms and indignation. Predan believes that there is an American version of Europe in *Virginia Woolf* since he thinks that the traces of Ibsen and Strindberg can be found in this play. According to Predan, this play is about the new truth of the contemporary middle-class world encountering dehumanisation, alienation, disintegration, erroneousness and even decay. Albee does not present a happy-end illusion, which is so typical of the American film industry and literature. Again, Predan stresses the high value of Korun's production. In Predan's essay „Dva Američana“ (Two Americans) (1975: 253), the critic thinks that Albee's world is still strange to us. However, he finds one common thing between the two worlds. Albee's world unfolds in the absurd wish not to be the way it is, whereas our world tends to reach the point of absurdity. Predan thinks that Albee warns us against the consequences of invisible lust.

The theatre's notice about Albee's play published in the newspaper *Delo* just before the premiere, is rather interesting. The author points out that this play is „inappropriate for young people under the age of 16“, probably due to the large amount of cursing and the sexual relations mentioned between Martha and George (Anon. 29. 1. 1964: 8).

Josip Vidmar states in his article in the newspaper *Delo* (4. 2. 1964: 5) that Albee's world of university professors is exotic, unexpected and unusual for Slovene audiences. However, their world touches us, especially George's, who seems to be inferior because of his failed career, and later on also Martha's destiny, which can easily be understood. The critic stresses the play's inner strength and praises Počkaj's Martha and Souček's George. In his book *Gledališke kritike (Theatre Reviews)*, Vidmar again stresses the presentation of the older couple (1968: 116). He thinks that because of them the performance is superb. Počkaj's Martha is persuasively vulgar, repulsive, seducing, egocentric, dangerous but still human, especially towards the end of the play when she breaks down. Souček's George is a perfect and first-rate creation. George combines intoxication, relentless passion for unfolding the past, clear-sightedness, humour, superiority and a weary life full of melancholy, jealousy, hostile love and loving hostility.

Another critic, Lojze Smasek, agrees in his article published in the regional newspaper *Večer* (6. 2. 1964: 8) that *Virginia Woolf* presents the misery of existence of

those people for whom we would never presume to have such problems. Their systematic foisting and their massacre is still too monstrous and unfounded. However, he entitles his article „A Great Performance” because he believes that the director’s production and the actors’ input are great. Moreover, he thinks that Počkaj’s and Souček’s roles are their personal masterpieces.

Mirko Jurak states in his article published in *Delo* (3. 3. 1964: 6), which he sent from London, that Slovene theatres’ repertoire is up-to-date in comparison with theatre programmes abroad. Namely, Albee’s premiere of *Virginia Woolf* in Ljubljana took place even a week before its London’s Picadilly Theatre production although the latter included two star performers from the original New York production (Uta Hagen and Arthur Hill), whose performance was excellent.

Andrijan Lah writes in his article in the weekly published in Celje „Strah pred praznino” (The Fear of Vacuum) (15. 5. 1964: 5) about Albee’s uncovering a fake façade of family life in the world of modern civilization. However, both couples are threatened by a horrible vacuum inside themselves which they all try to fill in with either alcohol or the exhibition of their mental dissection. He also praises the older couple (Lah 15. 5. 1964: 5).

What is more, Filip Kalan states in his book *Odmevi z ekrana* (Echoes from the Television Screen) that Slovene theatres have become up-to-date due to certain plays produced in Slovene theatres. Albee’s *Virginia Woolf* is supposed to be one of them. According to Kalan (1969: 49), Slovene theatres, especially Ljubljana’s Drama theatre, tend to continue its breakthrough into contemporary problems causing rigid critical reviews, disagreements between critics as well as some indignation of the audience who does not want its social non-engagement to be disturbed.

One can state that Korun’s production of *Virginia Woolf* was really a superb one. Many critics writing about later productions of the this play remember it and compare later productions with Korun’s production. Such a comparison was made by Slavko Pezdir more than a quarter of a century later (25. 10. 1990: 7) and by Lojze Smasek 30 years later (28. 2. 1995: 14). Milena Zupančič, the actress who acted Martha more than three decades later, also remembers Počkaj’s creation of Martha (Kranjc, 1997-98: 76). For Zupančičeva, the production of *Virginia Woolf* in 1964 was the best performance she had ever seen in her life and she needed a lot of time to persuade herself to act Martha in 1997 (Kranjc, 1997- 98: 76).

According to many positive critical reviews, Korun’s production of *Virginia Woolf* has been the best among Albee’s play performed in Slovene theatres so far.

The premiere of the second production of *Virginia Woolf* took place in the Slovensko stalno gledališče v Trstu (The Slovene Permanent Theatre in Trieste in Italy) on 25th January 1980 and was later on repeated 45 times (Kaufman 1983: 49). Its director was Dušan Mlakar who based the production on the new Slovene translation prepared by Maila Golobova. The set designer was Niko Matul and the costume designer Marija Kobi. The cast included Bogdana Bratuž as Martha, Anton Petje as George, Anica Kumer as Honey and Livij Bogatec as Nick. (Ferletič 1979- 80: 2).

Ferletič states that Albee attacks contemporary social relationships and passionately uncovers visually healthy relationships underneath which there is a lot of

corruption and brutality. She writes that Albee mercilessly dissects with a sharp blade each tiny part of human intimacy, where he finally finds the truth about the characters' total alienation from society, and their animal instincts (4 f). The actor Anton Petje believes that the play does not only depict the American way of life but also ours. The actress Bogdana Bratuž is of similar opinion stating that she does not see any big differences between the American and our world, adding that many things have changed since the first production of this play. Fifteen years later, there are many more similarities between the American and our world. This does not include the material wishes only but also the expectations about a prosperous career and the inability of certain classes and certain women's circles to climb higher. Petje adds that the Slovene interpretation lacks university professors' slang because there is none (6 f).

Bogdana Bratuž describes Martha as a futile woman: physically because she cannot have children, and spiritually because she and her husband could not equal her father's success. Anton Petje thinks that George has already turned into his own world and does not want to change either society or everyday life. His world is also futile and without future prospects. His depressed existence probably symbolizes the society's and thus the world's decay in general.

The set designer's purpose of placing a wire cage in the background indicates that the characters are caught in their own world. It is possible for them to only observe the outer world. The critic Andrej Inkret agrees that the symbolism of the wire cage intensifies the effect of captivity (29. 1. 1980: 8). However, he reproaches the director for the intensity of violence. Since it is too big at the beginning and too small at the end, the play lacks the balance of the brutality. This production also awakens in Inkret's mind the production directed by Korun in 1964.

Jernej Novak, also remembers in his theatre review published in Ljubljana's daily *Dnevnik*: (30. 1. 1980: 5) the first production of *Virginia Woolf* in Ljubljana from 1964 and compares it with the one in Trieste. According to Novak, George and Martha are both fanatic destroyers as well as deeply tragic characters who fight like two exhausted gladiators for their common death in the middle of the belied world in their absurd existence. Novak also praises Matul's idea of the wire cage as well as the dark silhouette of bare trees in the background. The critic believes that this production was a big theatrical success.

Tomaž Gorenc stresses in the youth magazine *Mladina* (7. 2. 1980: 33) that Albee's greatest feature is his uncovering of decay in American society. However, American society resembles all others although it still contains certain distinctive characteristics such as the destruction of the American dream about success, superiority, exaggerated ambitiousness, unaccomplished passion and unborn children. The critic thinks that the play's message is that sick ambition is the consequence of the sterility of a society which is caught in a kind of vicious circle (Gorenc 7. 2. 1980: 33).

The most extensive critical review was written by Vasja Predan in the fortnightly magazine *Naši razgledi* (22. 2. 1980: 104). The critic praises the set designer's idea of the wire cage and adds that the characters are caught in a domestic torture chamber where protagonists torture themselves and masochistically play with each other. The ambient is not part of the set designer's idea only but it is also part of the director's

procedure. Mlakar's message is that he sees Albee's vivisection as a pair of frightening scissors which are closing.

The third production of *Virginia Woolf* was prepared by students of the theatre academy in Ljubljana. The director was Zdravko Zupančič, Martina Bremec was the dramaturg and Pika Kompan was the set designer and the costume designer. The play was translated by Metka Zobec. The cast included Ksenija Mišič as Martha, Dragan Valter as George, Irena Varga as Honey and Robert Valtl as Nick. A short programme about the play and its production was also published (Vevar 1992: 86).

The actors of Akademija performed this play on 22nd October 1990 on the main stage of the Slovensko narodno gledališče theatre in Maribor as part of the accompanying programme of the annual theatre event „Boršnikovo srečanje” (Anon. 20. 10. 1990: 14). The director of this production states for the interview for the newspaper *Večer* (24. 10. 1990: 5) that it is evident at the end of the performance that academy graduates can rightly be compared with professional actors and that the audience liked their production a lot.

The fourth production of *Virginia Woolf* was prepared at Prešernovo gledališče in Kranj. The director and set designer, Barbara Hieng-Samobor, directed the play on the basis of the latest interpretation written by Metka Zobec. Mitja Logar was the dramaturg. The premiere was on 19th October 1990 (Vevar 1992: 83). The cast included Judita Zidar as Martha, Igor Samobor as George, Bernarda Oman as Honey and Pavel Rakovec as Nick. A short programme about the play and its production was also published (Vevar 1992: 83).

The dramaturg Matija Logar writes in the programme that there are no taboos for Albee since he totally uncovers his characters (1990-91: 2f). Horrible situations of the two duets are not to be admired but one should have pity on them and try to understand them. Then he compares the critics' and the audiences' reaction from almost thirty years ago with the one in 1990. In 1964 the play was not thought „to be ours”. Now, in 1990, the play is about the situation in Slovenia as well since we do not live in a kind of reserve: our reality is mirrored on the stage.

The theatre critic Slavko Pezdir believes that nothing human is unknown to Albee (25. 10. 1990: 7). The dramatist presents the „worst” drama which is anchored deeply in the human soul. The critic also agrees that the play seemed strange thirty years ago to him, too. Now, it is also ours. What seemed like fiction then is true today also due to our material standard of living which is shown on the stage too; such as objects which are piled up, the chandelier the price of which is within reach now, the drinks and other material things. Pezdir praises the set designer's idea of dividing the stage with a glass wall. It seems to him that the atmosphere resembles the one in a winter garden. The verbal and sometimes even physical attacks are accumulating in front of the wall whereas the protagonists' arrivals and departures as well as rare moments of relaxation occur behind it. The critic thinks that the director's idea of attacks going on in the cold, sterile and aesthetic area is great. Albee's characters are caught in the world of belied values and sick professional, private and erotic ambitions. According to Pezdir, the cast in Kranj is brilliant. Zidar's Martha, aware of her father's materialistic and moral authority, uncovers

her true sadistic character, sublimity and fictitious untouchability. However, she breaks down after her failed adventure with Nick, and George's attack. Samobor's George carefully prepares her breakdown. In his closing words, Pezdir stresses in his review that Kranj's theatre has shown its great artistic ambitions and a lot of creative courage and adds that the audience's reaction after the premiere was enthusiastic.

The fifth production of Albee's play *Virginia Woolf* took place at the Drama SNG theatre in Maribor. The premiere was on 24th February 1995. The director and the translator of this production was Radko Polič, Marko Japelj was its set designer, Livia Pandur the dramaturg and Bjanka Adžić-Ursulov the costume designer. The cast included Ksenija Mišič as Martha (for the second time), Brane Šturbej as George, Alenka Tetičkovič as Honey and Primož Ekart as Nick. There were 11 performances in the 1994-95 season, which meant 4201 visitors. A short programme about the play and its production was also prepared (Vevar 1996: 52). The play was thought to be part of the American cycle together with Serling's *Twilight Zone* and Kafka's *Amerika* (Forstnerič- Hajnšek 16. 2. 1995: 15).

The director, Radko Polič, states in his interview for the newspaper *Večer* (Grizold 20. 2. 1995: 8) that his idea is to produce the play in cooperation with actors, since he is an actor too, he also expects a dialogue with the director. He thinks that this play presents one of the most difficult modern texts and that it is also very difficult to find two pairs of first-rate actors who are almost a generation apart. He decided for the new translation and interpretation because this play is not about the decay of the American society only but also about the ethic and moral collapse of the whole western civilization. According to Polič, the play should be subtitled as black comedy.

Lojze Smasek writes for the newspaper *Večer* (28. 2. 1995: 14) four days after the premiere that Polič's production of *Virginia Woolf* is totally different from Korun's production which took place thirty-one years before. On the one hand, this production is much shorter and condensed, lasting only 110 minutes and there is no break. On the other hand, this production is also „ours”, it is Slovene as well and not foreign any more. Albee's farewell to American illusions is also a farewell to our illusions about the Slovene idyll concerning human relationships. The title of his critical review is „Skoraj obredno mesarjenje” (Almost a Ritual Massacre) because the cohabitation based on lies in the drama is turning into a merciless mutual massacre. According to Smasek, the director and the set designer have created a realistic performance which additionally questions the situation in which the two couples appear. The rusty car on the stage symbolizes their intimate relationships. The books which are piled to the ceiling obstruct an easy access and depict the basis of an idyll built on lies which must crash. The accessible bar with drinks symbolizes a barrier which can easily be defeated in case of a need. Smasek finishes his review pointing out that this production is a fresh interpretation of *Virginia Woolf* which - in addition - is performed by an excellent cast.

The rest of the critics who wrote about this production were not so positive. Andrej Inkret agrees in his article (28. 2. 1995: 8) that none of the three productions of *Virginia Woolf* which were produced after its first production in Slovenia in 1964, can repeat the success of the first one. Inkret expresses his negative opinion about Polič's interpretation because of certain grammatical peculiarities used by actors and because

of the destruction of the play's structure. According to Inkret, the essence of Polič's production is the intimate vivisection of erotic and sexual frustrations only. What this production lacks is the American social context and the conflict within the two families. Inkret also does not like idea about the red cabriolet being placed on the stage, because he does not see any appropriate symbolism in it. However, Inkret praises the actor Brane Šturbej as George and the actress Ksenija Mišič as Martha.

The critic Ignacija Fridl is also sceptical about the director's interpretation of this play and the set designer's idea of the car which occurs in almost every production at this theatre (1. 3. 1995: 12). In her opinion, Polič exaggerates in stressing some of the symbols of American culture too much. The car is therefore too intrusive. Fridl's opinion about the cast is also less positive than Inkret's and Smasek's. Ksenija Mišič's interpretation of Martha lacks development and oscillates between sobriety and intoxication only. Brane Šturbej's George lacks intellectual capacity, what is indicated by the playwright.

Peter Tomaž Dobrila evaluates this production in the review *Dialogi* published in Maribor as better than the production in Kranj (1995: 80- 83). According to this critic, Albee exposes his protagonists' dreams who gnaw to pieces their illusions and ask themselves what life would be like without any illusions. In Albee's world of abundance, tinsel, materialistic goods and a career-centred life one can feel the lack of love and the world's *spiritus agens*. Martha and Georges's marriage is like a pulsatile mousetrap and their relationship resembles the sadomasochistic variant of surviving marriage. Therefore their family life is spastic. The actor Brane Šturbej was excellent and Dobrila thinks that his role as George is Šturbej's best so far. Dobrila stresses Šturbej's chameleonic changing from an unfriendly host to an emotionally broken character who finally manages to let the ghost out of the bottle and overpowers everything that happens on the stage. Ksenija Mišič is in his opinion too clichéd, unnatural, artificial and unconvincing. Wearing the wig, she reminds the critic of the film version of this play and therefore of Elisabeth Taylor's acting.

Vasja Predan believes that this production focuses too much on Martha and George's vivisection of a nightmare, as a sadomasochistic destruction of emotions (3. 3. 1995: 36). However, this „tornado” is too violent at the beginning of the play and then it ceases. Predan also thinks that the best actor is Brane Šturbej, a sarcastic and brutal victim hiding his vulnerability, who later develops into the best role on the stage. Ksenija Mišič's Martha is too hysterical at the beginning and also too young for this role. Predan does not like Japelj's set design which is too chaotic and monumental and sees no reason for the car, the high bookcase and some other pieces of furniture.

Blaž Lukan focuses on Šturbej's George, who, like Albee's George, is also a realistic character (7. 3. 1995: 20). Šturbej's George is verbally fast and sharp, full of energy, inexhaustible, understanding, direct, a man of principle and the master of all the actions. Lukan thinks that Mišič's Martha lacks emotional span. She is physically and verbally too vulgar (7. 3. 1995: 20).

The sixth production, and also the last one so far, was prepared by the Drama SNG Ljubljana theatre in 1997. The premiere was on 19th October 1997. The play was newly translated by Zdravko Duša and directed by Mateja Koležnik. Meta Hočevar was the set designer and Alan Hranitelj the costume designer. The cast included Milena Zupančič

as Martha, Radko Polič as George, Nataša Ralijan as Honey and Matjaž Tribušon as Nick. The play was seen by 10,224 theatre-goers and it was performed 27 times in the 1997/98 season (Vevar 1999: 31); it was shown again in the next season, bringing the total number of the audience to 12,896 (Vevar 2000: 33).

Anja Golob writes before the premiere that the decision made by Janez Pipan, the director and the general manager of the Drama theatre, to produce the play is a delicate one because of its success in 1964. However, the company managed to procure a good cast and decided to offer the direction to a young female director, Mateja Koležnik, who has already directed Albee's *Three Tall Women* at Mestno gledališče ljubljansko theatre a year before. According to Pipan, Koležnik has shown high sensibility and understanding of the 1960s literature (Golob 17. 10. 1997: 18).

Sanja Nikčević stresses in her review that Albee belongs to the new generation of American playwrights because he depicts a different point of view toward losers in comparison to O'Neill and Williams (Kranjc 1997/97: 15f). The latter dramatists try to find guilty individuals for their protagonists' tragic ends, whereas Albee presents losers without any condemnation. Their state is actually their choice and therefore not their curse. The critic agrees that the protagonists of Albee's plays are losers and feel weird. They do have certain predispositions for success but are unable to adapt to their environment and the pressure of the American dream due to their inability to communicate with other people. Martha, in the critic's opinion, equals George in education, sensibility and the fact that she is also a loser (16-18). According to Nikčević, in Albee's play women only support their men on their way to realization of their American dreams. However, Martha's life is also unsuccessful because she has failed in marrying her father's successor and establishing a family. The younger couple are losers as well: Nick fails in seducing Martha and Honey is unable to have children.

Another female critic, Petra Pogorevc, praises this performance as well as the then new translation by Zdravko Duša (21. 10. 1997: 21). She believes there are no weak points in this production. Moreover, the critic agrees that this play is also about "the Slovene version" of the American dream, about the capitalistic myth. The set designer contributes to the feeling of alienation, coldness and sterility of characters by deciding for the whiteness on the stage. This colour also suggests the essence of Martha and George's relationship. The four aquariums symbolically depict the four characters and successfully contrast their passions. Pogorevc thinks that the cast is brilliant. Zupančič's Martha is an aggressive, bossy and poisonous madam who always has the last word. Polič's George develops from a humiliated loser into a self-confident outsider, Ralijan's Honey is witty and Tribušon's Nick is her „appropriate" husband.

Andreja Babšek is in her review more sceptical about the success of the play, especially about its director Mateja Koležnik (22. 2. 1997: 16). She thinks that the director has failed in realizing one of her aims, i.e. to stress the importance of the younger couple. In this production, they are only spectators of the older couple's quarrelling. The critic sees in Honey and Nick the projection of Martha and George and the presentation of their former and present marriage. According to Babšek, Milena Zupančič is excellent because she is agitated, vulgar and at the same time a dame, a dangerous seducer, a mean winner and a humble loser. George is apathetic, furious, and full of mean but witty ideas. Nick is an introvert, a sulky parvenu, but lacks in being penetrating, which

could be supposedly the director's fault. Honey is lovely, witty, but too shallow. The critic also mentions the appropriate costumes made by Alan Hranitelj and the set design where whiteness prevails. This colour is meant to stress the coldness and emptiness of characters. The aquariums in pillars stress the vacuum and the mirror on the wall does not function merely as the characters' projection but also ours. The black armchair is reserved for losers, for George throughout the play and for Martha at the end of it.

Blaž Lukan critically observes this production by pointing out that the director has succeeded in only one of her four goals, that is in the cast, which is brilliant, but not without fault (23. 10. 1997: 8). He thinks that Martha is too obviously marked with her futility and alcohol. Polič supposedly did not follow the director's instructions and created his George at his own will. Ralijan's Honey is good but remains in the background, and Tribušon's George is too monotonous. However, the director supposedly failed in style of this production, in the balance between verbal assaults and physical attacks, and this is so because she let the direction to be led too much by the actors.

Veno Taufer also remembers the play's first production in 1964, which presented to him a total theatrical experience (12. 11. 1997: 30). Concerning this production's cast, Taufer thinks that George is the best actor because of his ambiguity and his ability of switching from a game and imagination into reality. Milena Zupančič convinces the critic in her aggressiveness and the acting of the young couple is also good.

It is actually not surprising that Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* seems to have been the most successful, discussed and also criticized play of all productions of Albee's plays in Slovene theatres. Among all six productions of this play, the first one presented at the Slovensko narodno gledališče Ljubljana in 1964 still remains the best one as far as the critics' responses are concerned. Their responses concerning this play are more or less similar. However, there are several disagreements concerning the directors' and set designers' interpretations. Albee's *The Zoo Story*, especially the production given by the Slovensko narodno gledališče Maribor was also highly evaluated. What surprises me is the fact that Albee's *A Delicate Balance* has been produced only once and that it was not much discussed. One should not forget that it received a Pulitzer Prize in 1967 and was nominated for a Tony Award for best play in the same year. I believe the play raises many questions similar to those in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and that it would still be relevant today. However, I look forward to new productions of plays written by Albee, although I believe that the director of the next production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* will definitely have a very difficult job to perform because critics will tend to compare it with the first six productions in Slovene theatres, especially with Korun's version.

Laško, Slovenia

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AUTONOMOUS ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN AUSTRALIA: BESIEGED BY SCANDAL AND CORRUPTION, HOW CAN THEY MOVE FORWARD?

Adi Wimmer

Abstract

Discourses of Australian Aboriginal culture have all too often relied on the “noble savage” trope, in Australia as in Europe. There were practical outcomes of such views, most notably the creation of over a hundred self-governed indigenous communities in the 1980s, most of them in the Northern territories. The architect of the plan was Nuggett Coombs, a top Canberra administrator and advisor to Whitlam and Hawke. His idea was to allow Aborigines a “pre-contact” lifestyle and to shield them from all evil “white” influences. Neither worked. On the contrary, it has now emerged that the leftist, liberal consensus on how to “empower” Aboriginal culture has resulted in the exact opposite, in degradation, alcoholism, and sexual violence. This is not only due to passivity in indigenous communities but also to a decade-long denial of their dysfunctionality by the white courts, academics, and lawmakers.

KEVIN RUDD’S APOLOGY AND A SHORT INTRODUCTION

In November of 2007, the head of the Australian Labor party Kevin Rudd won the Australian general elections, ending 11 years of conservative government. On 13th February 2008 he gave a speech to the Australian Parliament and to millions of Australians glued to their TV sets in which he uttered the long-awaited “Sorry” to the indigenous population. Rudd apologized for two centuries of discrimination, but the focus of his apology was pitched to the so-called “Stolen Generations”. The occasion was reported all over the globe, allowing Rudd to bask in the glory of the moment. His popularity rose by 20% over the next two weeks (*Weekend Australian*, 23 February 2009, p.13). John Howard, the PM of the previous 11 years had refused to offer such an apology.

PM Rudd’s speech was welcomed by all except the most churlish members of the Aboriginal community. It was welcomed not leastly because it offered a respite from months of relentless media attacks on Aboriginal leaders. What was there to criticize within the wide field of Aboriginal culture, a culture that in Australia is heavily subsidized and protected, and which in European discourses has been praised to the point of glamorizing? The short answer is: Rampant and *systemic* sexual violence in self-governed Aboriginal communities. By systemic one means as part of the operations of a system.

It was revealed that in remote communities, a *routine* of sexual abuses of girls and boys by Aboriginal power-men had evolved which went on undetected and unchecked for almost 30 years. To quote just one of many reports: the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) reported “horrific levels of sexual abuse in remote Aboriginal communities, including the rape of a baby.” Details of the report were:

At an Aboriginal camp in central Australia, a four-year-old girl drowned while being raped by a teenager who had been sniffing petrol. In other cases two very young children - including a seven-month old baby - were sexually assaulted by adult men while their mothers were elsewhere drinking alcohol. Both children needed surgery for their injuries. Dr Nanette Rogers, who is a Crown prosecutor in the Northern Territory, said that Aboriginal settlements were suffering from tragedy fatigue, where monstrous crimes appeared unremarkable. “All child sexual assault in central Australia is happening at much higher rates than are currently being reported to police,” she said. “Horrible offences committed on really small children, it is beyond most people’s comprehension and range of human experience.” (CRIN 2006).

The Robertson report of 2000 had already stated that in NSW, Aboriginal children are twice as likely to be sexually abused as in mainstream society. It also found that 88% of child sexual abuse cases are not reported. And this was New South Wales, not the North, where the real centres of sexual violence are. Nicholas Rothwell, a journalist with *The Australian* and an expert of many years on Aboriginal issues, wrote that “from Cape York to the Pilbara (...) child abuse is a familiar rite of passage and girls are routinely violated before their 13th birthday” (qut. Nowra, 45).

How could Aboriginal culture deteriorate so badly? Here is what happened and why.

NUGGET COOMBS AND ABORIGINAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

In 1976 the highly respected Labor politician Nugget Coombs came up with a plan how to save Aboriginal culture. His plan provided for self-governing communities which were to be sealed off from the rest of Australia. No white person would be allowed to enter these communities without first obtaining a permit. In these communities, Aborigines would find the conditions to maintain their traditional life-styles, to have their own laws and to pursue their own educational needs. The government would assist these communities financially. Aboriginal culture would thrive in a political, social and legal matrix whose conception was emphatically autonomous and authentic. Coombs and his ideas had the full support of left-liberal academics as well as most of the Labour party rank and file. By the time it was implemented under PM Bob Hawke in the early 1980s, it had bi-partisan support.

The idea was already flawed in the 1970s, but in the 21st Century it has become totally untenable. Cell phones, videos and DVDs, the internet (with its easy access to pornography and violence) and other technical ‘achievements’ of the late 20th Century have rendered the local basis in these communities obsolete. Traditional culture no longer thrives and it is questionable whether it ever did; it is certainly less healthy

now than before the referendum of 1967. Literacy amongst present day Aboriginal youth is lower than in their parent generation. And above all: these communities, sealed off as they were from the media, became dysfunctional in ways that make William Golding's dystopic vision in *Lord of the Flies* appear like a harmless fairy tale. Sexual abuse of very young girls has become systemic and substance abuse has ravaged most communities. "Viewing pornography is commonplace" (Nowra 37); the collective moral fibre has degenerated to a point where the most irresponsible activity draws no response. These matters now represent the most powerful public discourse in Australia, particularly since an unprecedented government action two years ago, the so-called "Intervention".

On June 21, 2007, PM John Howard and his Indigenous Affairs Minister, Mal Brough, declared Australia could no longer ignore the shame of sexual abuse against children in indigenous communities. They ordered an unprecedented intervention by medical teams, the military and federal law into the Northern Territory's Aboriginal communities. Prior to this move, there had been a wave of governmental, TV and newspaper reports all clamouring for action. The most damning was the "The Little Children Are Sacred" Report.¹ Amongst its major findings was the statement that "Underlying the Inquiry's findings was the common view that sexual abuse of Aboriginal children is happening largely because of the breakdown of Aboriginal culture and society." The first point made in the Inquiry's summing up was that "Child sexual abuse is serious, widespread and often unreported."

Despite unease in some Labor hearts, and despite loud protest from the Labor Premier in Darwin, Kevin Rudd (the then leader of the opposition) professed support for the intervention. However, how to straighten out the mess that a misguided liberal policy has caused, and how to strike the proper balance between local and global culture, is yet an unresolved issue.

GOING BACK TO THE ROOTS: 1967 AND A DEMAND FOR FURTHER ACTION

Australian Aborigines were given full civic rights through a referendum in 1967 and a subsequent Act of Parliament in 1968. But that new legislation did not all at once erase all inequalities. Something had to be done that would go beyond a simple legal act. The leading intellectuals, sociologists, historians and artists were all busy drawing up plans for a better Aboriginal future.

The most influential of these was a high-ranking Australian government administrator and advisor, H.C. 'Nugget' Coombs. In 1968 he became the Director of the newly created 'Council for Aboriginal Affairs.' In 1970 he was promoted to the post of chief advisor to Gough Whitlam, the head of the Labor Party, who won the general elections of 1972 – and Coombs had a small share in this victory as he formulated Labor's "Abo-

¹ Web reference: <http://www.inquirysaac.nt.gov.au>. A Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse was established by the Northern Territories government on 8 August 2006. Its final report was released June 15, 2007. The purpose of the Inquiry was to find better ways to protect Aboriginal children from sexual abuse.

iginal Policy” paper (Wikipedia). Coombs thought of himself as a dedicated friend of Australia’s Aboriginality and he became the chief agent of a new policy.

As H.C. Coombs himself argued in an interview:

(...) what we have to do is to accept the fact that Aborigines are different. They do have a different way of seeing the world and understanding it, they have a different vision of what the place should be like. They are autonomous their - by their nature yes a fundamental thing in Aboriginal society that what Judge Blackburn described it as a society which is run by laws not by men - or women. And I think that’s important, they - nobody, no Aboriginal has the right to tell any other Aboriginal what he must do, or should do. Autonomy’s - autonomy is fundamental to their ways of thinking now, I think we have, we might have prepared to spend money on them, we’re prepared to offer them this and that and educate them and so on, but what we won’t do is allow them to be different. (Source: www.australianbiography.gov.au/coombs/interview)
Conducted in 1992.

Of course Aborigines are “different”, but Coombs was not aware what consequences his idea of an autonomous life-style in remote areas of the continent would have. The essence of his policy was to allow Aborigines a return to their culture as it had been practiced before 1788. Coombs and the politicians he advised believed Aboriginal Australians would be better served if they were insulated from the negative impact of ‘whitefeller’ culture. To that end, they were invited to stay in remote areas & to revive their original hunter-gatherer lifestyle. They were also advised to abandon domesticated animals, farmed crops and a monetary system.

Whitlam had great faith in Nugget Coombs, but the idea of autonomous Aboriginal communities was only realized during Bob Hawke’s tenure. Leave them alone, was the motto, and they will themselves shape their future. The plan was in a large measure born out of shame over what had been done to Aboriginal people over the past 180 years. Coupled with that shame was an unrealistic view of the worth and potential of Aboriginal society, as Louis Nowra has observed: “At the (..) time there was a growing romanticisation amongst the general population, especially from those on the liberal and left-wing side of politics and among New Agers in particular” (2007, 31). Nowra also finds the “idealisation” of Aboriginal life “epitomized” in Nugget Coombs (ibid., 32). Similarly ‘romantic’ views also prevail in Europe, as the huge success of Marlo Morgan’s novel *Mutant Message Down Under* (1991²) demonstrates.

The great flaw in Coombs’ plan was that it did not provide for any sustainable economic base for these communities. Labor has traditionally held the notion in disdain that culture must have an economic basis and had unrealistic hopes that the empowerment of ‘the local’ would somehow deliver the future. And ‘the local’ was, in this case,

² *Mutant Message Down Under* was on the US best-seller list for 25 weeks. The New-Age author claimed she had been on a four-month ‘Walkabout’ with a hitherto unknown W.A. tribe. That her yarn was all fabricated had to be admitted after representatives of the Nyoongar people staged a sit-in in front of the Los Angeles based publisher. The German translation titled *Traumfänger* sold roughly 100.000 copies and a sequel is still in the shops. In 1995 there were plans for a film adaptation, but these came to a halt when once again, W.A. Aborigines (under the leadership of Robert Eggington) flew to Hollywood to protest. In a press statement, Eggington said Morgan had “taken away the right for Aboriginal people to tell their own story as she saturates the American market with a complete fabrication.” Websource: http://www.mountainman.com.au/news96_5.html (27 Feb 2009)

an indigenous culture that was still largely unknown to Australians. There were no plans for training facilities, for higher education, for literacy programmes – because these were, and are, parts of *white* culture. In white Australia, of course every child has by law to go to school between the ages of 6 and 16. This law was considered non-binding for Aboriginal communities. “Let them decide whether school is necessary” was an often heard view, and there was also the naïve notion that a good command of English was not necessary if young people had a good command of their own Aboriginal language. Both languages, so the politically correct view was, were equally important. *Nonsense*. What job opportunities does a mono-lingual Aboriginal boy or girl have in mainstream Australian society?

How muddled Nugget Coombs was on the issue of education is shown in another passage of the interview cited above in which he is asked about education:

(...) starting with the education of how they are changing the way in which children, from the very beginning, are introduced to the world and to the ... and learn how to be Aborigines or to ... and those are - those things are very important and I, yeah so that as I say this is one area where, not because of our - I think our policies are almost universally wrong in relation to Aborigines. (*Ibid.*)

Coombs argued that self-governed indigenous communities would have to be given some seed money before becoming self-sufficient, but he did not have any idea when that point would be reached. The handouts became habitual, and indigenous communities dependent on them. “Sit-down money” was the term created for government support because the recipients were not required to do anything in return. That would have been considered ‘racist’. So no responsibilities were attached.³ And the people in those communities were content to live a life in idleness, and the speedy consequence was alcohol abuse.

ALCOHOL ABUSE

Since the communities were autonomous, no laws to ban alcohol could be passed. (A ban on selling alcohol to the indigenous population existed until 1968: it was repealed after the 1967 referendum.) The politically correct advisors to the government (academics, mostly) did not see ‘grog’ (to use the Australian vernacular) as a problem. They lived in denial. I myself have heard the opinion: “Alcoholism isn’t any worse amongst Aborigines; it is just that they drink in public and the whites drink at home, so theirs is visible and ours is not.” Well intentioned, but totally wrong. A whitewash of the real dimensions of alcohol abuse.

First of all, since traditional Aboriginal culture did not know alcohol it is much more addictive to them than to us. Secondly, when there is nothing to do, when there is pure boredom, addictive drinking is more likely to occur than in a fulfilled working life. The CRIN Report mentioned above points at a concrete link between violence and alcohol:

³ In Queensland, unemployment pay to indigenous parents is now tied to the requirement of regular school attendance of their children.

Central Australia has the highest murder rate in Australia, at ten times the national average. Alcohol and drug abuse have caused many impoverished native settlements to self-destruct.

An even more serious addiction is petrol sniffing, which has become so frequent the government was forced to introduce a type of gasoline in Central Australia that is 'non-sniffable'. Sniffing petrol damages the brain and addicts die after relatively short periods of addiction. The syndrome was given serious treatment in a feature film with the title *Yolngu Boy* (Stephen Johnson, 2001).

We now know that alcoholism is rampant amongst Aborigines, and deadly. Let me refer you to a newspaper report about a community located in Northern Queensland, on the West coast of the Cape York peninsula. It is already a community with a limited supply of alcohol – limited to weekends. The beer supply boat arrives at 9 in the morning and takes it to the local pub as well as to some shops. By 11 the first shouts and fights are heard. By the afternoon, comatose figures line the streets. The whole male community is drunk. But this isn't the only effect. The men beat their wives and children. As a measure of self-protection – this is how the report went on – the wives organize themselves into weekend trips into the bush to escape domestic violence. They hide until Monday morning when their husbands' drunkenness has worn off (Opinion, 2007). A similar case was reported by Mary Ellen Jordon on the Arnhem community of Maningrida, where the 'grog' would be delivered only every two weeks. Jordon concluded her report with the words: "I knew that women were bashed, raped and assaulted every time grog came into town" (qut. Nowra, 39).

ABORIGINAL VIOLENCE: A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

That none of this made it into the collective awareness of the nation is to a large extent due to a conspiracy of silence amongst well-wishing liberals, social workers, and academics. You don't play into the hands of the racists, was the unspoken agreement. The first voice breaking that silence was that of an anthropologist, and even he had waited for many years to "come out"⁴. He gave a paper at a conference titled "The Politics of Suffering" which was published in 2001, but had zero impact in the general population. In it Sutton writes of the rapid deterioration of a community which he had known and in which he had repeatedly lived since 1970 after a "wet-shop" was opened in 1985. He returned to it in 2000 for a double funeral of two people he knew. But there had been many more casualties:

[E]ight people known to me have died at their own hands, two of them women, six of them men. Five of these were young people. From the same community in the same period, 13 people known to me have been victims of homicide, 8 of them women, 5 of them men, and 12 others (9 men and 3 women) have committed homicide. Most of these, again, were young people, and most of the homicides occurred in the home settlement of both assailant and victim. Of the eight spousal murders in this list, seven involved a man killing his female partner, only one a woman killing her husband. In almost all cases, assailants and victims were also relatives whose families had been linked to one another for generations (2001, p. 125. (Sutton: Web reference, 2001.)

⁴ Personal correspondence.

Sutton's paper had no echo either in the media or in policy making. It was social workers of indigenous communities who blew the whistle a few years later. In 2004 two newspapers, *The Australian* and *The Age* began to report on wide-spread sexual abuse and rampant alcoholism. The academic establishment as well as Aboriginal leaders immediately closed ranks and *denied* these allegations. A typical example was the journalist, film director and producer Philip Adams, whose achievements in the field of Australian political culture are many and great. He averred that "the public outcry" about the various cases of violence were "an example of conservatives using the information to pick on Aborigines." And more denial came spouting from his pen: "[T]here is just as much domestic violence in the general community" (qut. Nowra, 33). But the reports did not stop, and in 2006 the lid flew off. More and more social workers came forward and spoke to the press about how they had been intimidated by Aboriginal elders NOT to report of the abuses or else they would lose their jobs. For many years this threat had worked, but now some social workers were so ashamed of their silence that risking their jobs, they blew the whistle. And then a veritable tsunami of reporting crashed over Australia. An article in *The Age* quoted a social worker: In this community [which was in central S.A.] you will be hard pressed to find a 13-year old girl that has not been raped by her uncle, her father, or other relatives. Other reports spoke of systemic domestic violence, violence which often enough resulted in the death of a beaten wife – and the perpetrators usually came off with very light sentences.

Meanwhile, Peter Sutton has worked his 2001 essay into a full-length study (MUP 2009). It provoked controversy in Australia, but also much praise, for instance from Professor Marcia Langton (who is the only indigenous person to hold a professorship in Australia, at Melbourne University). In her introduction to the book, Langton called Sutton's study "a powerful corrective to the romantic, misinformed fabulations about Aborigines as a special kind of modern 'noble savage'". But Sutton did more than buttress his report of 2001. There are three main points one can discern. The first addresses how racially liberal attitudes have actually been more harmful than beneficial to indigenous communities. Second, as the book's subtitle "The Collapse of the liberal Consensus" already reveals, he attacks as "totally unscientific mumbo-jumbo" the long-held liberal view that a formal treaty, or handing back large tracts of lands, would somehow 'empower' dysfunctional communities. Thirdly, and this is the most contentious view, he argues that a number of Aboriginal problems, from low life expectancy to sexual violence, are an after-effect "of ancient, pre-existent social and cultural factors that have continued (...) into the lives of people living today" (qut Neill, 17)

To provide a better picture, here are a few further reports, starting with one that is about Australia's best known interior city, Alice Springs. It has an Aboriginal population of appr. 6.000, which is 25% of the population. In 1966 there were 165 cases of Aboriginal women getting treatment in the hospitals for injuries resulting from beatings by their partners. In 2006 this figure rose to 800 cases, a five-fold increase. According to my computation, of the 2.000 Aboriginal women in Alice who are between 18 and 65 years, a full 40% were beaten so badly that they needed hospitalization – *in one year alone*. Alice has a murder rate that is 10 times the national average. Alice Springs has an alcohol consumption that is 70% above the national average (Nowra, p. 7).

In his *Aboriginal Health and History* (1993), Dr Ernest Hunter established that in the Aboriginal population of the Kimberleys, an indigenous woman was twice as likely to be killed by her husband than in the white community. He had known of this fact as early as in 1984.

A case occurred in an Aboriginal community in Araru (Coburg Peninsula) in which a 27-year old pregnant woman sought protection from her husband and it was denied because police were told not to interfere in the affairs of Aborigines. She reported her husband for blatant violence 29 times, and the police never arrested the man. A psychologist filed a report to the social workers of the district in which he predicted: this woman will eventually be killed. Nothing was done, and one can only marvel at the total passivity of both police and judicial systems. On April 25 2005 she was beaten to death, for refusing to bring him a glass of water. At the time of the murder, the husband was already on parole for viciously beating his wife months earlier. The man received a mild jail sentence of 6 years (qut. Nowra 40-41)

In another and well-publicised case of 2002 that I remember very well, a man in a community about 300 km from Darwin beat his wife to death for not telling him she intended to go to Darwin shopping and for staying away overnight. He beat her with a branch from a tree and there were about a dozen witnesses who did not stop the man. The woman died in a Darwin hospital from multiple injuries and internal bleeding. Her killer was sent to jail for all of 2 years. The judge asked a community elder whether the man would be received back into the community when he came out of jail, and this elder said yes, there was support fore the man. His wife had wronged him, he said. After a public outcry the sentence was increased to three years.

Another man was sentenced to 3 years after beating his wife to death while drunk. He showed absolutely no remorse. In court he reported how he had left his wife unconscious on the floor after giving her a thrashing and had gone to sleep. He was astonished in the morning to find her dead. "I thought she would wake up eventually" he explained to the police, "she usually does" (qut. Nowra, 44)

In VIC where the Abor population is a mere 1%, 12% of children in state care and protection are Aboriginal children. From 1997 to 2000, the rate of removal from abusive parents rose by 50%. There are also troubling reports that the rape of boys has risen dramatically. A survey conducted in QLD and the NT in 2006 reported that a full 10% of all Aboriginal boys had been raped before the age of 16, and a further 15% said anal rape had been attempted on them. 33% reported they had been sexually abused in other ways. Women in remote communities now refuse to allow their 12 or 13 year old boys to go out into the desert with their uncles for the customary initiation or *Tjukurrpa* rites as so many have told them afterwards that they had been pack-raped.

In W.A., sexual crimes in the Aboriginal community rose tenfold between 1981 and 2001. In Queensland it was reported that an under-age Aboriginal girl was ten times more likely to be raped than a white girl. A spin-off is that sexually transmitted diseases are horrifically frequent in under-age Aboriginal youths, as a result of having become rape victims. Syphilis amongst Aborigines in the NT is 65 times the rate of the non-indigenous population. In Alice Springs, it was 70 times as high (qut. Nowra, 49).

Speaking of Alice Springs, in late 2005 four girls aged between 7 and 15 were diagnosed with multiple infections, including syphilis. The girls named the men with whom

they had had sex. The hospital notified the social workers. 7 months later, health workers wanted to know what the child-care department had done about the case. They found that the department contacted these men only to tell them they needed medical treatment!

THE MARCH OF CORRUPTION

The evidence on what lies at the bottom of the malaise is quite clear. Left to themselves, the self-governed communities fell under the sway of a powerful elite of corrupt elders. They decided on how to use the government funds, and they formed a mafia-like structure which killed any community spirit. Little wonder then that in several communities, the women have petitioned their state governments to remove the power from the hands of their kinsmen, and to restore white administration and white policing.

Lest I be accused of a one-sided analysis, I must add that the failure of white institutions is equally mind-boggling. So great has been the faith in the *laissez faire* approach to Aboriginal culture that a kind of dogma arose which laid down that any white interference would only make matters worse. It is a fine philosophy, but it fails to take into account what happens to the weakest members of that culture. What happened in a self-governed community in April 2006 provides ample illustration.

Aurukun lies on the eastern coast of the Cape York peninsula. A ten-year old girl was gang-raped by nine men, six of whom were under the age of 18. The girl was described as intellectually retarded. She had been removed from her alcoholic mother and was now in the care of white foster parents in Brisbane. But then a relative died and the local social workers (ironically called the "Child Safety Office") decided she had to attend the funeral in order to maintain links with the family. She was flown to Aurukun and given into the temporary care of an aunt. The same evening as she was going for a stroll she was set upon and gang raped. Her aunt told her not tell the police. So she was raped again, by the same gang. Again she did not tell the police (she had been instructed that this would land well-respected boys and men of her own family in jail) but she went to two white social workers, both women, asking about the symptoms of VD. These women did not report the case to the police either, but at least they ordered a medical check-up. The result was the girl had been infected with gonorrhoea. Even then the case was not reported: one social worker actually inquired from the hospital whether gonorrhoea could be contracted in a non-sexual way! Only after the girl returned to Brisbane was the police informed. In turn, the local police in Aurukun were alerted. They hauled all nine men in and got confessions from all of them. However, all of them were released back into the community. In December 2007 came the trial. The state attorney applied for *suspended* sentences, and the court agreed. So nobody went to jail. This sent a powerful message to the community, namely that Aboriginal men were exempt from any responsibility for their sexual crimes.

The case was picked up by *The Australian* soon afterwards and as a result, both Kevin Rudd (the newly elected PM) as well as Queensland Premier Anna Bligh recorded their horror about this lenient sentencing. Noel Pearson was interviewed on ABC's "The 7.30 Report" on December 12th; here is an excerpt from the Report:

Pearson, a long-time advocate of law and order and the scrapping of welfare, argued that “lenient sentencing” and “passive welfare” had caused a complete breakdown in social norms, not just in Aurukun, but throughout Cape York (Allan 2007)

Aurukun is described as fairly typical. It is a neglected city with no job prospects where the moral fibre and the will of its population to take charge of their fate had broken down. Outrageous actions no longer drew any response, Pearson argued. But he went further than that:

Pearson outlined an even broader agenda, insisting that courts must stop taking into account the historical dispossession and oppression of indigenous people: “In fact, part of the whole breakdown, the social and cultural breakdown, that we see in our communities is the consequence of courts taking into account the historical and social background of Aboriginal offenders.” (Ibid.)

Later Pearson speculated that the only way out might be to remove all children above grade four to boarding schools in the major cities in order to remove them from the bad influence of their dysfunctional communities. This however immediately conjures up echoes of the “Stolen Generation” and so the proposal will almost certainly not be pursued any further.⁵ Pearson does not advocate that these young Aboriginal people should cut all ties to their local community and culture, but he does suggest that unless they prioritize proper ‘white’ schooling and a familiarity with standard systems of knowledge they will never become active and valuable members of Australian society.

One question that these cases raise is whether Aboriginal culture has not always been misogynist; Peter Sutton’s study arrives at this conclusion. Letters from the early colonists, reports such as Arthur Phillip’s journal of the First Fleet Colony and by his officer Watkin Tench (1793) give strong indications in that direction.⁶ And what are we to make of convicted rapist Geoff Clark, the ATSIC president between 1999 and 2004? In 2001, Geoff Clark was indicted on four independent cases of rape. He used ATSIC money to pay his attorneys, managing to delay the court cases. Despite the investigations against him, the ATSIC Board re-elected him as Chairman in 2003. Three of the women withdrew their cases on technicalities (they had been reported more than 30 years after the actual rape date.) But the fourth case resulted in Clark’s conviction. In December 2007 after battling his indictment through all court levels, he was found guilty of twice leading a pack-rape of 14-year old Carol Ann Stingel in 1971 (Uebergang, 2). Clark’s bathetic comment on his conviction was that it “represents the lowest point in the history of this country” (*Wikipedia*, entry on Geoff Clark).

In May 2009 the German journal GEO published an interview with Tom Calma, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and Race Discrimi-

⁵ In an interview with ABC’s “Lateline” presenter Tony Jones (June 3, 2007) Louis Nowra confronted the issue of removing children from Aboriginal families – *for their own safety*: “There’s also a - there’s a secret that nobody really talks about because Aboriginal children are taken from their communities at a rate much higher than at the times of assimilation in 1920s, 1930s. So in Victoria 1 per cent of children are Aboriginal but 12 per cent are taken from their homes because of the violence and because of the alcohol. Now the trouble is many more should be taken.” Web reference: <http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2007/s1864812.htm>

⁶ For a proper debate on this, see Livio Dobrez’ excellent article in *Zeitschrift für Australienstudien* 21/22 (2007), pp. 36-45 (Klagenfurt).

nation Commissioner of the Kevin Rudd government (Albig, 2009). Asked about sexual abuse, he downplayed the issue: “the media presented it as if each man there was abusing children and was violent towards women”, saying that “here and there”, sex abuse cases may have had happened. He criticized the government for their “paternalistic” attitude of intervening rather than “cooperating with the communities.” The overwhelming evidence however, gathered in about 40 reports, is that violence really is embedded in each and every community. Paul Toohey (2009) reports that the NT’s “Child Abuse Task Force” (CAT) has conducted 842 child-sex investigations since June 2006. CAT has made 79 arrests, it has 124 cases under investigation and 41 matters before the court. Sex abuses only “here and there”? A recent report in *The Australian* (Anon., May 28, 2009) summarizes the case in these words: “Extent of Aboriginal child abuse ‘far worse’”. Secondly, Calma ignores that *real* violence against women and children is much more “paternalistic” than any governmental policy can be. And thirdly, he failed to admit that indigenous rulers had shown no inclination at all to “cooperate” with the government.

THE WAY FORWARD?

Things are in flux and it is to be hoped that modern solutions can be found. One thing is certain: There is no stone-walling the issue any more. Of course it is hard for Australian Aborigines to admit of a cancerous evil in their midst; it took German and Austrian politicians 25 years or more to admit of their citizens’ involvement in the Nazi crimes. (Some deny them to this very day.) Enlightened Aborigines now say that they have to blend into mainstream society, and this must be done by a heavy emphasis on education. They go so far as to say that certain aspects of their traditional culture (for example its emphasis that no individual can own land) stand in the way of progress. They even raise the question whether there is any future for them on their ancestral lands, whether they must not move to where the jobs are. It is no use romanticising the past with its emphasis on the alleged strengths of the local: that policy was tried by the Labor Party and its chief advisor, and it was a total and unmitigated failure. For our part here “up over”, we should stop glamorizing an exotic culture as it only encourages Aborigines to stay frozen in the past.

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PIANIST GLENN GOULD'S OFTEN DISMAL WRITING

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Abstract

Glenn Gould was known to the world primarily as a pianist. His Bach interpretations were lauded, his Mozart generally lamented, and his often curious musical views met with suspicion. Despite the fact that it was his primary occupation, Gould considered himself to be much more than a pianist. He produced a number of radio and television documentaries on subjects ranging from musical topics, to life in the north of Canada. He considered himself to be only a part time pianist, and he longed to be recognized also as a writer. After briefly introducing Glenn Gould as a Canadian cultural icon, this paper examines the lesser-known part of his oeuvre, and points out some of the stylistic shortcomings of his writing, before addressing the following question: "Why bother to read him?"

The Anthology *From Ink Lake: Canadian stories selected by Michael Ondaatje* reveals some questionable editorial choices. The problem is not the "Canadian," since Canadian literary tradition has always found room for those with tenuous links to Canada. Indian-born writer Bharati Mukherjee long ago chose the United States over Canada, her work regularly appears in anthologies of both American and Canadian literature. If Canadian pedantic types point out that Carol Shields and even Ondaatje were not born in Canada, it is generally to prove a point about a multicultural nation. The problem lies with the "stories" part of the title – Alice Munro and Mavis Gallant, two short story magicians, are included, but many of the works in *From Ink Lake* are extracts from novels rather than short stories proper. Ondaatje can be forgiven this minor subterfuge, even if his title implies traditional short stories in the sense of fictional narrative prose we can consume in one sitting. The table of contents reads like a list of both anglophone and francophone Canadian literary all-stars, regardless of whether their prose genre was really the novel.

The oddest inclusion in *From Ink Lake* is pianist Glenn Gould's 1967 "The Search for Petula Clark." It is an odd conclusion because it is not fiction but an autobiographical dissection of the English pop singer's music. Even Ondaatje himself seems desperate to justify his decision, and he almost apologetically notes, "as for Glenn Gould's comic deconstruction of Petula Clark, it seems to me as fictionally playful and literary-wise as the fiction of Julian Barnes in *Flaubert's Parrot* [...]" (Ondaatje, xvi). Parallels or not, the piece is more of a short travel essay or series of jesting philosophical observations –

Gould describes a solitary highway journey into Northern Ontario, reflecting all the while on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and especially the then ubiquitous voice of Petula Clark belting out “Downtown” or “Who Am I?” over the CBC airwaves.

This paper has two modest aims: to introduce classical pianist Glenn Gould as a Canadian cultural icon and then to examine in brief his often dismal writing, before considering the question of “why bother to read it?” It is usually unfair to poke fun at musicians’ writing skills. Their job, after all, is to let the piano or saxophone or ukulele do the talking. Although many musicians have taken up the writer’s pen, their written work generally piggy backs on their music. Gould’s did too, but he is different in the sense that he very often departed from strictly musical topics. This is most obvious in the three contrapuntal radio documentaries that make up his *Solitude Trilogy* – “The Idea of North” (1967) on living in the far north of Canada; “The Latecomers” (1969) on Newfoundland, the last province to enter the Canadian confederation; and “The Quiet in the Land” (1977) focusing on Mennonites; and Those interviewed individually for these documentaries are edited into what seems like a conversation, and their voices are played at simultaneously in the style of musical counterpoint. There are traces of Gould’s desire to go beyond the typical also in his radio documentaries on anti-fascist Catalan cellist Pablo Casals,¹ and, bizarrely, with conductor Leopold Stokowski on the possibilities of alien life. Since these documentaries were primarily aired on the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, this part of Gould’s art was less known outside of Canada. The rest of the world was happy just to hear his piano playing.

Gould regarded himself as a “writer and broadcaster who happens to play the piano in his spare time” – a self-description that would baffle fans in New York, London, or Berlin (Introduction). The statement is partly tongue in cheek, but there is some truth to it; moreover, it is an open expression of Gould’s desires. Gould had retired from the concert state at age 32, perhaps as an effective cure for stage fright and his visceral fear of flying, but ostensibly to dedicate himself to composing, writing, and producing radio and television programmes. He did continue to record some 80 records, though he planned to give up even that some time after his 50th birthday in order to devote himself more fully to other pursuits, especially writing. A mere week after turning fifty, Gould died of a stroke in October, 1982.

It has been over a quarter century since Gould died, yet he remains one of the few bright lights in a waning classical music market. In 2007 there was a year-long exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau (across the river from Ottawa), and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City showed a series of Gould films in 1987. François Girard produced the 1993 feature *Thirty Two Short Films About Glenn Gould*; Bruno Monsiegeon’s 2005 documentary *Au-delà du temps/Hereafter* creatively and spookily used old footage and voiceovers to make it seem like Gould was the film’s narrator; and, as I write this, the Toronto International Film Festival is premiering *Genius Within: The Inner Life of Glenn Gould*, a documentary that “investigates Gould’s

¹ Gould states that it can be more rewarding to talk about something beyond the interviewee’s area of obvious expertise: “it’s been far more instructive to talk with Pablo Casals, for example, about the concept of the *Zeitgeist*” (Gould, 315). Cryptically, even for the apolitical Gould, *Casals: A Portrait for Radio* (1974) does not discuss the cellist’s refusal to play in totalitarian Germany, Italy or the USSR, and his self-exile from Franco’s Spain.

personal life, specifically his long-running affair with painter Cornelia Foss, his [non-recreational] drug intake and how his public façade began to take over his existence” (*Genius Within*). Kevin Bazzana’s 2004 *Wondrous Strange: The Life and Art of Glenn Gould*, which purported to be a cultural biography examining Gould as a product of his puritanical Canadian surroundings, was hailed as a gem. This has not deterred Penguin Canada – again, as I write this – from releasing philosopher Mark Kingwell’s *Glenn Gould* for its “Extraordinary Canadians” series of biographies.

Dying, quipped one music industry executive, “was a great career move” for Gould (qtd. in Bazzana, 3). It also offered Sony Music Entertainment the chance to repackage and remarket, rather than simply re-release, anything Gould had recorded for Columbia Records, which Sony purchased in 1987. In a word: to charge full price for old products. Though all of Gould’s recordings have been reissued, including his often-silly Mozart sonata recordings justifiably panned by critics, much of the hysteria has focussed on his 1955 recording of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Goldberg Variations. For it was this recording that rocketed the 22-year-old Torontonion to world fame, and his stellar interpretation of the then seldom-played work engendered the half-pun “*Gouldberg*” variations. Those too young to remember long-playing records will have no problem finding a CD version. In addition to simple re-issues, the Variations are available as part of 1992’s mammoth “Glenn Gould Edition” (to mark the tenth anniversary of his tenth), 1999’s box set “The Original Jacket Collection – Glenn Gould Plays Bach” (with nostalgic reproductions of the original LP cover pictures), 2002’s “A State of Wonder: The Complete Goldberg Variations (1955 & 1981)” (Gould re-recorded the piece just before he died, arguing that the first recording was a poor one); 2003’s “Goldberg Variations (1955 Version) – Expanded Edition” (which apparently *expands* the 38-minute recording in some manner), and 2005’s “The 1955 Goldberg Variations – Birth Of A Legend.” Since copyright has expired on the 1955 recording, the Naxos label has released the prosaically-titled “Goldberg Variations / Partita N. 5 (Gould).” For sheer bizarreness and technical innovation, however, the laurel goes to Zenph Studios 2006 re-performance of the Goldberg Variations. The 1955 recording was fed into a computer, and then a robot of sorts replayed the music in the same manner on a Yamaha piano tuned to replicate the original Steinway on which Gould played in Columbia Records’ New York studio. The idea was to have “Gould” play in stereo sound and without the incessant humming and half-singing that accompanied all of his recordings.

Though the epic list of Gould products in the previous two paragraphs is not exhaustive, it should serve to underscore the uniqueness of this performer. The excitement around other famous pianists, such as the late Vladimir Horowitz and Sviatoslav Richter, is limited to CD re-releases and the occasional traditional film or print biography. Gould’s cultural resonance can be gauged in another simple way: there are literary allusions to Glenn Gould and his manner of playing Bach in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday* (“He decides on the ‘Goldberg’ Variations. He has four recordings here, and selects not the showy unorthodoxies of Glenn Gould [...]” (257)), Joyce Carol Oates’ “The Skull: A Love Story” (“Already by the end of the second day he’d tired of Bach performed by Glenn Gould. The pianist’s humming ceased to be eccentric and became unbearable”) (196), and in Thomas Harris’ *Silence of the Lambs*, the cannibalistic Hannibal Lecter is a Glenn Gould fan. Austrian Thomas Bernhard’s novel *Der Untergeher* (translated into

English by Jack Dawson as *The Loser*) is about a would-be concert pianist who drifts towards suicide after hearing a certain Glenn Gould play a few notes of the Goldberg Variations and realizing he is nowhere near as brilliant.

In Canadian literature, Gould tends to appear more vaguely as a musician and more prominently as a High Culture Persona. In Mordecai Richler's *Barney's Version*, for example, Barney Panofsky merely recalls his wife "listen[ing] to Glenn Gould," with no reference to a particular work (364). The point appears to be this: classical music plays no role in the protagonist Barney Panofsky's life, but even he is away of Gould. In Ray Robertson's hockey novel *Heroes*, Bach's Goldberg Variations make an appearance, but they are played by someone named Glen (sic) Gould (92). There is thus an impression of bluffing, or name-dropping. Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* picks up the issue of the name and its spelling, as Crake explains the unusual spelling of his first name: "My dad liked music [...] He named me after a dead pianist, some boy genius with two n's" (70). This is something of an inside joke to Canadians, since, given Gould's stature in Canada, the reference would be immediately recognizable to most; only in Canada was the public aware of Gould as a prodigious boyhood talent. Moreover, "Crake and Gould share more than a name: both are (like Atwood) animal lovers and, in an interview in *Maclean's* in 2003 (Bethune), Atwood surmised that Gould, like Crake, suffered from Asperger's syndrome, a variant of autism that seems to be characteristic of many creative high achievers."²

The difference in kind between allusions to Gould by non-Canadian writers, and those by Canadians, illustrates the different ways in which Gould was received. No music fan should prefer a pianist only because he or she comes from one's soil – that would be pure chauvinism. Gould was a very vocal Canadian, in love with the far north (which he had never seen), and most others were vaguely and indifferently aware of that fact. Two quotations from Edward Said, who, in addition to being one of the leading literary critics of the late 20th century, was also an accomplished pianist and music critic for the general interest magazines *Vanity Fair*, *Harper's*, and most regularly *The Nation*. He was also a Glenn Gould aficionado. Two of Said's back-handed compliments draw attention to Gould's nationality and cultural background. When praising Gould's often unusual and always provocative musical philosophy and ideas, Said writes, "he was far from being a pastoral idiot-savant despite his affinity for the silence and solitude of the North" (Said, 10). Regarding Gould's lifelong refusal to play the warhorse romantics like Chopin and Schumann, Said notes: "That material was a lot for a young and in effect provincial Canadian pianist to have given up at the very outset" (Said, 271).

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Glenn Gould appeared to be a happy marriage. When he burst on the international music scene in 1955 Gould's two hands proved, for many, that Canada did have a high culture, and soon enough Gould was permitted television and radio space to drone on about Arnold Schönberg and Johann

² Atwood is not the only one to confirm post-mortem that Gould had Asperger's, which is a convenient way of accounting for both Gould's mannerisms and his genius. Ioan Mackenzie James cautiously notes "some of the eccentric behaviour [Gould] manifested in childhood and during adolescence [...] is suggestive of Asperger's syndrome" (195), and that experts do not agree on whether Gould had the syndrome. This does not prevent a Gould chapter in *Asperger's Syndrome and High Achievement: Some Very Remarkable People*.

Sebastian Bach. Gould would work for hours for virtually no remuneration. Because of his enthusiasm, because of his stature as a Prominent Canadian, and because he came cheap and often worked overnight when the studio was empty, “The CBC authorities were inclined to let Gould do pretty much what he wanted” (Friedrich, 208). In other words, if he were not Glenn Gould, much of his work would never have been allowed on-air. Gould’s highfalutin discussions of composers old and new may not have been to everyone’s tastes, but at least they were educational and potentially edifying. If this fit the CBC’s perceived role as a “bastion of uplifting national culture against the onslaught of American popular culture” (Vance, 362), it also fit the critique that it broadcasts things many Canadians do not want to see. Gould has entered the popular Canadian imagination in a way akin to Slavoj Žižek’s fame in Slovenia: even those who may not own or be able to recognize a Gould recording will recognize the man and personality. Gould was forever on the air, talking music, always from a script, and far too often dressed up as ridiculous characters like the New York music critic Theodore Sotz, the esteemed English maestro Sir Humphrey Price-Davies, and the avant-garde German composer Herbert von Hochmeister. These antics and skits, complete with absurd accents and juvenile humour, are embarrassing,³ and it is inconceivable that a young pianist out of New York or Berlin would have been given the same opportunities.

GOULD AS A WRITER

The line between Gould as a writer and Gould as a (non-musical) performer is a thin one. Many of his writings were actually meant for radio, and Gould often read them on the CBC. There is thus an oral quality to all of Gould’s writing – unfortunately, it is Gould’s brand of orality, which consists of labyrinthine sentences that sound like they belong in a dreary academic treatise. Gould had an astounding ability to filter and produce information, and it is a wonder that he himself does not get lost in his Germanic syntax, digressions, qualifying thoughts and general wordiness. In an interview on his contrapuntal radio documentaries, Gould states: “The average person can take in and respond to far more information than we allot him on most occasions” (Gould, 380). Even if this is true, Gould often appears to be intentionally difficult, to hide even straightforward ideas in endless phrases. This section of the essay examines some of the usual shortcomings of Gould the writer, before ultimately addressing the question: why bother to read him?

A personal ad found in Gould’s apartment after his death provides an insight into Gould the man and Gould the writer. The self-described “puritan” seeks a partner and, like all good personal ads, this one reveals as much about the seeker as the sought:

Wanted: Friendly, companionably reclusive, socially unacceptable, alcoholically abstemious, tirelessly talkative, zealously unzealous, spiritually intense, minimally turquoise, maximally ecstatic, loon seeks moth or moths

³ Gould said that these masks helped him overcome a “degree of inhibition” and that, once he slid into character, “[he] found it no problem to say what [he] wanted to say in a humorous style” (Cott, 87). Unfortunately, any legitimate arguments were lost behind the poor jokes and odd costumes.

with similar qualities for purposes of telephonic seduction, Tristanesque trip-taking, and permanent flame-fluttering. No photos required, financial status immaterial, all ages and non-competitive vocations considered. Applicants should furnish cassette of sample conversation, notarized certification of marital disinclination, references re low decibel vocal consistency, itineraries and sample receipts from previous, successfully completed out-of-town (moth) flights. All submissions treated confidentially, no paws [?] need apply. Auditions for (all) promising candidates will be conducted to, and on, Avalon Peninsula, Nfld. (qtd in Bazzana, 321)

The first sentence is part autobiography, part self-roasting, for Gould was a teetotalling recluse who loved to talk on the telephone (it is a safe bet that “telephonic seduction” is a not a reference to phone sex). Other requirements are self-referential to the point of being nonsensical for those not intimately familiar with Gould’s biography: “minimally turquoise” is perhaps a nod at Gould’s dislike of bright colours and shows his love of always choosing the less simple word. The entire text is also a clever spoof on the personal ad genre, since he begins with the banal and self-evident “friendly” before launching into what seems like thesaurus-fuelled prose. Though this is essentially a playful search for a lover or soul-mate, Gould admits the plural “moths” – before ominously referring to “Tristanesque trip-taking.” Wagner was a composer Gould adored, but openly suggesting the *Liebestod* that was the demise of the lovers Tristan and Isolde would scare off the hardiest potential candidates. Gould hated formalized competition (though he loved impromptu word and guessing games), so anyone involved in competitive professional pursuits is out of the question. There is typically Gouldian humour: a “cassette of sample conversation” seems coldly absurd and distant, but such technology-buffered correspondence appealed to Gould.⁴

This personal ad was scribbled on a scrap of paper, and since it was perhaps nothing more than intellectual doodling it would be unfair to dissect it aesthetic terms. It is, however, indicative of Gould’s prose. Gould is a writer that makes the reader work. There is that egregious wordiness that so often is the enemy of wit; then there are, even in articles ostensibly meant for public consumption, cryptic allusions and alienating surpluses of musical terminology; Gould excels in abstractions, but even when he conjures up metaphors to aid his philosophical cause, the reader is often none the wiser; not least, there is a complicated playfulness and sometimes very corny humour. Humour is relative, subjective, but on the printed page Gould is just not funny. For the reader willing to get at Gould’s point, there are further problems: is he being sincere? Is he trying to shock us to make a point, or merely for the sake of shocking? Even if these accusations are not original, their harshness invites some justification and examples.

Filmmaker Bruno Monsiegeon has praised Gould’s “*textes littéraires, o la richesse de la langue est quelque chose de phénoménal,*” and states earnestly that Gould could have become one of the major English-language writers of the 20th century (Le

⁴ Gould’s faith in technology was absolute, not only because it allowed him to keep the world at bay. Stereos of the future, he thought, could limit the metaphorical distance between lofty performer and listener by enabling the listener to control performance speed and dynamics by twiddling dials. A more extreme example of his faith: “A war [...] engaged in by computer-aimed missiles is a slightly better, slightly less objectionable war than one fought by clubs or spears” (Gould, 355).

privilege). *Monsaingeon* is a minority of one. All other commentators, even otherwise sympathetic biographers, are less kind to Gould the writer. Otto Friedrich calls him “an intelligent but rather inhibited literary amateur” (Friedrich, 113); Geoffrey Payzant talks about “his early ponderousness and obscurity” (144); Kevin Bazzana notes “the verbose, tangled prose that had plagued his earlier writing” (466); at least one anonymous Youtube poster accurately wrote “bla, bla, bla” in response to Gould talking. Even those who champion Gould provide slim praise. *High Fidelity* prefaced Gould’s famous essay “The Prospects of Recording” – which lays out his belief that “the public concert as we know it today would no longer exist a century hence, that its functions would have been entirely taken over by electronic media” – with a caveat: “[This] is a lengthy and occasionally difficult essay, but we consider it well worth our space and your attention” (The Prospects). The most damning of all, precisely because he turns cartwheels *not* to insult the style, is Edward Said’s remark on a speech Gould once provided: “Even allowing for a certain confusion between various imperfectly deployed metaphors, it is possible to decipher the sense of what Gould is trying to articulate here” (Said, 270). Said himself slips into Gouldese as he implicitly states that Gould’s prose is obscurely Byzantine.

Gould’s writings were lamed by verbosity, and throughout his life he continued to confuse big words and unusual words with eloquence. This misconception was evident already when Gould was a schoolboy, and his essays prompted teachers to quip, “you are using words for their own sakes,” “waste of words” (Friedrich, 29) or, “I am a busy teacher and have better things to do with my time than to read papers that require one to constantly have to refer to a dictionary for half of the words used” (Bazzana, 53).

Here is Gould alluding to the 1957 game show scandal involving Columbia professor Charles Van Doren, who was fed the answers when he appeared on *Twenty One* (the event was famous again in the 1994 movie *Quiz Show*). The passage, by no means one of Gould’s worst, is complicated:

And the commendable pragmatism with which Van Doren shed scholastic credibility in the interests of better program building afforded an object lesson for anyone concerned with the future of television and, in particular, for those of us perplexed by the less than cordial relations between musical performance and the camera. For just as television, despite the proliferation of closed-circuit teaching aids and ‘Twenty-One’s’ ingenious approximation of a final semester’s nervous prostration, cannot invalidate the classroom, neither can it stimulate, for all its undoubted capacity to attract that substantial audience which no longer frequents the concert hall, the antiquarian charm of a public musical display. (Gould, 369)

The point towards which Gould is stumbling in this excerpt from a short article on television in music is that “The concert is dying because it not longer adequately ministers to the needs of music in the twentieth century and not because television is waiting in the wings [...]” (ibid). The Van Doren analogy is a witty, even promising one, but it dominates much of article without adding much clarity to the underlying argument.

Given that many of Gould's pieces were published either as liner notes for his records or in industry magazines or journals like *High Fidelity* and *The Piano Quarterly*, the concentration of musical terminology is understandable and even appropriate. However, even when aiming at a general, less specialized audience, Gould was unrelenting. Not for him a vulgarization of classical music or a serving up of sugary biographical anecdotes. Kevin Bazzana sees this as more an inability than a conscience choice or sign of respect for viewers' intellect: "He could not tailor his prose to suit his audience, and aside from the odd flippant or slangy remark, his texts were often too technical and long-winded, written in that peculiar, knotty Gouldese that is often difficult to assimilate at spoken tempo" (Bazzana, 227).

Here is a quotation by a young Gould talking on the CBC in 1966 on "Conversations with Glenn Gould: Richard Strauss." Though he appears to be speaking freely, the words are scripted:

Well, you see the problem with Strauss' harmony, and indeed Strauss' problem, was that he came to the latter part of the 19th century at a time when harmony was in great disrepair, when Schönberg, and Gustav Mahler indeed, to a certain extent, were pulling harmony to pieces, were pulling all the pat formulas of Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms, the academic romantics so to speak, to pieces, simply by a certain sense of indulgence, and I think it is to Strauss' very great credit that he managed to tighten up the bulwarks through which they had been poking holes, Strauss [sic] and Mahler; now this is to say nothing whatever against Strauss [sic] and Mahler, it's simply a question, against Schönberg and Mahler, rather, it is simply a difference of approach, a sense of containment about tonality. Strauss was a self-satisfied man as far as the whole princip[le]...., working motifs, of tonality are concerned [...]. (Richard Strauss Burleske)

This is a difficult passage to transcribe because even where grammar demands a period or semi-colon Gould presses on with nary a pause, making it difficult for lay-people to follow this relatively straightforward passage.

Even "The Search for Petula Clark" (included in the Ondaatje story anthology and probably the best of Gould's writing) occasionally shows the stamp of Gouldese. When I read this piece with my fourth-year Literary Interpretation class, many students commented on the alienating effect of passages like this:

Well, come to that, almost all pop music today *is* relentlessly diatonic – the Max Reger-Vincent d'Indy chromatic bent which infiltrated big-band arranging in the late thirties and forties ran its course when Ralph Flanagan got augmented sixths out of his system. [...] For the Beatles, a neotriadic persuasion is (was?) a guerrilla tactic – an instrument of revolution. (303f)

There was a general sense that Gould was merely showing off his knowledge, even as he discussed popular topics. The "well" – duly written into the transcript that Gould read aloud on the CBC – is at best a register clash; at worst, it makes Gould sound like a pompous politician attempting to curry favour.

As indicated in his singular preference for Petula Clark over the Beatles, Gould had some peculiar ideas about music. In fact, though a rabid fan of Barbara Streisand, he rarely ventured beyond the classical world, and even as a child he had no time for jazz or other popular forms of music. His favourite composer was one Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625); he had little respect for romantics like Chopin or Schumann. But he reserved most of his dislike for Mozart, “a bad composer who died too late, rather than too early” (Friedrich, 141). As he explained in a 1974 interview,

The Sonata K. 332 was the first I began to study, I think, and I simply couldn't understand how my teachers, and other presumably sane adults of my acquaintance, could count this piece among the great musical treasures of Western man. (Gould, 33)

Rather than avoiding Mozart, he recorded the complete piano sonatas, always with a view to providing a completely new take, to exposing what he saw as weaknesses in the music itself, and often infuriating. (The above words scandalizing Mozart's name appeared on the CD liner in a recent repackaging of Gould's Mozart for the 1999 “Glenn Gould Jubilee Edition” – even this clear statement that he has no love for Mozart is rolled into the marketing machine.) The Gouldian logic was that Mozart relied too much on his gift for improvisation and this led him to create music that was full of clichés – and Gould was out to convince the world of this in piano recordings, even if it meant ignoring what Mozart had written, and in print or conversation. His music sounded like “inter-office memos [...], [I]like an executive holding forth upon the ramifications of a subject no one in the front office is much concerned with anyway. ‘Yeah, well, Harry, as I see it, J.B. has got this thing about replacing the water cooler...’” (qtd. in Friedrich, 143). This is a failed attempt to be clever; moreover, it makes no sense. The simile, which a polemicist should employ to aid thought and clarity of argument, does not help. If Mozart is the memo-writing executive, what could “the front office” possibly be? Gould is entirely correct that water coolers are found in offices, but that is where the sense ends. Two strains of thought intertwine with Gould on Mozart: the first is his insistence of being right; the other is his awareness that he is being unconventional. He is also entirely and playfully aware that his aggressive stance will not convince many.

The esteemed Canadian journal Robert Fulford, who was a boyhood friend of Gould's, has written that the pianist was not really of our time. He recalls a conversation in which Gould dismissed modern music, specifically the jazz that Fulford adored:

He was twenty-five years old and sounding like an octogenarian crank whose tastes had been formed in the last century. And yet all the time, as he went through this absurd conventional dance, his eyes were sparkling and he was laughing at himself. He was beginning to explore eccentricity as a mode of life. (Fulford, 45)

In other words, though Gould's basic conviction that jazz represents inferior music is sincere, he remains well aware – and insouciant about the fact – that Fulford regarded him as an un-hip relic and that his arguments were untenable.

Kevin Bazzana points out that when Gould “let fly at his *bêtes noires*, he often revealed a surprising ignorance of his basic sources and a willingness to accept trite

and spurious ideas. His musical rationales for disliking late Mozart and middle-period Beethoven – and Schubert and Schumann and Chopin – were feeble” (Bazzana, 274). This means, of course, that were it not for his being *Glenn Gould* sounding off, very little of his writing would have been published. The result of this is a double standard: although Gould must have been cognizant of his key position as musical genius – hence music expert, hence authority on all things musical – he never seemed to realize that he was hired as a writer and commentator because of his hands and mind at the piano keyboard. The “other Gould” was hired because he was the boss’ son, so to speak.

The offer made to Gould by the editor of *Piano Quarterly* in the early 1970s must have been irresistible: “You can write about anything you want. It doesn’t have to be about music – anything you want to write, I’ll publish. Carte blanche. No editing and there’s no limit to the length” (Friedrich, 112). Though he would receive no money, this guaranteed him even more control than he had at the CBC. And control was of absolute importance to Gould. He is known to have scripted entire interviews, writing both the questions and the answers for a conversational set-piece that would then be broadcast as an unintentional spoof on spontaneity. This of course requires a docile interviewer willing to allow Gould the role of puppet master. For obvious reasons, few interviewers would admit to such obedience, and Bruno Monsiegeon is careful to point out in the accompanying notes to his *Glenn Gould: The Alchemist* DVD, “contrary to what has been written here and there, our dialogues were not scripted. They were improvised and completely spontaneous, all the while following a carefully thought-out dramatic sequence” (6). The film evidence bears this out. In contrast, it is hard to believe that Tim Page’s 1982 interview on Gould’s re-recording of the Goldberg Variations was a natural conversation. There is a striking telepathic quality to it, including off-cue laughter that occasionally precedes the witty riposte, the “interviewer’s” references to some of Gould’s own pet references (like conductor Leopold Stokowski), and the general stiffness of the conversation, complete with intrusive interjections of “uh, huh,” and contrived “well, Glenn” lead-offs (“Highlights from”). Especially for those familiar with more flowing Gould interviews, it is as if Gould *wanted* listeners to know that this was a charade.

Geoffrey Payzant’s 1978 work *Glenn Gould: Music and Mind* examines Gould’s tremendous body of writings as a proper philosophical and aesthetic unity, rather than a series of ramblings and staged arguments. In the introduction, Payzant nevertheless admits the possibility that “Gould has all along been playing a secret game with us, and at some level does not intend to be taken seriously” (Payzant, x). In other words, it is not a case of either/or. Three pages from the end of his book, Payzant remains cautious about Gould’s writings: “one cannot deny that Gould puts barriers in the way of our taking him as seriously as we might: his facetiousness, his clowning, his early ponderousness and obscurity, his vaulting arguments, his outrageous exaggerations” (144). Gould himself wrote a review of *Music and Mind*. There he notes, with the professional athlete’s use of the third person, “the author’s obvious determination is to prepare his portrait without being interfered with, or influenced by, the conversational connivance and media manipulation at which Gould is allegedly a master” (Gould, 448). Yet again, Gould assumes a double position. This seems particularly good natured in light of Payzant’s final chapter: “Talking Nonsense On Anything Anywhere.”

The most fascinating insight into Gould as a playful creator and Gould as a man bursting with ideas are his self-interviews, especially “Glenn Gould Interviews Glenn Gould about Glenn Gould” (1974). In this interview, which initially appeared in *High Fidelity*, Gould/Interviewee lampoons his own desire for control and his yearning to be more than a pianist. He is open to discussing any topic, “apart from music, of course” (315). The self-interview is brilliant because it feigns self-analysis, accurately presenting Gould as a hypochondriac well aware of his condition (he had stated famously, “They say I’m a hypochondriac and, of course, I am.”). This is also as close as Gould came to admitting that he knew, at least in 1974, that for all his forays into print and other types of art, in the minds of most he was primarily a pianist.

Edward Said remains convinced that Gould’s “prose was intended as an adjunct to his playing [...], as well as the vehicle by which he advanced a comprehensive, if sometimes whacky, world-view” (128). Evan Eisenberg writes similarly in *The Recording Angel: Music, Records and Culture from Aristotle to Zappa* about Gould’s uniqueness and passion as a performer, and that “his writings, if we had noticed them, could have given us a little more of that ecstasy, along with hints on how it might be understood” (83). Each of these critics puts forth the idea of Gould having produced a sort of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, whereby the total art is not music and drama, but music and writing about music, and talking about music, and being interviewed about music. Both Said and Eisenberg approach Gould as a pianist who happens to write, they do not comment on Gould as a producer of documentaries for the CBC.

A question that arises is this: if Gould is so an infuriating writer, why bother to read his work? There are better authors out there, and our short story time is better spent on writers like Alice Munro or Mavis Gallant – to return to some of my favourites from the Ondaatje anthology mentioned at the outset. This, however, is a matter of fictional apples and non-fictional oranges. Moreover, in those finer short stories, Munro and Gallant disappear into the work. We can – and perhaps should – enjoy them without any knowledge of the author’s life. This is difficult and less rewarding with Gould. “The Search for Petula Clark” is all the more satisfying when read with an awareness of Gould’s quaint love of Canada’s north, his own ubiquity on the CBC’s airwaves, and his general refusal to acknowledge the value of popular music. “After several hundred miles of this exposure [to Clark’s voice],” writes Gould, “I checked into the hotel at Marathon and made plans to contemplate Petula” (301). It is strangely prescient that serious contemplation of popular culture is now a fully-fledged intellectual business.

Gould’s ideas are sometimes radical, sometimes boorish, but rarely boring. His statements on the benefits of recorded music, as opposed to what he saw as the circus-like atmosphere of live concerts, have proved wrong in practice but right in spirit: “We must be prepared to accept the fact that, for better or worse, recording will forever alter our notions about what is appropriate to the performance of music” (Gould, 337). It is easy to gauge the results of this situation – lip-syncing pop stars, or concert goers obsessed with mechanical perfection, even over musicality, at the keyboard.

Music now surrounds us in ways never before imagined, but the sonic bombardment that assails us in every café, shop or public space has not led to keener listeners. Although technology grants us immediate access to music, it has not limited the distance between virtuoso performer and active listener. Gould’s predictions and hopes that that

there would be a democratization of performance have not come to pass – few listeners exploit technological possibilities to co-create the listening experience. On their own, Gould’s theories and philosophies are best regarded as time pieces – we can look back at them and see where he was correct, where wrong. Even his playing, especially his occasional lack of regard for what Mozart or Beethoven actually wrote, is from a time past. Combined with his playing, his musical views form a remarkable whole. When Gould argues that “all the basic statements have been made for posterity” and that the artist must therefore recreate the work by “contribut[ing] a totally new view,” he comes close to putting the performer ahead of the work (Will there?). But in these days when famous music is reduced to a sound bit, and trivialized as a cellular phone’s ring tone, Gould laughably slow version of “Ronda alla Turca” maintains a liberating freshness, especially when supported by his quirky reasoning. Perhaps it is better than it sounds.

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ARNO GEIGERS *ES GEHT UNS GUT* AUS DER SICHT DES ZEITGENÖSSISCHEN FAMILIEN- UND GENERATIONSROMANS

Maria Bryk

Abstract

This essay presents Arno Geiger's family novel *Es geht uns gut* (2007) as an example of a literary genre, which becomes more and more popular.

A family/generation novel has had its peak popularity in the first half of the 20th century. The purpose of this essay is to characterise the genre in its recent form and to prove the genre is still alive.

One of the possible explanations to the present interest in a family novel is its versatility and the potential for raising and combining of multiple, various up-to-date subjects.

Family and generation conflicts are the main motive of this genre, often, as in Geiger's novel, against a background of historical problems. For German family novels this historical setting is particularly Nazism. A family/generation novel does not though aim to present the "historical truth" in an objective way but rather presents the past in a way it has been internalised by family remembrance. This way any negative episodes are often dislodged or neutralized. Another motive widely taken up by Geiger, is social and moral transformation of female characters struggling to change their situation in society. The essay discusses also the traditional genre' motive – the rise and fall of a family.

Geiger's book is an interesting example of a modern family/generation novel. It refers to the classical genre and takes up typical motives but at the same time it is distinguished by its different, fresh approach.

Es klingt fast wie ein Paradoxon, dass ein Familien- und Generationsroman modern sein kann.¹ Zur Zeit scheint aber das jahrelang unterschätzte, als konventionell und überholt geltende literarische Genre sehr beliebt zu sein. Immer wieder neue traditionelle und inzwischen auch modern anmutende Familiensagen und Generationen übergreifende Geschichten erscheinen auf dem literarischen Markt, erfreuen sich wachsender Popularität und, was bemerkenswert ist, finden Rezeption nicht nur in den breiten Lesermassen, sondern auch bei Literaturkritikern und Juroren literarischer Wettbewerbe. Selbst wenn sich viele in der Meinung über den Wert des Genres uneinig sind, können keine Zweifel mehr daran bestehen, dass der Familien- und Generationsroman

¹ Die Bezeichnung „modern“ wird im vorliegenden Text in ihrer alltäglichen Bedeutung gebraucht und nicht auf die literarische Moderne bezogen.

gerade eine Hochkonjunktur erlebt.² Immerhin wurde 2005 mit dem ersten Deutschen Buchpreis ein Familien- und Generationsroman gekrönt.

Arno Geigers Erfolgswerk, von dem hier die Rede ist, mit dem fast prophetischen Titel *Es geht uns gut* setzte sich gegen solche Werke wie Daniel Kehlmanns *Die Vermessung der Welt* (2005) oder Friederike Mayröckers *Und ich schüttelte einen Liebling* (2005) durch. Die Entscheidung der Jury begründete Bodo Kirchhoff mit den Worten: „Arno Geiger gelingt es, Vergänglichkeit und Augenblick, Geschichtliches und Privates, Erinnern und Vergessen in eine überzeugende Balance zu bringen.“³ Der Autor, der „ebenso genau wie leicht vom Gewicht des Lebens spricht“⁴ meint selbst Folgendes: „Ich denke, dass der Erfolg mit der Form des Familienromans zu tun hat.“⁵

Der Anfang der gegenwärtigen Popularität von Familien- und Generationsromanen wird in der Zeit der Wende und der Wiedervereinigung gesehen.⁶ Das Genre drücke nämlich die Sehnsucht nach dem Ursprung aus, gesucht wird also die eigene Herkunft. Seine Popularität hängt auch gewiss mit dem „anhaltenden Gedächtnisboom“⁷ zusammen. Wie bereits von Kirchhoff und Geiger beobachtet, eignet sich das „aktuelle“ Genre gut dazu, die quälenden Fragen zu beantworten – aus einem Abstand auf das vergangene, katastrophenreiche 20. Jahrhundert zurück zu blicken, sich mit der Vergangenheit auseinanderzusetzen und die immer noch bestehenden Ungewissheiten zu klären versuchen. „Die Enkel wollen es wissen“ – heißt es bei Volker Hage⁸, und es ist die Enkelgeneration (Autoren wie Geiger, geboren um 1968), die sich zu Wort meldet und statt einer „großen Vergangenheitsbewältigung“⁹ private Geschichten bietet. Darin erschöpfen sich aber die Leistung und die Möglichkeiten der Familien- und Generationsromane keineswegs. Das Genre trägt dazu bei, „die heutigen kulturellen Verhältnisse zwischen Jung und Alt, Eltern und Kindern, Lebenden und Toten, Vergänglichkeit und Zukunft zu erforschen“¹⁰. Letzten Endes greift es ein Thema auf, das jedem Leser nahe steht – die identitätsstiftende Familie. Die vertrauten Fragen, wer wir sind, woher wir kommen und was wir angesichts des Vorgefundenen – des Vorbestimmten also, bedeuten und überhaupt

² Die These von der Popularität des Genres sollen einige der am meisten in der Öffentlichkeit rezipierten Familien- und Generationsromane bestätigen; neben Arno Geigers *Es geht uns gut* Eva Menasses *Vienna*, Gila Lustigers *So sind wir*, Charles Lewinskys *Melnitz*, Irene Disches *Großmama packt aus*, Stephan Wackwitz' *Ein unsichtbares Land*, Tanja Dückers' *Himmelskörper* und *Der längste Tag des Jahres*, John von Düffels *Vom Wasser* und *Houwelandt*, Thomas von Steinaeckers *Wallner beginnt zu fliegen*, Viola Roggenkamps *Familienleben* und viele weitere.

³ Bodo Kirchhoff zitiert nach Brigitte Schwens-Harrant: *Taubenkot am Dachboden*. In: *Die Furche*, Wien, 17.11.2005, Nr. 46, S. 1.

⁴ Bodo Kirchhoff zitiert nach Paul Jandl: *In diesen Tälern ist das Gute daheim. Wer hätte das gedacht. Österreich erzählt*. In: *Neue Züricher Zeitung, International*, Zürich, 13.12.2005, S. 25.

⁵ Arno Geiger im Gespräch mit Klaus Buttlinger: *Geh't's uns gut?* In: *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten, Beilage Wochenende*, Linz, 13.05.2006, S.7.

⁶ Vgl. Friederike Eigler: *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende. Philologische Studien und Quellen 192*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag 2005, S. 9.

⁷ Ebd.

⁸ Volker Hage: *Die Enkel wollen es wissen*. In: *Der Spiegel* 12/2003 vom 17.03.2003, S. 170.

⁹ Susanne Beyer: *Gesucht: die eigene Herkunft*. In: *Der Spiegel* 29/2004 vom 12.07.2004, S. 118.

¹⁰ Ulrike Vedder im Programm der Konferenz *Am Nullpunkt der Familie: Generationen und Genealogien in der Gegenwartsliteratur*, vom 15./16.2.2008 im Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturforschung Berlin. http://www.zfl.gwz-berlin.de/veranstaltungen/veranstaltungen/_/259/?cHash=cddd716ac5. (10.05.2008).

leisten können, bilden die zentralen Themen, um die Familien- und Generationsromane kreisen.¹¹ Dieselben Fragen lassen sich allerdings auch poetologisch auf das Genre selbst richten – was ist also der zeitgenössische Familien- und Generationsroman?

DEFINITIONSVERSUCHE

Familien- und Generationsromane stellen kein einheitliches literarisches Genre dar, vielmehr handelt es sich hier um einen Sammelbegriff für literarische Prosawerke mit manchmal äußerst unterschiedlicher Thematik. Das gemeinsame Merkmal bleibt immer die Familie als der eigentliche Akteur oder eine Generationen übergreifende Familiengeschichte, die sich auch nicht notwendigerweise im Vordergrund befinden muss. Die Familie bildet häufig nur das Hauptgerüst des Romans und liefert einen Ausgangspunkt für die Behandlung und Erörterung weiterer Themen. Das *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur* formuliert dementsprechend die Definition des Familienromans folgendermaßen:

ein stofflich im Problembereich des bürgerlichen oder adligen Familienlebens, den Konflikten und Bindungen des Zusammenlebens, im weiteren Sinne auch noch der Generationen und der Ehe angesiedelter Roman, doch nur selten rein in dieser thematischen Begrenzung, meist spielen beim anspruchsvollen Familienromanen umgreifendere und allgemein soziale Fragen hinein.¹²

Darüber hinaus sei ein Familienroman ein häufiges Genre der Unterhaltungsliteratur und könne auch weitere Romanformen annehmen – des Bauernromans, der Heimatdichtung, des sozialen bzw. Ständeromans, des Eheromans oder des auf die Geschlechterfolge ausgreifenden Generationsromans.¹³ Dies scheint aber nur eine teilweise gültige Definition zu sein, die nicht unbedingt einem modernen Familien- und Generationsroman der Gegenwart gerecht wird. Die breite Themenpalette der Familienromane wurde um einiges reicher und kann jeweils, in unterschiedlichem Ausmaß, unterschiedliche Ausführung erfahren.

Neben den grundlegenden „familienzentrierten“ Themen, zu denen Familienzerwürfnisse zwischen Generationen, in ihrer „klassischen“ Form zwischen Vätern und Söhnen, Konflikte zwischen Geschlechtern und das zentrale Thema des Genres – der Zerfall bzw. Untergang der Familie – zählen,¹⁴ gehören zu den bedeutendsten Themen

¹¹ Zur Entstehung von *Es geht uns gut* zitiert Reinhold Reiterer folgende Äußerung von Arno Geiger: „[Philipp Erlach erbt eine Villa. Ein Mittdreißiger, der sich treiben lässt, eine bekannte Arno-Geiger-Figur.] 'Ja, das stimmt. Neu war für mich die Frage: Woher kommt der eigentlich? Wie kann ich ihm eine biografische Tiefe und historische Plausibilität geben. Mir war klar, ich kann diesen Menschen nur erklären, wenn ich seine Eltern mit einbeziehe und dann lag für mich auf der Hand, ich brauche auch die Großeltern. Diese Generation ist dermaßen wichtig, ohne die komme ich nicht aus. So bin ich in den Familienroman hineingeraten.'“ S. Reinhold Reiterer: *Kräftiges Ausholzen im Familiendickicht*. In: *Kleine Zeitung*, Graz, 17.09.2005. S. 104.

¹² Gero von Wilpert: *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*. Stuttgart: A. Kröner, 1989. S. 259.

¹³ Ebd.

¹⁴ Vgl. Yi-ling Ru: *The Family Novel. Toward a Generic Definition*. New York, San Francisco, Bern: Peter Lang, 1992.

auch geschichtliche und gesellschaftskritische Aspekte.¹⁵

Eine derartige Definition des Familien- und Generationsromans führt auch Heide Lutosch an:

Die gängige Charakterisierung des Familienromans bestimmt die Romanfamilie als „Spiegel“ der Gesellschaft, als „Wiederholung“ des übergeordneten Gemeinwesens im Kleinen, als „Mikrokosmos“ im strukturgleichen Ganzen. Die Verknüpfung von „Einzelschicksalen und Weltenlauf“ sei somit die besondere „Leistung“ des Familienromans.¹⁶

Zur Begründung der Popularität des Genres meint Lutosch:

Egal, ob dieses Vorurteil über den Familienroman auf die so bezeichneten Romane zutrifft oder nicht: Wenn eine konkrete, in wiedererkennbare und alltägliche Probleme verwickelte, sich in Kindern und Kindeskindern fortsetzende Romanfamilie als Spiegel der Gesellschaft aufgefasst wird, dann fungiert sie dadurch auch immer als Versprechen, dass das „große Ganze“ überschaubar, verständlich und von Dauer ist; – ein Versprechen, das zu der anhaltenden und sich von Zeit zu Zeit boomartig verstärkenden Beliebtheit des Familienromans sicher nicht unwesentlich beiträgt.¹⁷

Die enge Verknüpfung der familiären mit der geschichtlichen Thematik erfolgt nach Lutosch aus der Sehnsucht des Menschen nach Unendlichkeit des Lebens. Die Generationenfolgen, die nacheinander treten, sichern die Kontinuität der Familie und somit ihre Unsterblichkeit:

Diese verschiedenen Vorstellungen von Unendlichkeit, die im Bild der Familie enthalten sind, sind insofern Glücksvorstellungen, als sie sowohl die Angst vor dem individuellen Verschwinden, dem Tod, als auch die Angst vor dem Verschwinden von „allem“, dem Weltende, kurzzeitig zu bannen vermögen. Familie bedeutet so: Es geht alles weiter, es kommt alles wieder, alles ist festgefügt und von Dauer.¹⁸

Mit diesem Versprechen, das Ganze, die romantische Totalität des menschlichen Lebens in umfassenderem Rahmen des Zeitgeschehens zu schildern, präsentiert das Genre (auch dank seiner überwiegend realistischen Darstellungsweise) eine besondere Form des Romans, die Charakterzüge und Funktionen des (gewöhnlich bürgerlichen) Epos annimmt. Allerdings darf hier nicht behauptet werden, dass Familien- und Gene-

¹⁵ Mit dem „thematischen“ Inhalt der Familien- und Generationsromane scheint ihre Klassifikation bzw. Zugehörigkeit zur Hochkultur oder zur Trivialliteratur zusammenzuhängen. Während sich der triviale Familienroman auf die (meist erfolgreiche) Suche der Protagonistin (!) nach dem Liebesglück konzentriert, entscheiden die „Hintergrundthemen“ wie Literarisierung der Geschichte, breite Darstellung der sozialen Verhältnisse, Erörterung kultureller Problematik der jeweiligen Zeit über die Qualität und den Anspruch des Familien- und Generationsromans. Da verschiedenartige Entwicklungen und Veränderungen anhand der Schilderung mehrerer Generationen anschaulich gemacht werden können (mit Hilfe der Darstellung von Kontrast- und Korrespondenzrelationen zwischen den Generationen) wäre vielleicht an dieser Stelle die Unterscheidung zutreffend, das sich im Falle von Trivialliteratur fast ausschließlich um Familienromane handelt, während Familien- und Generationsromane häufiger den Anspruch der Hochkultur erheben.

¹⁶ Heide Lutosch: *Ende der Familie – Ende der Geschichte. Zum Familienroman bei Thomas Mann, Gabriel García Márquez und Michel Houellebecq.* Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2007. S. 9.

¹⁷ Ebd., S. 9f.

¹⁸ Ebd., S. 194f.

rationsromane, besonders die der Gegenwart, die Welt mimetisch nachahmen wollen. Vielmehr stellen sie Versuche dar, mit Hilfe der einzelnen Familiengeschichte über historische, soziale, kulturelle u. a. Themen zu reflektieren, von denen die jeweiligen literarischen Weltentwürfe abhängen. Friederike Eigler schreibt darüber folgendermaßen: „Das Genre [...] steht aufgrund dieser zeitgeschichtlichen Verankerung in besonderem Maße im Spannungsfeld zwischen Fiktionalität und Referenzialität“¹⁹ und bemerkt auch: „Literarische Texte sind weder an ein chronologisches Nacheinander gebunden noch an die Einheit von Zeit, Ort und Handlung und können damit der Fragmentierung von Raum und der Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen, die die Geschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts in besonderem Maße auszeichnet, mit genuin literarischen Mitteln erfassen.“²⁰

Geigers *Es geht uns gut* mit seinen Themen, aber vor allem dank der besonderen Erzähltechnik, scheint diese These zu bestätigen, was im Folgenden dargestellt werden soll.

ES GEHT UNS GUT – EIN ANTI-FAMILIENROMAN?

Arno Geigers Familien- und Generationsroman hat einen eher untypischen Anfang, der mehr von einem Anti-Familienroman zeugt: Hier erbt ein erfolgloser Schriftsteller, ein 36jähriger Wiener, Philipp Erlach, die Villa seiner verstorbenen Großmutter im Hietzinger Bezirk und damit auch eine „verstaubte“ Familiengeschichte, von der er nichts wissen will. „Er hat nie darüber nachgedacht, was es heißt, daß die Toten uns überdauern“²¹ – lautet der erste Satz des Romans und zugleich das Motto der zahlreichen Annäherungsversuche an die eigene, bereits fast verstorbene Familie, die der Erbe mit „familiärer Unambitioniertheit“²² unternehmen wird, während er das verkommene Haus saniert.

Obwohl das Licht nicht das allerbeste war, erfaßte er mit dem ersten Blick die ganze Spannweite des Horrors. Dutzende Tauben, die sich hier eingeknistet und alles knöchel- und knietief mit Dreck überzogen hatten, Schicht auf Schicht wie Zins und Zinseszins, Kot, Knochen, Maden, Mäuse, Parasiten, Krankheitserreger (Tbc? Salmonellen?). Er zog den Kopf sofort wieder zurück, die Tür krachend hinterher, sich mehrmals vergewissernd, daß die Verriegelung fest eingeklinkt war.²³

Der Anblick des Dachbodens im geerbten Familienhaus löst in Philipp Panik vor der bevorstehenden „Wühlarbeit im Haus der Ahnen“²⁴ aus. Das Dachgeschoss und zugleich ein Gedächtnisspeicher muss zuerst aufgeräumt und damit die eigene Familiengeschichte mühsam entstaubt werden oder, besser gesagt, mit Hilfe der gelagerten Erinnerungsstücke erst rekonstruiert werden. Von der Vergangenheit überwältigt lernt

¹⁹ Friederike Eigler: *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende. Philologische Studien und Quellen* 192. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag 2005. S.10.

²⁰ Ebd. S. 35f.

²¹ Arno Geiger: *Es geht uns gut*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2007. S. 7.

²² Ebd., S. 11.

²³ Ebd., S. 7.

²⁴ Vgl. Volker Hage: *Wühlarbeit im Haus der Ahnen*. In: *Der Spiegel* 35/2005 vom 29.08.2005. S. 154-156.

Philipp in langsamen Schritten die Familienvilla kennen und damit auch die hinter den zahlreichen Photographien, in Schuhkartons aufbewahrten Briefen und alten Möbelstücken verborgene Familiengeschichte.

Das Entrümpeln der alten Villa ist also der Ausgangspunkt fürs Erzählen der Geschichte einer Wiener Familie, der Sterks, die sehr persönlich und zugleich repräsentativ für das vergangene Jahrhundert erscheint. In einundzwanzig, mit konkreten Daten überschriebenen Kapiteln werden immer mit einem einzelnen Tag sieben Jahrzehnte aus der Perspektive des jeweiligen Familienmitglieds dargestellt. Der erzählerische Bogen umfasst die Zeit seit dem Jahr 1938 bis zum Jahr 2001, wobei all die „gegenwärtigen“ (mit 2001 datierten) Kapitel den Enkel Philipp betreffen und somit auch einen Rahmen für den Roman bilden.

Auf diese Art und Weise erzählt Geiger die Familiengeschichte nicht ausschließlich aus der Perspektive des Enkels, sondern er lässt alle Figuren selbst sprechen. Bemerkenswert ist auch, dass immer im Präsens erzählt wird. So vernehmen die LeserInnen die Stimmen der Familienmitglieder immer in ihrer jeweiligen Gegenwart. Und es ist auch der/die LeserIn, dem/der die Gesamtschau der Familie zufällt.

Folgendermaßen begründete Geiger selbst die gewählte Erzähltechnik:

Die meisten Familienromane sind rückblickend aus der Enkelperspektive erzählt. Meines Erachtens ist das ein egozentrischer, tendenziöser Blick, der allen Familienmitgliedern eine Familienposition zuweist und die vorherigen Generationen zu Zuträgern der Enkel macht. Ich wollte eine Erzählhaltung finden, die allen Figuren gleichermaßen gerecht wird. Deshalb erzähle ich im Präsens, deshalb die Entscheidung für einzelne Tage, was mir ermöglicht, sehr nahe an die Figuren heranzugehen. Im Ergebnis ist sowohl die Zeithierarchie aufgebrochen, die etwas Wertendes hat, weil weniger wichtig erscheint, was länger her ist, als auch die Generationenhierarchie.²⁵

Die gewählte Erzählhaltung ist „allen Figuren gleichermaßen gerecht“ auch deswegen, weil sie sie alle sprechen lässt – die Familiengeschichte wird durch dieses multiperspektivische Erzählen ergänzt, vervollständigt und zugleich auch relativiert. Dies ist auch ein erzähltechnisches Verfahren, das die Darstellung des Privaten, Persönlichen und zugleich Repräsentativen auf einmal ermöglicht. Jeder Protagonist und jede Protagonistin ist ein Mensch aus Fleisch und Blut, stellt aber auch einen Typus dar, an dem konkrete Themen aufgegriffen und behandelt werden, ohne dass das Individuelle der jeweiligen Person darunter leidet. Auffallend ist übrigens hier die Tatsache, dass die für den Familien- und Generationsroman traditionellen Problematiken – wie Geschichte und Zeitgeschehen (typischerweise) an den männlichen Protagonisten „ausgeführt“ werden, während die gesellschaftskritischen Aspekte eher Protagonistinnen des Romans betreffen. Aus dem Kaleidoskop der dargestellten einzelnen Tage ergibt sich im Endeffekt ein panoramisches Bild der Familie, der Geschichte und der Epoche.

²⁵ Peter Landerl: Interview mit Arno Geiger. Literaturhaus Wien, 06.10.2005. http://www.literaturhaus.at/buch/autoren_portraits/portraits/geiger/. (20.09.2007).

Familien- und (vor allem) Generationsromanen, die mit einer realistischen Darstellungswise eine Familiengeschichte über mehrere Jahre und Jahrzehnte hinweg schildern, liegt eine implizite Möglichkeit zugrunde, historischen Stoff zu literarisieren und gesellschaftskritische Aussagen zu machen. Die Schilderung der „historischen Fakten“ als Hintergrund oder als gleichberechtigte Plots des Romans bedeutet immer schon deren Interpretation. Zwischen den Zeilen kommt eine Geschichtsauffassung oder Deutung der jeweiligen historischen Ereignisse zum Vorschein, so wie sie in der Familie verinnerlicht wird. Die Geschichte als Erzeugnis des Familiengedächtnisses, mit seinem Drang zur Neutralisierung und Verdrängung des Unbequemen lässt aber auch Aussagen über die Bedeutung markanter Fakten aus der Vergangenheit im kollektiven Gedächtnis machen.

Die meisten zeitgenössischen deutschsprachigen Familien- und Generationsromane nehmen (notwendigerweise) Stellung zur deutschen Vergangenheit und zum Nationalsozialismus. Hier bietet das literarische Genre besondere Möglichkeiten an, einen Weg zwischen der privaten, verinnerlichten Geschichte und der etablierten Geschichtsschreibung einzuschlagen bzw. „die Trennung zwischen historischem Wissen über die deutsche Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert (Lexikon) und dem privaten Raum von Familiengeschichten (Familienalbum) zu überwinden, oder zumindest zu lockern“.²⁶

Die Figur, an der die historischen Themen des Familienromans, vor allem die österreichische Vergangenheit und der Nationalsozialismus, sichtbar bzw. „realisiert“ werden, ist Philipps Großvater, Dr. Richard Sterk. Er verwirklicht sich außerhalb der Familie und bringt es von einem Verwaltungsjuristen einer Elektrizitätsgesellschaft zum christlichsozialen Innenminister, der im Nachkriegsösterreich mit den Russen verhandelt und an den Vorbereitungsarbeiten am Staatsvertrag intensiv beteiligt ist. Gerade dieses Moment scheint den Zusammenhang dieser konkreten Familie mit der ganzen Gesellschaft zu betonen. Sterk ist die Figur, die nicht nur über das Schicksal seiner eigenen Familie, sondern auch des ganzen Staates entscheidet.

Die politische Einstellung Richard Sterks zum Nationalsozialismus ist eher ambivalent. Einerseits ist er kein Anhänger Hitlers, andererseits präsentiert er sich auch nicht als dessen aktiver Gegner. Sein Verhalten ist eher eine „sanfte“ Opposition. Vielmehr versucht er sich „unauffällig“²⁷ zu halten und „für ein paar Jahre geduckt“ abzuwarten.²⁸

Nur „zwischen den Zeilen“ und aus den tagtäglichen Gesprächen des Ehepaars Serk erfährt der Leser von der politischen Situation Österreichs – von dem an Ausmaß und Kraft anwachsenden Antisemitismus, von Verfolgungen, Militarisierung, Enteignungen und Deportationen. Die „Geschichte“ findet jedoch in der unmittelbaren Nähe, im wortwörtlichen Sinne „hinter dem Zaun“ statt – mit der jüdischen Nachbarfamilie Löwy, die gezwungen ist, das eigene Haus in der Wiener Vorstadt zu verlassen und nach London zu emigrieren, wird das Zeitgeschehen in Geigers Familienroman thematisiert.

²⁶ Friederike Eigler: *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende. Philologische Studien und Quellen 192*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag 2005. S. 36.

²⁷ Arno Geiger: *Es geht uns gut*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2007. S. 89.

²⁸ Ebd., S. 200.

Aber auch die Sterks bleiben vom Nationalsozialismus nicht unbetroffen. Der Krieg nimmt der Familie den einzigen Sohn, Otto, einen 14 Jahre alten Hitlerjungen, dessen Kriegsbegeisterung und früher Tod für immer ein Familientabu bilden.

Nun bleibt als das einzige Kind Ingrid, die trotzige, rebellige und eigenwillige Tochter, die dem Vater neuen Kummer beschert – in Person ihres Freundes und zukünftigen Ehemannes Peter Erlachs. In dem mit dem 8. April 1945 datierten Kapitel wird er als kleiner Junge geschildert, der in den letzten Kriegstagen ergeben an den Trümmern Wiens kämpft. Mit Peter werden Erinnerungen an Otto geweckt und mit dessen starker Ablehnung die unangenehme Vergangenheit aus dem Familienleben zu verdrängen versucht. Der an einem „neuen“ Österreich arbeitende Minister Sterk kann einen ehemaligen Hitlerjungen und jetzigen Taugenichts an der Seite seiner Tochter nicht akzeptieren. An dieser Stelle werden in Geigers Roman erneut Geschichte und Politik mit der familiären Thematik deutlich verbunden – das zum großen Teil politisch hervorgerufene Zerwürfnis wird zu einem Generationskonflikt:

Ich verhandle nicht jahrelang mit den Sowjets, damit meine Tochter den Verstand verliert. Siebzehn Jahre lang haben jetzt andere über uns bestimmt. Ein halbes Leben lang habe ich eine katastrophale Störung um die andere über mich ergehen lassen. Und jetzt, wo sich die Verhältnisse ein wenig klären und man endlich wieder Herr im eigenen Haus wird, lasse ich mir den Unfrieden nicht von der eigenen Tochter hereintragen.²⁹

Als der sture und autoritäre Vater und Minister, der um jeden Preis die Kontrolle sowohl über das öffentliche als auch familiäre Leben zu behalten trachtet, aufs politische Abstellgleis geschoben und von der Tochter verlassen wird, versinkt er mit den Jahren in eine schnell fortschreitende Demenz und Hilflosigkeit.

In den Erinnerungen der Protagonisten verschwimmen die Ereignisse aus der früheren und späteren Vergangenheit. Was bleibt, ist ein unscharfes Bild der Geschichte, das zugleich „das kollektive Selbstverständnis Österreichs“³⁰ verzerrt darstellt:

was anderswo eben erst passiert war, war in Österreich bereits lange her, und was anderswo schon lange her war, war in Österreich gepflegte Gegenwart. Ist es dir nicht auch so ergangen, daß du manchmal nicht mehr wußtest, hat Kaiser Franz Joseph jetzt vor oder nach Hitler regiert? [...] und plötzlich war Hitler länger her als Franz Joseph, das hat den fünfziger Jahren den Weg geebnet, das hat Österreich zu dem gemacht, was es ist, nur erinnert sich niemand mehr daran oder nur sehr schwach.³¹

Das, was bleiben soll, versucht Peter mit der Erfindung des Spiels, mit dem markant doppelsinnigen Titel, „*Wer kennt Österreich?*“ zu „etablieren“. Das „Reise- und Orthographiespiel, das die kleine, besetzte [...] Republik in seiner Schönheit und Harmlosigkeit in den Mittelpunkt stellt“³² und das Peter zwar aus Geldnot entwickelt,

²⁹ Ebd., S. 145.

³⁰ Julia Freytag: „*Wer kennt Österreich?*“ *Familiengeschichten erzählen*. Arno Geiger *Es geht uns gut* (2005) und Eva Menasse *Vienna* (2005). Köln, Wien: Böhlau 2007. S. 116.

³¹ Arno Geiger: *Es geht und gut*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2007. S. 349.

³² Ebd., S. 161.

überprüft die Kenntnis der österreichischen Geographie, lenkt aber zugleich von den schwierigen Fragen nach der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit und österreichischen Mittäterschaft während des Krieges ab. Eine friedliche österreichische Identität soll neu geschaffen werden.

GESELLSCHAFTSKRITIK AUS DER SICHT DER BETROFFENEN

Die gesellschaftskritische Problematik wird in Geigers Roman vor allem mit Schilderung der Frauengestalten thematisiert, die einerseits eine Beobachterposition annehmen, aus der sie die politischen und sozialen Verhältnisse kritisch betrachten, die sich andererseits von diesen stark betroffen fühlen und unter der patriarchalischen Ordnung leiden.

Philipps Großmutter, Alma Sterk, die wohl hervorragende Figur des Romans überhaupt, wird bereits als eine ältere Dame dargestellt – eine kluge und verständnisvolle Frau von großer innerer Wärme, die seit einigen Jahren ihren bereits an Alzheimer kranken Mann pflegt. Alma, ihrem Vornamen gemäß, verkörpert das Mütterliche, die Wärme, die Fürsorge. Ihr Leben ist auf die Familie und das Familienhaus konzentriert – die haushalterischen Angelegenheiten, kleine Reparaturen, Gartenpflege und Bienenzucht sind ihre täglichen Beschäftigungen. In Rückblenden erinnert sich jedoch Alma an die Zeit, als sie Richard kennengelernt hatte, und als er, der reiche Nachkomme einer Hietzinger Familie, von ihr als einer modernen und unabhängigen Frau begeistert war. Eine frühe Schwangerschaft bedeutete allerdings das Ende ihres Studiums und legte sie endgültig auf die Familienfürsorge fest. Auch ihre berufliche Aktivität, die Geschäftsführung in einem Wäschebusiness musste sie einstellen, nachdem Richard aus politischen Gründen von dort sein Kapital zurückgezogen hatte. Seitdem steht Alma immer im Hintergrund, obwohl eigentlich sie die Existenz der Familie sichert.

Alma lebt an der Seite eines sturen, konservativen und autoritären Familienoberhauptes, dessen Affären mit einem Kindermädchen und einer Sekretärin sie jahrelang mit Geduld ertragen muss. Aber all die Jahre der familiären Unterordnung und der Einschließung im Privaten tragen zu ihrer Verbitterung bei. Sie wird zu einer beobachtenden, reflektierenden und realistisch denkenden Person, ohne jegliche Illusionen:

Ich war glücklich, ich meine insofern glücklich, als ich damals nicht ahnte, dass das Leben ein großes Hindernislaufen sein wird, das auf Dauer müde macht.³³

Ihre Frustrierung und zugleich Resignation finden einen Höhepunkt in der Entscheidung, die Bienenkönigin zu töten und damit den Schwarm auseinander zu treiben. Ein Bild, das sich nicht schwer auf die Familie übertragen lässt.³⁴

³³ Ebd., S. 384f.

³⁴ Dem Bienenstock, den Sterks ihren zur Emigration gezwungenen Nachbarn abgekauft haben, kommen mehrere Symbolfunktionen zu. Er versinnbildlicht Familie aber auch den Staat mit dessen Vergangenheit. Julia Freytag bemerkt: „Das Bienenhaus als Miniatur des großen Wohnhauses der Familie Löwy fungiert als Symbol für die Enteignungen und Deportationen.“ Vgl. Julia Freytag: „*Wer kennt Österreich?*“ *Familiengeschichten erzählen. Arno Geiger Es geht uns gut (2005) und Eva Menasse Vienna (2005)*. Köln, Wien: Böhlau 2007. S. 114f.

Im Laufe der Zeit kehrt sich aber die Relation zwischen Alma und Richard um – sie, jahrelang untergeordnet und betrogen, mit Garderobezuschüssen besänftigt, bleibt ihm auch im fortgeschrittenen Alter geistig und emotional überlegen. Er zwingt sich selbst in ein starres Korsett aus Lebenslügen, Konventionen und Rollenbildern und endet in völliger Demenz. Von einem strengen Patriarchen wird er zum Pflegefall, einem hilflosen Greis, für den auch Alma nur schwer Mitleid empfindet.

Ingrid, Philipps Mutter, wiederholt das Schicksal ihrer Mutter nicht, obwohl auch sie nicht glücklich wird und an der patriarchalischen Ordnung leidet, die der macht-ausübende Vater verkörpert. Zunächst ist er für sie eine wichtige Bezugsperson, doch bald wendet sich die Tochter, in ihrer Entscheidungsfreiheit vom Vater eingeschränkt, von ihm ab. Sie flieht vor seiner Autorität zu ihrer großen Liebe, Peter, der sich letzten Endes als Schwächling und Taugenichts erweist.

Ingrids Auflehnung gegen den Vater bedeutet auch eine Auflehnung gegen die Fremdbestimmtheit. Sie bringt den notwendigen Mut auf, dem Willen des Vaters Widerstand zu leisten und selbst über sich zu entscheiden, dafür muss sie aber einen hohen Preis zahlen – sie wird vor die Tür gesetzt und aus der Familie ausgeschlossen.

Dabei gelingt es ihr nicht wirklich, sich von der Macht des Vaters zu befreien. Ohne sich dessen bewusst zu werden, erfüllt sie seinen Auftrag – statt Schauspielerin zu werden, was ihr Kindheitstraum darstellte, schließt sie erfolgreich das Medizinstudium ab, wird eine tüchtige Ärztin, Mutter und Frau, die erst zu spät erkennt, „dass es blöd ist, immer die perfekte Ehefrau abgeben zu wollen.“³⁵ Neben ihrer Doppelbelastung durch Beruf und Familie ist sie auch einsam, unglücklich, von Peter bekommt sie weder Unterstützung noch Aufmerksamkeit. Allmählich verliert auch sie ihre Illusionen bezüglich ihres neuen freien Lebens. Verbittert erinnert sie sich an ihren Traum, Schauspielerin zu werden und an ihren kurzen Auftritt als Elfjährige im Heimatfilm „Der Hofrat Geiger“. Erst nach Jahren begreift sie die Tragweite des erfolgreichen österreichischen Nachkriegsfilmes:

Wie konnte sie diese Ungeheuerlichkeit dreiundzwanzig Jahre lang übersehen? [...] daß sich die sitzengelassene Frau mit dem unehelichen Kind durch die dreißiger Jahre und den Krieg schlägt, damit der Herr Hofrat nach achtzehn Jahren daherkommt und sich großzügig zum totalen Familienoberhaupt aufschwingt? Wenn Ingrid sich vergegenwärtigt, daß ihr die Schnulze, als [...] Mädchen [...] der Inbegriff des höchsten Glücks inmitten der vertrauten Landschaft gewesen ist. Wenn sie bedenkt, wie sehr sie von [...] seinen Happy-End-Exzessen gerührt war, und ihre Freundinnen nicht weniger, in einem kollektiven Tagtraum, den der Film erzeugte oder aufgriff und verstärkte. [...] Wenn sie dies alles bedenkt – und zwar unter dem Aspekt ihres eigenen Lebens und ihrer jetzigen Situation –, müßte ihr eigentlich speiübel werden.³⁶

Das Leben außerhalb der autoritären Macht des Vaters in der Ehe, wo sie alleine die ganze Verantwortung für die Familie tragen muss und in der Tat verlassen ist, raubt alle Illusionen. Die scheinbar starke, kämpfende Ingrid scheitert an ihren Beziehungen zu den Männern der Familie, an den Erwartungen ihr gegenüber und an Rollen, die ihr

³⁵ Arno Geiger: *Es geht uns gut*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2007. S. 248.

³⁶ Ebd., S. 151f.

aufgezwungen werden. Dieses Scheitern bzw., im wörtlichen Sinne, „Zugrundegehen“ illustriert der frühe Tod der Protagonistin. Ingrid ertrinkt an einem sommerlichen Tag in der Donau, festgeklemmt am Boden des Flusses durch ein Armband, das sie von Peter geschenkt bekommen hat, und aus dem sie sich unter Wasser nicht befreien kann oder will.

Erst Ingrids Tochter Sissi, und damit der um 1968 geborenen Generation, gelingt der Weg zur Emanzipation, was durch die große geographische Entfernung und den ausgeübten Beruf betont wird. Sie lebt mit ihrer Tochter in New York und arbeitet dort als Journalistin. Über die Protagonistinnen des Romans schreibt Michaela Schmitz in ihrer Rezension folgendermaßen:

Und die Frauen? Sie sind vor allem Betroffene. Leidtragende ihrer in jeder Hinsicht unbefriedigenden, entscheidungsunfähigen und ignoranten Männer. Und Opfer ihrer aus konservativen patriarchalischen Gesellschaftsstrukturen ererbten Rollenzwänge. Sie halten die Familien zusammen, sie stiften Identität, sie hinterfragen die Vergangenheit. Und sie begreifen die österreichische Heimat- und Familienidylle als kollektive gesellschaftliche Lüge.³⁷

Die männlichen und weiblichen Figuren in Geigers Roman werden fast stereotyp und klischeehaft geschildert: die Männer üben wie der Minister Sterk Macht aus oder sind wie Peter, der Erfinder eines populären Spiels, oder Philipp, der Schriftsteller, kreativ und schöpferisch. Das sind die Rollen und Charakteristika, die ihnen zwar zugeschrieben werden, die aber in der Wirklichkeit nicht stimmen. Die Frauen werden dagegen auf unterschiedliche Art und Weise entweder mit Natur oder mit Fürsorge assoziiert: Bienenzüchterinnen, Gärtnerinnen, Pflegerinnen, Heilerinnen, Ärztinnen oder, wie die launische und unentschlossene Geliebte von Philipp, Johanna, Meteorologinnen. Doch dank der besonderen Erzählhaltung – dem Erzählen aus der Perspektive der jeweiligen Figur, immer im Präsens, in ihrer Gegenwart, werden diese Rollenvorstellungen und geschlechterspezifische Zuschreibungen in Frage gestellt – der Patriarch ist dement und hilflos, der Künstler lethargisch, die Familienmütter keine glücklichen Priesterinnen des Hauses.

FAMILIENROMAN UND DER MYTHOS ZERFALLENDER FAMILIEN

Das bereits erwähnte, wichtigste thematische Merkmal der Familien- und Generationsromane, das über ihre Genrezugehörigkeit entscheidet und mit den weiteren Motiven eng verflochten ist, ist die Thematik, die um das Familienleben kreist. Unter den auf das umfangreiche Thema Familie konzentrierten Plots der Familien- und Generationsromane lassen sich zwei grundlegende Gruppen von Motiven unterscheiden. Während die eine all die Generationenkonflikte, familiäre Querelen, tatsächliche Tragödien und alltägliche Tragikomödien betrifft, thematisiert die andere einen Mythos des Zerfalls bzw. des Untergangs der Familie, wofür als Standardbeispiel Thomas Manns *Buddenbrooks* angeführt werden.

³⁷ Michaela Schmitz: *Arno Geigers neuer Roman ist für den Deutschen Bücherpreis nominiert. Zu Recht! Wer kennt schon Österreich?* In: *Rheinischer Merkur* vom 06.10.2005. S. 21.

Diese Differenzierung hebt auch Walter Erhart hervor:

Es gibt wohl zwei große Kulturmuster, in denen das Unglück der Familie sich seine Form gesucht hat. Das erste sind die Familientragödien im fast gattungsspezifischen und im fast antiken Sinn: die Verschwörung, der Aufstand oder der Kampf der Kinder gegen die Eltern, die Leidenschaft gegen die Ordnung, die Liebe gegen das Gesetz, das Liebespaar gegen die Institutionen. Dies ist der Stoff, aus dem die Weltliteratur gemacht ist, ja, wie dafür geschaffen erscheint. Es ist der Konflikt im Inneren der Familie, an dem die Familien dann regelmäßig auseinander brechen, in dem ebenso regelmäßig die Söhne und Töchter vor den Vätern und Müttern sterben: Daran entstehen Tragödien, aber auch Komödien, an deren Ende man sich – gerade noch – wieder versöhnt. Das zweite Muster aber ist der Verfall: jenes eher zeitlich organisierte Modell, in dem eine Familie kontinuierlich von der Höhe in die Tiefe stürzt, nicht durch einen exemplarischen Konflikt, sondern durch eine Folge von Ereignissen. Es handelt sich hier um einen eher zur Erzählung und zum Epos neigenden Fall, einen eher schleichenden Prozess über mehrere Stationen. Natürlich kann beides kombiniert werden: die große Tragödie und der schnelle, oder auch langsame, sich anschließende Verfall der Familie, das Gift, das eine Familie langsam zur Erlöschung bringt. Auch dieses Muster besitzt historische Größe, hat weltliterarische Stoffe geformt, ja gehört in gewissem Maße zu den Formen des Erzählens überhaupt: *the rise and fall* – von Familien, Königreichen und Imperien.³⁸

Thomas Manns Roman *Buddenbrooks*, der den Niedergang einer hanseatischen Großbürgerfamilie darstellt, liefert ein repräsentatives Muster dieses Motivs, das nicht nur einen politischen und sozialen sondern auch moralischen und physiologischen Verfall der Familie schildert.³⁹ Und auch hier ist die familiäre Thematik stark mit der zeit- und gesellschaftskritischen verflochten – das Ende der Familie drückt das Ende einer Epoche oder der Geschichte selbst aus.⁴⁰ Innerhalb der österreichischen Literatur wurde der Mythos am deutlichsten in Joseph Roths *Radetzkymarsch* sichtbar. Auch hier wird der facettenreiche soziale, moralische, mentale und sogar körperliche Verfall und Untergang der Familie von Trotta in Zusammenhang mit den verhängnisvollen politischen Veränderungen dargestellt. Die Trotta sterben aus, während sich die k.u.k. Monarchie mit dem ersten Weltkrieg ihrem Ende zuneigt. Der Untergang einer ganzen Epoche wird mit dem Tod des jüngsten Protagonisten besiegelt. Bevor dies aber zustande kommt, spiegeln sich die historischen und sozialen Veränderungen in den abschwächenden Familienbanden zwischen den Generationen und in der fortschreitenden Schwäche, Dekadenz und Lebensfremdheit der Geschlechterfolgen wider.

Obwohl der Verfall der Familie ein zentrales Merkmal der Familien- und Generationsromane darstellt und in zahlreichen Rezensionen von Geigers Roman angesprochen wird,⁴¹ scheint das Motiv in *Es geht uns gut* eine veränderte Ausführung zu erfahren. Trotz der engen Verknüpfung der Familiengeschichte mit der Historie, der Emblematisierung

³⁸ Walter Erhart: *Thomas Manns Buddenbrooks und der Mythos zerfallender Familien*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang 2004. S. 164f.

³⁹ Ebd., S. 167f.

⁴⁰ Vgl. Heide Lutosch: *Ende der Familie – Ende der Geschichte. Zum Familienroman bei Thomas Mann, Gabriel García Márquez und Michel Houellebecq*. S. 11.

⁴¹ Vgl. z. B. Susanne Breuer: *Abschied von der Vergangenheit*. In: *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger* vom 15.10.2005, S. 40.

und den aussterbenden Generationen handelt es sich hier um eine Familie, in der die Familienbande in großem Maße aufgrund der politischen Meinungsunterschiede und der familiären Kommunikationsunfähigkeit tatsächlich abschwächen bzw. wo sie nie wirklich stark waren. Mehr noch – diese Kommunikationslosigkeit und -unfähigkeit scheint die sonst im Genre durch Darstellung der etablierten Familienriten hervorgehobenen, identitätsstiftenden Verhaltens- und Kommunikationscodes zu ersetzen.

Während in der traditionellen Ausprägung des Mythos der Verfall kontinuierlich in der männlichen Erbfolge stattfindet, ergibt sich bei Geiger aus mehreren Perspektiven das Bild einer Familie, wo nicht nur Männer, sondern auch Frauen zu handelnden Personen werden und wo das (die Familienkontinuität sichernde) Bindeglied zwischen Großeltern und dem Enkel Philipp seine Mutter Ingrid bildet (und nicht der Vater!). In Geigers Roman lebt jede Generation und jedes Familienmitglied für sich, was noch zusätzlich durch die gewählte Erzähltechnik verstärkt zum Vorschein kommt. Die Einsamkeit versteckt sich hinter alltäglichen Floskeln, wie die dem Routine-Telefonat entnommene „Es geht uns gut“.

Trotz der unglücklichen Schicksale und des sie begleitenden melancholischen Untertons wird in *Es geht uns gut* weder ein Verfall noch ein typischer Zerfall der Familie geschildert. Die Familie stirbt zwar frühzeitig aus (Otto, Ingrid), doch am Ende bleibt der Enkel, der die Chance hat, das Leben in den Griff zu bekommen. Seine Geschichte ist noch offen. Zwar ist auch Philipp ein lebensuntüchtiges Familienmitglied, ohne Zweifel schwach, apathisch und unentschieden, auch kein Minister mehr, sondern ein erfolgloser Künstler, aber auch er stellt eine Diagnose seiner Generation und seiner Zeit.

Die Veränderung in der Ausführung des Mythos vom Zerfall der Familie kann übrigens in Zusammenhang mit den soziologischen Veränderungen der Familie gebracht werden. Walter Erhart spricht von dem Motiv als von einem „Mythos einer ehemals inkontakten, mit der Gesellschaft verbundenen ‚Großfamilie‘, die – zur Kleinfamilie reduziert – den Verfall einer sozialen Form spiegelt.“⁴² Geiger schildert bereits eine wesentlich kleinere, „mutterzentrierte“ und emotionalisierte Familie, keine verzweigte Sippe, deren Identität über die Person des Vaters vererbt sein würde. Und ihr „Auseinanderdriften“ hängt eher mit den wieder neuen, zeittypischen Hindernissen zusammen – mit der Individualisierung, Entfremdung und der bereits erwähnten Kommunikationslosigkeit und -unfähigkeit.

Der wesentliche Unterschied zwischen Geigers Roman und den traditionellen Familien- und Generationsromanen besteht hier auch darin, dass die Familiengeschichte mit Philipp kein Ende nimmt. Statt der Schilderung eines Familienverfalls handelt es sich hier, umgekehrt, um eine (eher unfreiwillige) Wiederaufstellung – Rekonstruktion der eigenen Familiengeschichte seitens des Enkels, der doch mehr als nur eine verkommene Familienvilla erbt, und um eine „Zurückgewinnung“ der eigenen Familie, nicht

⁴² Walter Erhart: *Thomas Manns Buddenbrooks und der Mythos zerfallender Familien*. S. 167f. Erhart setzt folgendermaßen fort: „Die Familienforscher des 19. Jahrhunderts haben diesen Mythos inszeniert, um der zersplitterten und individualisierten Moderne ein Idealbild vergangener Ordnung entgegenzustellen; die Familienhistoriker haben in dem Übergang vom ganzen Haus zur modernen, emotionalisierten und reduzierten Kleinfamilie in der Tat einen Motor der Modernisierung erkannt. Heute ist dieses Bild der Großfamilie zum Teil wiederum als ein Mythos entlarvt, der die inzwischen erkannte alteuropäische Vielfalt der Familienformen geflissentlich übersieht. Diese vormoderne, zumeist in idealischen Farben gemalte Großfamilie ist in der Tat einer der Mythen glücklicher Familien.“

nur durch die Sanierung des Hauses, sondern durch seine literarische Arbeit. Philipps Unentschlossenheit und Schwäche können sich noch in Stärke umwandeln. Besonders die letzte Szene des Romans, wo Philipp, um den vergessenen Hut zu holen, das Dach der Villa erobert und bereit ist, von da her in die dunkle Sommernacht „auszureiten“, scheint die (zum Teil utopische, idealisierte) Möglichkeit eines Neuanfangs zu symbolisieren. Das Haus ist frisch renoviert, die Familie „zurückgewonnen“, es zieht ein Gewitter auf, das Neue bahnt sich an ...

ES GEHT UNS GUT ALS EIN ZEITGENÖSSISCHER FAMILIEN- UND GENERATIONSROMAN

Thematisch greift Geigers Roman traditionelle Themen und Motive des Familien- und Generationsromans auf, die aber „gegenwartsgemäß“ ausgeführt werden. Die dem Enkel Philipp bevorstehenden Chancen und Möglichkeiten machen seine Familiengeschichte zu einer offenen Geschichte ohne vorhersehbares Ende. Zwar genügt diese Tatsache noch nicht, um den Roman schon als eindeutig postmodern zu klassifizieren, sie stellt aber einen wesentlichen Unterschied zu den großen etablierten Familien- und Generationsromanen der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts dar. Da in diesem Genre das Private mit dem Öffentlichen und Historischen eng verflochten ist, und die großen Vorbilder wie *Buddenbrooks* oder *Radetzkymarsch* schwerwiegende politische und soziale Veränderungen schildern, lässt sich Geigers *Es geht uns gut* auch als eine Art Diagnose der Gegenwart lesen. Beängstigt und unsicher oder einfach vorsichtig schaut die Enkelgeneration, der Philipp zugehört, in die Vergangenheit zurück und zugleich in die Zukunft, bevor sie dem 21. Jahrhundert die Stirn bietet.

Formal neu ist in Geigers Roman auch die damit zusammenhängende Fragmentarisierung der Familiengeschichte durch das Erzählen aus verschiedenen Perspektiven. Eine kontinuierliche, einheitliche Geschichte scheint nicht mehr möglich. Die einzelnen Kapitel, aus der Sicht der einzelnen Protagonisten geschildert, ähneln alten Familienbildern, aus denen sich die Familiengeschichte wie ein Familienalbum zusammensetzt.

Sie ähneln aber auch, wie Michaela Schmitz bemerkt,⁴³ dem verschachtelten Roman *Die Handschrift von Saragossa* des polnischen Grafen Potocki, über den Philipp auf der Vortreppe der Familienvilla sinniert. Die besondere Erzählhaltung erweist sich hier also als ein literarisches Zitat.⁴⁴

Gerade durch seine Multiperspektivität und Gleichwertigkeit der Stimmen sichert Geigers Roman die vom Genre erwartete Schilderung der Totalität des Lebens.

⁴³ Michaela Schmitz: *Neun Tage für ein halbes Jahrhundert*. <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/buechermarkt/411611>. (05.05.2008).

⁴⁴ Geigers Roman zeichnet sich übrigens durch eine Vielfalt von solchen, expliziten wie impliziten, intertextuellen Bezügen. Der untüchtige Enkel Philipp erscheint auf der Vortreppe wie aus Eichendorffs *Aus dem Leben eines Taugenichts*, und auf dem Dach der Familienvilla wie der Baron von Münchhausen [Julia Freytag]. Philipps Großmutter Alma ist dagegen eine begeisterte Leserin von Stifter und Keller, was als Geigers Statement an seine literarischen Vorbilder gedeutet werden kann: „Ich bewundere Kellers Umgang mit Alltag, dass er wenig auf Effekte setzt. Der Versuch, Nebensächlichkeiten so darzustellen, dass sie nicht nebensächlich sind: Da sehe ich einen Bezug zu meinem Roman.“ Arno Geiger in: Anne-Catherine Simon: *In den Familienroman gestolpert*. In: *Die Presse* vom 19.10.2005. S. 29.

Das Versprechen der Unendlichkeit des menschlichen Lebens erfüllt sich hier nicht in der Wiederkehr des ewig Gleichen in Gestalt der Söhne, Enkel und Urenkel, nicht in der diachronen Kontinuität der Familie also – die Familiengeschichte der Sterks und Erlachs wird eher „synchron“ erzählt. Jedes Kapitel könnte eine selbständige Erzählung darstellen, die ihren Eigenwert unabhängig von der Reihenfolge des Erzählens behält. Diesen Eindruck verstärkt noch zusätzlich die angewandte Erzählperspektive – berichtet wird entweder aus der Sicht des auktorialen Erzählers oder aus der Figurenperspektive und in inneren Monologen, was zugleich persönlich und intim anmutet und doch, dem traditionellen Familien- und Generationsroman gemäß, einen Überblick über das Welt- und Familiengeschehen gewährleistet.

Diese zweideutige Positionierung von Geigers Roman dem Genre gegenüber wird auch in der Schlusszene deutlich:

Gleich wird Philipp auf dem Giebel seines Großelternhauses in die Welt hinausreiten, in diesen überraschend weitläufigen Parcours. Alle Vorbereitungen sind getroffen, die Karten studiert, alles abgebrochen, aufgeräumt, auseinandergezerrt, geschoben, gerückt, gerüstet. Er wird reisen mit seinen Gefährten, für die er ein Fremder ist und bleibt, gleich geht es dahin auf den wenig stabilen Straßen der ukrainischen Südsee, gleich geht es dahin durch Moraste und über Abgründe. Er wird von den Dieben verfolgt sein, die ihn schon sein Leben lang verfolgen. Aber diesmal wird er schneller sein. Er wird den Löwen und Drachen auf den Kopf treten, singen und schreien (schreien bestimmt) und ungemein lachen (ja? sicher?); den Regen trinken (schon möglich) und – und über – – über die Liebe nachdenken. Er winkt zum Abschied.⁴⁵

Philipps „utopische“ Dachfahrt ins Unbekannte lässt sich auch als eine Art Rückkehr lesen. Er hat vor, mit den Schwarzarbeitern, die sein Haus renovierten, Steinwald und Atamanov in die Ukraine zu reisen – in die mythischen Ostgebiete der ehemaligen k.u.k. Monarchie also, und zugleich in Roths Herkunftsland. Vielleicht wäre dies als ein Verweis zu deuten, dass der gegenwärtige Familien- und Generationsroman mit der literarischen Tradition nicht endgültig bricht, sondern sich von ihr respektvoll inspirieren lässt? Die Sentenz, dass uns die Toten überdauern, dürfte auch den Autor Geiger selbst und zugleich den Autor Erlach betreffen. Denn auch Philipp ist ein Schriftsteller, der an einem Familienroman arbeitet.

Dieses metafiktionale Moment des Romans ist ein Merkmal, das neue Interpretationen des Genres ermöglicht. Es betont den Konstruktionscharakter der Familien- und Generationsromane, der dargestellten familiären Mikrokosmose, der geschilderten historischen Umwelt, der komplexen Weltenentwürfe und menschlichen Schicksale.

Es geht uns gut thematisiert also implizit das Genre des Familien- und Generationsromans selbst. Den zahlreichen gegenwärtigen Schriftstellern gleich setzt sich auch der Enkel Philipp mit dem Thema Familie auseinander. Zunächst unfreiwillig, desinteressiert, vom „Vorgefundenen“ überwältigt, findet auch er die Mittel, um die eigene Herkunft zu ergründen – das Familiengeschichten-Erzählen. Und Johannes Behauptung zum Trotz, dass sich seine literarische Arbeit lediglich im Phantasieren über die Ahnen auf einem „Notizbuch-Stadium“ erschöpft, lässt sich eines entgegensetzen – haben wir denn nicht gerade einen Familien- und Generationsroman gelesen?

⁴⁵ Arno Geiger: *Es geht uns gut*. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2007. S. 389f.

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“[...] IN UN GIARDINO D’ARMIDA”: IL RACCONTO D’AUTUNNO DI
LANDOLFI. ESEMPIO DI METAMORFOSI NOVECENTESCA DEL
FANTASTICO

Patrizia Farinelli

Abstract

The issues however typical of 19th-century fantastic narrative which mark Landolfi’s *Racconto d’autunno* are not sufficient reference for fitting his work with the label of this literary genre. As elsewhere, Landolfi’s rhetorical and discursive procedures (breach of illusion complicity, contamination of genres) produce a radical twisting of fantastic narrative’s defining features at the peak of the genre’s success in 19th century as determined by the 20th-century post-war critics including Todorov. The structuring ambiguity of an event apparently inexplicable by the logic of the action’s setting is shifted by Landolfi from the level of the story to that of the language (i. e. a fantastic event is no longer experienced by the subject as an epistemological challenge), quite in keeping with the author’s poetics set on revealing the unreliability of language.

Tommaso Landolfi (1908-1979) è uno dei narratori italiani novecenteschi più coscienti dei limiti del linguaggio; la sua poetica poggia, infatti, sul postulato che ogni narrare commette un tradimento nei confronti del suo referente per la natura stessa della parola, che muta l’oggetto del dire, mentre lo dice, e non c’è scritto in cui egli non ritorni su questo punto. Il suo *opus*, le cui prime prove risalgono alla seconda metà degli anni Trenta, è rappresentato soprattutto da racconti brevi, costruiti intorno a storie d’impianto non verosimile, e da opere di genere diaristico o piuttosto pseudo-diaristico, considerato che il discorso autobiografico vi risulta sempre intersecato da elementi di finzione¹.

Lo scritto su cui ci si intende soffermare qui, il *Racconto d’autunno* – composto in un breve arco di tempo nel 1946 e pubblicato nel 1947 –, è uno dei testi narrativi più estesi dello scrittore; qualcuno lo ascrive al genere del romanzo², ma del romanzo

¹ Alcune delle opere più note dello scrittore: *Il dialogo dei massimi sistemi* (1937), *Il mar delle Blatte e altre storie* (1939), *La pietra lunare* (1939), *Le due zittelle* (1946), *Cancroregina* (1950), *Ombre* (1954), *Un amore del nostro tempo* (1965). *Un paniere di chioccioline* (1968) Fra gli scritti diaristici: *BIERE DU PECHEUR* (1953), *Rien va* (1963), *Des mois* (1967).

² Ne parlano in termini di romanzo sia Simona Costa (Costa, 2008: 135), che Idolina Landolfi (T. Landolfi, 1991: 1008).

come scrittura capace di raccogliere attorno alle vicende narrate un intero mondo e di farne sentire la polifonia, non ha proprio nulla. Landolfi non ha in generale il ductus del romanziere e non tende a costruire storie di ampio respiro; il suo narrare inciampa sempre in una falla che ostacola lo sviluppo della trama e che si manifesta o come interruzione improvvisa della traccia principale o come inserzione di un nuovo genere o ancora più spesso come estesa digressione metanarrativa. Del resto un simile rifiuto del genere romanzesco non è solo di Landolfi, la cui poetica esclude di per sé la possibilità di costruire azione e sviluppare intreccio, ma si presenta come una tendenza abbastanza diffusa in Italia nella prima metà del XX secolo. Tale fenomeno s'innesta a sua volta, come noto, in un processo sovranazionale di profonda revisione degli istituti letterari tramandati ed è connessa a trasformazioni epistemologiche che rivisitano i concetti di tempo, soggetto e realtà. Il romanzo in generale ne esce ridefinito. Nell'orizzonte letterario italiano, però, questo genere trova una resistenza nei primi decenni del Novecento prima ancora di aver raggiunto quella maturità che aveva invece ottenuto nel corso del XVIII e XIX secolo in altri Paesi europei. Basterebbe ricordare al proposito l'esperienza del frammentismo³, gli esempi di controromanzo di un Bontempelli e di un Palazzeschi o i numerosi casi di contaminazione tra romanzo e racconto.⁴ Poche sono le eccezioni che si sottraggono a tale tendenza e anche più tardi, del resto, a metà Novecento, negli anni del Neorealismo, sarà ancora il racconto, e magari il racconto lungo, a imporsi sul genere del romanzo; il quale troverà invece una certa risonanza nella penisola solo nella seconda metà del secolo.⁵

Nonostante Landolfi si rifaccia con predilezione, nei motivi prescelti, a narratori dell'Ottocento e specificatamente ai grandi russi⁶ e a due maestri del fantastico, quali Hoffmann e Poe, tutti autori a lui ben noti anche per la sua attività di traduttore, egli interviene sui dispositivi narrativi tramandati in maniera così innovativa, che tutto si potrà dire di lui, tranne che sia un epigono. Le trasformazioni attuate si evidenziano per una sorta di dissonanza programmata, che può mostrarsi tra l'altro per improvvise svolte di genere all'interno dello stesso testo o per l'assenza di storie compiute, quasi fosse del tutto secondaria la fabula e consistesse la vera avventura nel racconto, il quale tenderà a evidenziare le tecniche utilizzate nella costruzione dei mondi narrati e a rilevare costantemente l'inaffidabilità della lingua.

Già la scelta dell'autore, di narrare la storia con un'estensione riservata a pochi altri suoi lavori e di gonfiarla verso la fine con l'inserzione di un'ulteriore traccia (la vicenda d'amore) spostando l'attenzione su un nuovo personaggio, insomma di ammicciare da lontano al romanzo lascia intravedere un'intenzione contro il canone. Ruotando infatti le storie fantastiche per lo più attorno ad un unico evento, esse trovano realizzazione soprattutto nella prosa breve.

³ De Meijer osserva che le tecniche discorsive della prosa frammentista "[...] sono perfettamente compatibili con la narrazione moderna, anche romanzesca, come dimostrano le esperienze europee contemporanee, ma [...] nella polemica italiana dell'epoca hanno funzionato a favore della forma breve, e, in essa soprattutto del lirismo, dell'espressione della soggettività individuale ridotta ad una sua purezza e non colta nella complessità di una rete di rapporti sociali." De Meijer, 1984: 786-787.

⁴ Se ne è occupato Di Nicola, 2004.

⁵ Su questo aspetto cfr. Spinazzola, 2007.

⁶ Tradusse tra altri: Puskin, Lermontov, Gogol', Leskov, Dostoevskij, Tolstoj.

Ma veniamo alla vicenda narrata. Durante una non meglio precisata guerra, che vede sul campo un esercito d'occupazione ed uno di liberazione, un giovane rompe le fila per salvarsi la vita e trova rifugio in un'antica residenza di campagna dove vivrà degli eventi singolari. Già entrarvi è un'impresa: l'accesso gli è bloccato da due cani apparentemente feroci e, una volta superato quest'ostacolo, deve poi confrontarsi con l'anziano proprietario, un tipo scontroso e reticente che gli offre ospitalità, ma non gli presta confidenza e ne controlla i movimenti. Il ripetersi di strani rumori porta il rifugiato a supporre che nella casa sia presente qualche altra persona alla quale un fervente fantasticare dà fin da principio un'identità femminile. Nell'ispezionare l'ambiente, questo gli si svela labirintico. Infine un bel giorno, di nascosto, scopre che il proprietario, in una stanza segreta, svolge un rito esoterico durante il quale invoca uno spirito. L'invocazione negromantica giunge ad effetto e il giovane vede concretizzarsi nel fumo l'immagine di una donna che riconosce come la defunta moglie di colui che lo ospita. Lo spettro gli appare, però, con sembianze abbruttite rispetto al ritratto della stessa da lui notato in una sala della casa, ritratto nel quale la donna gli appariva di una bellezza ammaliante. Con un gesto imprudente egli fa scoprire la propria presenza e il vecchio, sentitosi tradito, lo fulmina con uno sguardo pieno di ira e poi, fiaccato, cade a terra, mentre l'altro lascia velocemente la casa per sfuggire alla supposta vendetta. Ritorna sugli stessi luoghi poco tempo dopo trovando ad attenderlo, viva, quella che crede sia la donna del ritratto e che si rivelerà invece esserne la figlia. La ragazza si esprime in modo sconnesso, con una logica difficile da seguire, ma nel suo vaneggiare finisce per svelare i segreti di casa: la malignità di una madre maga, le azioni macabre e perverse che si svolgevano fra i suoi genitori e su di lei, la decisione di costoro di tenerla isolata dal mondo. Fra i due nasce un amore che si conclude in modo tragico con l'arrivo di soldati e la morte della giovane sotto il loro tiro. La conclusione, di tono tragico-patetico, narra infine della visita del giovane alla tomba della ragazza ad un anno di distanza, quando la casa è ormai sventrata.

È opera tipicamente landolfiana il *Racconto d'autunno*, gonfia di temi poco compatibili fra loro, come guerra e magia, amore salvifico ed erotismo sadico, costruita per intersezioni inattese di generi diversi, dal fantastico al magico-esoterico fino all'avventuroso ed erotico e tale da presentare una storia il cui protagonista si connota (come sempre) per un irrefrenabile fantasticare.

Anche qui, dunque, a caratterizzare il testo sono le svolte narrative inattese, con un *incipit* e un *explicit* che richiamano vagamente alla memoria i fatti storici degli anni immediatamente precedenti al periodo in cui fu scritta (quelli del secondo conflitto mondiale), mentre gli episodi centrali ne restano del tutto impermeabili. È proprio questo richiamo attualizzante alla guerra nella mera funzione di generatore di una storia inverosimile, disseminata di motivi oscuri e inquietanti tipici di una narrativa di tradizione romantica, non resta senza effetti di provocazione se si considera il contesto storico-letterario italiano in cui il *Racconto* fu scritto, che era quello del Neorealismo.

A livello elocutivo l'opera presenta poi un linguaggio colorato d'una patina antica e libresca che s'impone, non meno della vicenda narrata, come sfacciatamente anacronistico in un'epoca in cui la narrativa italiana aveva sete di rinnovare i suoi re-

gistri espressivi⁷. Landolfiano, insomma, il *Racconto d'autunno* tanto per il gusto della dissonanza che l'attraversa, quanto per l'inattualità dei registri espressivi e tematici prescelti. E landolfiano ancor di più per la centralità assegnata alla parola, piuttosto che ai suoi referenti. Si tratta di una parola che si autoriflette, si ascolta, si contraddice, si meraviglia delle proprie potenzialità creative come dei suoi risvolti incontrollabili e che conduce il soggetto parlante non si sa dove, fino a far perdersi o a farsi soffocare nelle spire di ciò che viene affermando. Un tale approccio alla parola, tutto novecentesco, emerge nel *Racconto d'autunno* soprattutto nel modo in cui si esprime la figura vaneggiante della giovane Lucia, la cui modalità espressiva, sconnessa e contraddittoria, tipica di chi segue una logica attorcigliata su se stessa, ritornerà in forma più ostentata anche nelle figure del protagonista di *Cancroregina* (1950) ed era già stata del protagonista vagamente autobiografico di un racconto d'esordio come *Maria Giuseppa* (1937). Il modo di esprimersi di Lucia è, più in generale, analogo a quello di tutte le figure centrali dell'*opus* landolfiano, non esclusa quella che rappresenta una stilizzazione dell'autore, il che testimonia una volta di più la fedeltà di Landolfi a se stesso come scrittore.

Quanto al genere, i critici ascrivono l'opera di cui ci stiamo occupando per lo più al fantastico e Ferdinando Amigoni, in uno studio di pochi anni fa, la definisce "perfettamente fantastica".⁸ Una tale affermazione non lascia tuttavia privi di dubbi. Del resto cosa si può asserire di non problematico su questo genere o modalità narrativa⁹ considerando in primo luogo quanto sia labile il concetto di fantastico dal punto di vista della teoria letteraria,¹⁰ e quanti pochi criteri, in secondo luogo, esistano per circoscrivere l'identità del fantastico moderno e contemporaneo? A partire dalla constatazione secondo cui la creazione di una sovrarealtà è operazione letteraria per eccellenza, alcuni ritengono infatti (e Manganelli in Italia è uno degli esempi più autorevoli) che l'essenza del fantastico, di creare mondi alternativi, non sia dal punto di vista teorico distinguibile da quella della letteratura in generale. D'altra parte ben pochi negherebbero l'imporsi sull'orizzonte letterario, a partire dalla fine del XVIII secolo e poi per tutto il XIX secolo, di una produzione narrativa che, per una determinata tipologia discorsiva e tematica, si lascia circoscrivere specificatamente come fantastica. Tale produzione ha subito successivamente un vero tracollo in Europa, ad eccezione di certe aree geografiche. Scomparso è certamente dalla letteratura più ambiziosa un fantastico nelle strutture narrative rilevate

⁷ Un paio di esempi. Nel raccontare la scelta del cammino, il protagonista si esprime in questi termini: "Ma mentre così, tristemente, mi consigliavo meco, l'occhio mi cadde su qualcosa che poteva esser giudicato un sentiero [...]" Landolfi, 1991: 439; e nel descrivere il ritratto che lo attrae: "Le di lei fattezze, delicate e chiare, recavano l'impronta inequivocabile della nobiltà di sangue e di carattere, e quel minimo di sdegnosità che l'accompagna sovente." *Ibid.* 460.

⁸ Amigoni, 2004: 74.

⁹ Preferiscono riferirsi al fantastico in termini di "modo narrativo" o "modalità narrativa" diversi studiosi, fra cui Ceserani e Lazzarin.

¹⁰ Di buon orientamento, per distinguere il discorso teorico da quello genetico sul fantastico, sono le osservazioni di Secchieri. Lo studioso sostiene l'indefinibilità del fantastico da un punto di vista teorico, senza disconoscere, tuttavia, che nella storia della letteratura è certamente possibile riconoscere un genere fantastico. Questo avrebbe tuttavia un codice piuttosto mobile e mal definito poiché lo scarto fra due logiche (suo elemento qualificante) è una grandezza relativa e non quantificabile, dipendente in gran parte da una percezione soggettiva e leggibile solo rispetto ad un referente interno al testo. Cfr. Secchieri, 1995: in particolare 147.

da Todorov sull'esempio di un ristretto *corpus* di opere ottocentesche. Nei casi in cui il fantastico trova ancora un seguito nella produzione con qualità letterarie, si mostra contaminato, rovesciato nelle situazioni narrate come nelle strutture discorsive. In certi casi perde l'elemento dell'inquietante. Se in epoca contemporanea siano presenti nella letteratura non epigona opere di genere fantastico è dunque una questione aperta. E se esistono, quali caratteristiche strutturali le identificano? Parte della critica recente (ricorderei i contributi di Erdal Jordan 1998, Campra 2000, Farnetti 2000) ne rintraccia ancora le peculiarità salienti nel fenomeno di sovrapposizione di logiche incompatibili e nel relativo effetto perturbante prodotto sul lettore, per rilevare però che si tratterebbe ora, a differenza di quanto accadeva nella produzione del XIX secolo, di fenomeni di natura puramente discorsiva, presenti cioè a livello di enunciazione e non di enunciato. Il che, come già segnalato in altro contesto,¹¹ è illuminante e coglie certamente il caso di Landolfi, ma finisce per inglobare sotto l'etichetta di fantastico una vastissima produzione letteraria novecentesca, in special modo di gusto postmoderno. Sul fatto se il fantastico trovi realizzazione nell'opera landolfiana, i critici sono divisi fra chi non ha remore ad ammetterlo e vede anzi la sua produzione come decisamente ancorata a tale genere, e chi dubita invece che il suo *opus* si possa ricondurre al fantastico senza una qualche problematizzazione. Gli uni, come Barberi-Squarotti ed Amigoni, fondano le proprie posizioni per lo più attraverso letture che guardano ai significati della scrittura landolfiana sul piano esistenziale e biografico, mentre gli altri (come Cecchini, Carlino, Lazzarin e Secchieri) arrivano alle loro conclusioni attraverso metodologie più legate all'analisi dei dispositivi testuali e all'estetica della ricezione. Lazzarin, ad esempio, rileva nell'opera dello scrittore "un percorso che conduce [...] dal fantastico classico, al meta-fantastico al silenzio."¹² E specifica che la produzione fantastica della prima fase, fino alle soglie degli anni '50, può al più essere intesa come 'classica' in quanto ripropone molti motivi presenti in quella ottocentesca di questo genere; esclude però che si tratti di testi epigoni essendo essi costruiti con altre tecniche narrative, che prevedono tra l'altro un discorso ironico e una riflessione metanarrativa¹³. Mentre Secchieri (2005), richiamando da una parte l'attenzione sulla vaghezza del concetto letterario di fantastico e analizzando dall'altra quali sono gli specifici dispositivi discorsivi usati dallo scrittore, è piuttosto cauto a riconoscerne la presenza, precisando che l'opera di Landolfi propone al più un "fantastico di parola". Ed è una posizione a mio avviso ben convincente.

Anche limitandosi a considerare il solo caso del *Racconto d'autunno* non si può non constatare che le operazioni discorsive effettuatevi indicano piuttosto una volontà di corrosione di quel genere piuttosto che di adesione,¹⁴ a meno di non ridefinire i fenomeni che individuano un testo come fantastico e abbandonare come termine di orientamento la produzione del XIX secolo, la quale appunto con i primi studi teorici sul genere finì per imporsi come canonica.

¹¹ Cfr. Farinelli, 2008: 78-80

¹² Lazzarin, 2002: 233.

¹³ E proprio in ragione di questi aspetti escluderei, personalmente, di considerarli come realizzazioni di un fantastico 'classico'.

¹⁴ Per un'analisi del fenomeno indicato in altri racconti landolfiani si rimanda a Carlino, 2008; Cecchini, 2001; Lazzarin, 2002 e Farinelli, 2008.

Del fantastico più noto il racconto in questione non ricalca che alcuni aspetti superficiali concernenti motivi, personaggi e ambientazione: l'edificio isolato buio e labirintico in cui succedono accadimenti strani¹⁵, la presenza di un personaggio enigmatico nella figura del vecchio proprietario della casa, il motivo del ritratto seducente/inquietante nonché quello dello spettro. Anche nella *dispositio* Landolfi segue, nella prima parte del testo, una struttura attesa in racconti di genere fantastico, inserendo dei segnali premonitori dell'evento sovranaturale e tali da prepararne la possibilità del suo accadere.¹⁶ Certamente l'episodio dell'apparizione dello spettro mette in crisi la logica verosimile della realtà in cui ha luogo la storia, in quanto trasgredisce il principio vigente in natura di impermeabilità fra la sfera dell'animato e dell'inanimato. E proprio un fenomeno simile, ovvero il sopravvenire di un fatto incompatibile con la realtà data, aprirebbe lo spazio del fantastico, se creasse allo stesso tempo esitazione nel soggetto che si trova a confrontarvisi (rispettivamente lettore e narratore e/o protagonista). Perché il genere in questione, secondo Todorov e i teorici che seguono le sue posizioni, si distinguerebbe da altre modalità narrative che pure creano una sovrapposizione di mondi incompatibili, quando l'evento inspiegabile fosse avvertito come logicamente "spiazzante" e diventasse momento di una sfida epistemologica¹⁷. Ma è proprio ciò che non accade nel *Racconto d'autunno*.

Il narratore e protagonista non è preso, se non sul momento, da dubbi, né si misura successivamente con una ricerca di spiegazioni. In sostituzione del canonico momento dell'esitazione l'autore introduce l'episodio del ritorno del protagonista sugli stessi luoghi dell'evento singolare, dove incontra Lucia, la figlia della morta. Il racconto della ragazza farà comprendere al giovane la ragione degli strani movimenti avvertiti nella casa, ma non certo la natura del fatto inverosimile cui ha assistito, che non sembra occuparlo più e che nella logica narrativa resta un episodio senza soluzione, del tutto isolato da quelli che seguono. I dubbi, i ragionamenti e le indagini del protagonista appaiono solo nei primi episodi e si rivolgono a fatti strani ma non illogici (come dei rumori inquietanti) avvertiti nell'ambiente; essi terminano invece, piuttosto che intensificarsi, proprio con l'accadere dell'evento logicamente paradossale, quasi in un ribaltamento della *dispositio* tipica di un testo fantastico, mentre ci si attenderebbe che fosse proprio l'apparizione dello spettro a imporsi come perturbante e doverosa di indagine. Ecco dunque un ulteriore caso di narrazione condotta secondo una certa strategia retorico-discorsiva e vicina per alcuni aspetti (non ultimo una disposizione a climax degli avvenimenti) a quella del fantastico ottocentesco, la quale viene interrotta poi ad un preciso punto (alla fine del cap. XIV) a partire dal quale, con una svolta depistante, il testo presenta un epilogo inatteso rispetto alle premesse. Di esempi simili ce ne sono

¹⁵ "[...] ebbene, come tollerare una sia pur occasionale convivenza con creatura tanto enigmatica, estranea, secondo pareva, al mondo degli uomini?" Landolfi, 1991: 452.

¹⁶ Su questo aspetto cfr. Farinelli 2007.

¹⁷ L'operazione tesa a individuare la specificità genetica di un'opera misurandone l'aderenza che al canone, ovvero a norme ideali e puramente orientative, è certo questionabile. E tuttavia senza un qualche criterio orientativo è difficile affrontare qualsiasi discorso genetico. Pensiamo che ciò valga anche per un genere dalle caratteristiche così poco codificate come quello fantastico (che è una posizione sostenuta tra altri da Lugnani, 1983). Per il genere in questione ci si rifà qui ai due principali criteri strutturali indicati da Todorov (1970) e riproposti da Durst (2002): sovrapposizione di logiche incompatibili ed effetto perturbante sul lettore e narratore e/o protagonista.

diversi nell'opera dello scrittore; basterebbe ricordare quelli de *La pietra lunare* e *La donna nella pozzanghera*. La traccia appena abbozzata di discorso fantastico non solo non trova sviluppo nel *Racconto d'autunno*, ma sparisce del tutto e il testo continua nei modi di un racconto d'amore e follia, il quale si carica poi di senso metaletterario. Gli ultimi tre capitoli, infatti, attraverso il vaneggiare della ragazza, mettono in scena proprio l'ambiguità della parola.

Se non è coinvolto in una sfida epistemologica il narratore e protagonista, tanto meno lo è il lettore, non collaborando il discorso a sostenere il patto d'illusione. Questo si incrina prima di tutto per un'iperletterarietà del testo; la presenza di motivi tramandati ha infatti l'effetto di ostentare la natura finzionale della storia e l'artificio che la sostiene. Già il titolo allude chiaramente al *Racconto d'inverno* di Shakespeare, in cui, attraverso l'episodio della statua che prende vita, è presente un analogo caso di sovrapposizione di animato e inanimato; senza contare i riferimenti precisi, nel testo, alla letteratura magico-esoterica (l'invocazione della morta è una traduzione letterale della *Pregghiera delle silfidi*) e i rimandi più sporadici a Dante connessi al motivo della donna quale spirito di luce¹⁸, o ancora i richiami alla letteratura fantastica del XIX secolo e in particolare a *Casa Usher* di Poe. Il patto d'illusione è inoltre minato sia dalla vaghezza generale in cui sono presentati gli avvenimenti (restano assenti indicazioni su tempi, luoghi e identità), sia dalla poca attendibilità del narratore. Questi è pronto, ad esempio, a dichiarare l'apparizione della morta un inganno dei sensi,¹⁹ subito dopo aver assicurato il lettore circa la materialità di quello spettro o, ancora, pretende di non poter riferire con precisione le formule d'invocazione pronunciate dal vecchio, dopo averle citate pedissequamente e per esteso. Se il fantastico canonico raggiunge i suoi effetti sul lettore proprio per la credibilità del narratore e più in generale per una buona tenuta del patto d'illusione, allora qui siamo ben lontani da quel modello narrativo.

E proprio su questa assenza di credibilità del detto vanno a impiantarsi i capitoli di epilogo che trovano il loro senso come riflessione sulla natura della parola. Questa parte, che è certamente collegata con la precedente sul piano della storia, ma risulta del tutto slegata dalla logica narrativa fin lì seguita, non è del resto che una versione alternativa dei tanti finali autoriflessivi presenti nei racconti landolfiani. La loro funzione è rimettere tutto il detto in discussione, riaprire il gioco con altre carte in tavola, correggere, insinuare dubbi, vanificare la verità di ciò che si è affermato fino a quel punto. Nell'economia dei singoli testi tali epiloghi finiscono per impartire dunque al discorso un'essenziale vitalità.

Nel brano concernente l'apparizione dello spettro è possibile seguire meglio che in altri passi l'operazione performante del narrare landolfiano. Il "fumo fluttuante"²⁰ scorto dal narratore e protagonista nella camera segreta è subito dopo ridefinito come un fumo incarnato, che ha addirittura "un brivido"; nel passo successivo leggiamo che esso si rapprende in una forma precisa, nella quale il giovane scorge "delle carni, delle vesti, dei monili", ed è un'immagine plumbea eppure dotata di luce propria, in grado

¹⁸ Si chiamano Lucia tanto la donna invocata, che sua figlia. L'acqua attorno alla tomba della giovane è indicata come un'azzurra "spera". Landolfi, 1991: 514.

¹⁹ Cfr. *Ibid.* 492.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 491.

(chissà come) di oscurare la parete. Gradualmente quel fumo acquista l'identità di una creatura con tanto d'occhi: "Essa teneva gli occhi chiusi; li aprì subito dopo e scrutò dattorno. Per un attimo mi fissò."²¹ Poco oltre essa minaccia con lo sguardo chi gli sta di fronte e lo supplica "di non toglierli quella sua orrida vita[...]"²²

Con un atto metamorfico la parola dà in quella pagina una concretezza fisica e un'identità femminile a qualcosa di talmente etereo come del fumo. Si tratta di un gioco verbale condotto sugli specchi, analogo a quello registrabile in altre opere di Landolfi (ad esempio nei racconti *La morte del Re di Francia e Il bacio*) e certamente ricorrente nel fantastico, ma non specifico di questo genere: un gioco teso a far esistere l'antitesi, e nella fattispecie quella di evanescente e corporeo, trasparente e opaco, nonché il contrasto fra la suggestione dei sensi e la fattualità oggettuale. Se osservata in relazione alla potenzialità della lingua, quest'operazione non è tanto ludica, quanto inquietante, perché capace di dar corpo al nulla, di generare il suo referente come per un atto di magia e di annullarlo subito dopo o trasformarlo in metamorfosi inarrestabili; operazione seducente e minacciosa allo stesso tempo in quanto tendente a imporsi sulla razionalità del soggetto parlante.

Da quanto emerge ci appare lecito, allora, assumere in termini metanarrativi l'immagine di un rovesciato giardino d'Armida che il protagonista del *Racconto d'autunno* usa come termine di paragone per illustrare l'ambiente e la situazione in cui viene per caso a trovarsi.²³ Il giovane, una sorta di Rinaldo fuggito alla guerra che, in ordine capovolto, vive prima l'apparizione dello spettro e solo dopo l'episodio d'amore con la bella donna, entra sì in un luogo di magia nera, d'incantesimi e metamorfosi, di doppie e deformate identità, in uno spazio che è per certi versi tanto del magico che del fantastico (o meglio di quel fantastico-meraviglioso cui questo racconto per un certo suo tratto tende)²⁴, ma non sono certo questi eventi sovranaturali a costituire l'aspetto rilevante del testo. Rilevante e vero luogo di metamorfosi è piuttosto in quelle pagine l'attività del raccontare. Come in tutta la produzione landolfiana, indipendentemente dal fatto che questa fiancheggi più o meno da vicino il fantastico, anche in quel contesto non conta tanto ciò che viene narrato, e cioè gli inverosimili accadimenti aventi luogo in quella casa, quanto la parola che narra, le sue illogicità nonché le sue capacità metamorfiche. Un giardino d'Armida a rovescio è insomma il testo stesso; ad entrarvi è colui che si cimenta con la sua lettura e non il protagonista.

Con spettri, vampiri e altri esseri sovranaturali cari alla narrativa fantastica dell'Ottocento Landolfi gioca ripetutamente nella sua opera e il *Racconto d'autunno* non ne è che un esempio, ma quelle figure appaiono come semplice arredo di uno scenario e finiscono letteralmente in fumo. A ereditarne la funzione destabilizzante ed inquietante è il dire stesso.

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²¹ *Ibid.* 492.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ "Era come se fossi capitato in un giardino d'Armida, per dir così, alla rovescia. Non era senza dubbio meraviglia che quella casa esercitasse su me, in un modo o nell'altro, una talquale attrazione; ma dico che questa attrazione mi pareva anzi, in quel punto, concentrarsi in un preciso richiamo, donde da chi o da che cosa era altro discorso." *Ibid.* 456-457.

²⁴ Tale forma intermedia è contemplata, come noto, nel saggio todoroviano. Cfr. Todorov, 1970: 49.

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ACHILLE CAMPANILE: UNA PRESENZA SCOMODA NELLA DRAMMATICA NOVECENTESCA

Melani Mamut

Abstract

Achille Campanile (1899–1977) wrote plays, gags, sketches, novels and reviews in journals. A taste for the absurd, nonsense, misunderstanding and wordplay are all elements of his plays. After the most prolific period (1924–1935) came a creative pause, perhaps because of insufficient interest of the audience.

Unfortunately the audience in the 1920s did not understand Campanile, so he remained on the sideline for the rest of his life.

Achille Campanile (1899–1977) fu un grande umorista italiano che cominciò a scrivere molto giovane. Nella commedia *Autoritratto* dichiarò di aver scritto «finora» circa 2528 lavori teatrali. Anche se le cifre non vanno prese letteralmente, egli nei suoi 77 anni di vita si cimentò nei generi più svariati. Scrisse opere teatrali, testi cinematografici, freddure, sketch, lazzi, critiche, racconti e romanzi. All'età di diciannove anni cominciò la sua attività letteraria e scrisse la sua prima raccolta *Tragedie in due battute*. Già all'inizio della sua carriera umoristica s'intravede il gusto per l'assurdo, il nonsenso, il surreale, l'equivoco, i giochi di parole, tutti elementi a cui sarà fedele nel corso della sua attività da umorista. Il periodo più prolifico fu dal 1924 al 1935 in cui scrisse i suoi più importanti romanzi ed opere drammatiche. In seguito ci fu una pausa creativa, forse a causa d'insufficiente interesse di pubblico. Nel dopoguerra scrisse una serie di atti unici e dal 1958 al 1975 si occupò più di televisione. I temi che affronta sono i temi eterni dell'uomo: la vita, la morte, l'aldilà, l'amore. Lui stesso amava definirsi cronista del proprio tempo ed il genere che più amava era il genere teatrale. Silvio d'Amico lo definisce «l'artista della scemenza; il consequenziario degli equivoci impossibili, dei giochi di parole scambiati per realtà, delle montagne che camminano, e dei castelli che fanno capriole»¹. Senza dubbio nel suo percorso culturale affiorano elementi delle sintesi futuriste e la pratica del cabaret, ma Campanile ha saputo intraprendere una via diversa che lo distingue nettamente dagli altri scrittori del suo tempo.

¹ D'Amico, Silvio, *Il teatro italiano*, Milano, Fratelli Treves editori, 1937, p. 264.

La sua formazione avvenne nel clima culturale della Roma degli anni venti e trenta. Occorre notare che l'esordio di Campanile coincide con un clima turbolento e torbido, il delitto Matteotti nel 1924 e l'inizio della dittatura mussoliniana nel 1925. Fu proprio in questo clima che andò in scena al Teatro degli Indipendenti l'atto unico di Campanile *Centocinquanta la gallina canta*. Un altro avvenimento importante per il teatro italiano fu la fondazione del Teatro degli Indipendenti nel 1922 da parte di Anton Giulio Bragaglia, futurista, regista ed editore di teatro.

Prima di tuffarsi nel mondo teatrale bisogna prendere in considerazione tutta una serie d'eventi che precedettero la formazione di Campanile come umorista e che lo influenzarono in maniera minore o maggiore. Tutto il Novecento fu segnato da diverse correnti e diversi tentativi di creare nuove forme e istituzioni. Il periodo prima della Grande Guerra è un periodo in cui si nota un distacco dalla tradizione letteraria italiana. Bisogna aspettare il 1909 perché si notino segni di radicali cambiamenti.

Il futurismo che nacque come reazione al teatro naturalista, alla commedia borghese e al teatro di poesia dannunziana aprì una nuova via alla letteratura italiana e fu l'inizio di un nuovo modo di vedere le cose. La figura di spicco è Marinetti con il suo Manifesto pubblicato nel 1909.

Per la prima volta si pone l'accento sulla comunicazione tra attore, testo e pubblico. Molti critici ignorano l'importanza e l'influenza che ebbe il movimento futurista, come la rivoluzione dello spazio scenico ed il coinvolgimento fisico nell'azione teatrale. Oggi si può affermare con certezza che il suo retaggio fu di notevole importanza.

Già nel Manifesto del Teatro della Sorpresa che fu scritto nel 1921, Marinetti e Cangiullo, futurista e scrittore napoletano esperto di Varietà, dichiaravano: «Se oggi esiste un giovane teatro italiano con miscele serio-comiche-grottesche, personaggi irreali in ambienti reali, simultaneità e compenetrazioni di tempo e di spazio, lo si deve al nostro Teatro Sintetico»².

A questo proposito è interessante menzionare la connessione delle *Tragedie in due battute* di Campanile con il teatro sintetico futurista. In alcune delle battute si può individuare una traccia dello spirito futurista e la tecnica delle sintesi futuriste in cui i personaggi raffigurati sono i morti, gli animali, la giovinezza, il tempo, la vita, le stelle. Sebbene si possano avvistare alcune tecniche futuriste, l'atteggiamento di Campanile si muove su un tracciato diverso dall'atteggiamento di Marinetti. Egli non sente il bisogno di spaccare i capolavori dell'antichità. Il suo umorismo non è d'origine provocante e non c'è un contenuto politico nelle sue battute, almeno non in modo evidente. Campanile non fa parte di movimenti artistici violenti e burrascosi e nella sua scrittura non è guidato dalla violenza e anarchia. Le sue battute incarnano la rottura delle convenzioni linguistiche e comunicative fin allora esistite.

Occorre citare alcune battute che evidenziano il legame con l'avanguardismo futurista:

² Antonucci, Giovanni, *Lo spettacolo futurista in Italia*, Roma, Nuova Universale Studium, 1974, p. 139. La citazione è tratta da F. T. Marinetti, *Teoria e invenzione futurista*, Milano, Mondadori, 1968.

Personaggi:

La stella

In cielo, di notte, ai giorni nostri

La stella

Ma che vorrà da me quell'astronomo?

Mi sta fissando da un'ora col cannocchiale³.

Oppure un testo ancora più scarno:

Personaggi: NESSUNO

La scena si svolge in nessun luogo.

NESSUNO

*Tace*⁴.

Leggendo le sue *Tragedie in due battute* sembra che Campanile si fosse avvicinato più a Francesco Cangiullo, e difatti le sue battute ricordano quelle di Cangiullo.

Una delle commedie s'intitola *Non c'è un cane* – sintesi della notte:

Personaggi: Quello che non c'è.

La scena rappresenta una via di notte, fredda, deserta. Un cane attraversa la via.

Tela.

È chiaro?⁵

Un'altra s'intitola *Detonazione* – sintesi di tutto il teatro moderno:

Personaggi: Un proiettile

Un minuto di silenzio

Una revolverata

Tela.

È chiaro?⁶

Oltre a Francesco Cangiullo, la figura che merita una considerazione è il romano Ettore Petrolini. Egli inventò un repertorio tutto suo, creando una comicità basata su parodia, satira, ironia e improvvisazione. Proprio negli anni in cui Campanile scrisse le sue prime commedie fu rappresentata una satira di Petrolini, della società dello spettacolo degli anni '30. Petrolini provocava il pubblico e lo costringeva a riconoscere la finzione dell'attore e della scena.

Per capire meglio lo sviluppo di Campanile come drammaturgo ancor più importante ci appare il surrealismo, movimento nato negli anni venti. Il primo manifesto

³ Campanile, Achille, *Tragedie in due battute*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2001, p.166.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.192.

⁵ D'Amico, Silvio, *Cronache*, Primo volume, Tomo III, Palermo, Edizioni Novecento, 2001, p. 690.

⁶ *Ibid.*

surrealista uscì nel 1924, l'anno che coincide con l'esordio di Campanile. Egli adoperò elementi di comicità surreale e di paradosso umoristico ma come afferma Geno Pampaloni: «Il suo assurdo era di natura singolarissima; non era di natura onirica, ossessiva o liberatoria, come nei surrealisti; né volto al rifiuto, alla negazione come quello di Dada; era foggato su non senso, e quindi fundamentalmente verbale, linguistico. È questo l'aspetto più rilevante della sua modernità»⁷.

In quegli anni anche il teatro del grottesco tentò una rivoluzione antiborghese e s'intrecciò con il teatro di Pirandello. La storia ufficiale del grottesco inizia con la rappresentazione della *Maschera ed il volto* di Luigi Chiarelli. I rappresentanti più caratteristici furono Luigi Chiarelli e Rosso di San Secondo i quali attaccano le convenzioni borghesi ma non convenzioni linguistiche. I loro dialoghi appartengono alla commedia borghese e hanno poco in comune con l'avanguardia.

«Il teatro grottesco, escluso Rosso, volle e non volle, cercò e si tappò gli occhi, tentò una rivoluzione antiborghese con mezzi borghesi, e fece quindi restare il teatro italiano al punto in cui era. Indubbiamente gli autori del 'grottesco' non ebbero il coraggio di affrontare il rinnovamento in tutte le sue conseguenze [...] ma non fecero, anzitutto, quel che era necessario: una rivoluzione di linguaggio»⁸.

Quindi il teatro non si mosse dal punto in cui era arrivato. Questo avvenne solo con la figura di Pirandello.

L'ATTIVITÀ LETTERARIA ED IL FASCISMO

Bisogna ricordarsi che tra le due guerre ci fu uno sviluppo della società di massa. Il ceto medio comprendeva piccolo-medio borghesi i quali facevano crescere una produzione letteraria di consumo. La posizione dell'intellettuale era condizionata dalla società di massa. L'opinione critica è che non sia esistito un teatro fascista come riflessione di un'ideologia. Il repertorio teatrale di quell'epoca comprendeva la classica commedia borghese d'intrattenimento (teatro dei telefoni bianchi).

Nonostante il teatro fosse fortemente condizionato dal regime fascista che tentava di inculcare i propri valori, che riguardavano Natura, Famiglia, Nazione e Dio, nel complesso non si produsse una drammaturgia interamente fascista. Ci fu, a cavallo degli anni 30 e 40 una diversa corrente a sfondo storico-patriottico, ma non era molto accentuata. Sarebbe errato negare che ci furono autori i quali nelle loro opere lodavano il regime fascista e celebrarono le conquiste militari del regime, ma occorre notare che si trattava di copioni mediocri i quali spesso avevano un unico obiettivo, cioè quello di accontentare il regime.

Ai tempi del fascismo era cambiata l'organizzazione del teatro e si cercava di influenzare la scelta dei repertori. I giornali erano tenuti sotto stretto controllo e lo spazio per scherzare fu ridotto al minimo. «Il fascismo fu il primo regime in grado di programmare e attuare una sua politica totalitaria dell'informazione, attraverso l'uso spregiudicato di tutti gli strumenti possibili: stampa, radio, cinema.

⁷ Cecchi, Emilio, Natalino Sapegno, *Storia della letteratura Italiana*, Tomo II, Milano, Garzanti, 1987, p. 490.

⁸ Verdone, Mario, *Teatro del Novecento*, Brescia, Editrice La Scuola, 1981, p. 56, 57.

Con lo stesso spirito il fascismo intervenne anche sulla lingua, combattendo l'uso dei dialetti»⁹.

È interessante menzionare che nel 1931 fu creato un ufficio centrale alle dirette dipendenze del ministero dell'interno che sotto la direzione di Leopoldo Zurlo, censore, controllò 18 000 testi d'autori italiani. E questo si protese fino al 1943.

C'imbattiamo in difficoltà nell'affermare che Campanile seguì o ricorse all'auto-censura per soddisfare le aspettative dell'organo di controllo e censura. Ma è risaputo che Campanile si attirò le ire di Mussolini quando intitolò *Amiamoci in fretta* la sua opera che parlava di amori sulle panchine del parco, sulle scale di casa ecc. Mussolini vide in questo titolo un pericolo che andava contro la sua propagata campagna demografica riguardo alle famiglie tradizionali. Naturalmente non era permesso ironizzare sulla sacralizzazione dell'istituto familiare.

Non è facile sintetizzare la posizione politica di Campanile rispetto alla dittatura mussoliniana. Campanile, del resto, diceva che gli umoristi non sono fatti per occuparsi di politica ed è importante sottolineare che egli non aderì al fascismo come lo fece Pirandello.

La sua non fu una critica diretta, e poi sulla "Gazzetta del Popolo" dal 1934 al 1940 le sue idee trovarono una via e si rispecchiarono nel personaggio di Gino Cornabò. Campanile ci trovò gusto nell'ironizzare sulla borghesia fascista. Del resto ne *Il diario di un uomo amareggiato* disse che: «conveniva diffidare chiunque avesse incarichi di dittatore, guance pitturate di rosa e baffi pitturati di nero».

LA RICEZIONE DEL PUBBLICO E LE MESSE IN SCENA

Fernando Taviani nell'introduzione alle commedie *L'inventore del cavallo* afferma che «le commedie di Campanile erano molto più recitate di quanto lasci pensare la documentazione sulla loro fortuna scenica. Negli anni fra le due guerre erano presenti nel teatro endemico, cioè le recite in famiglia, nei circoli e negli ambienti amicali, le recite di scuola, di collegio»¹⁰.

Nonostante questo, Campanile è stato citato pochissime volte nelle antologie e nelle storie di letteratura italiana. La scarsità d'informazioni è dovuta al fatto che la letteratura accademica, in nostra opinione ingiustamente, considerava le sue opere come un sottoprodotto. Poi, come del resto afferma Franca Angelini, bisogna sottolineare il fatto che Pirandello è il drammaturgo che aveva occupato l'intero panorama del teatro italiano.

Purtroppo il pubblico negli anni venti del secolo scorso non fu in grado di capire il genio di Campanile. Ne è prova un fatto che successe nel 1924 quando un capocomico di nome Pietro Mazzucato gli chiese di rappresentare al Teatro Margherita di Roma, una sua tragedia in due battute intitolata *Colazione all'aperto*.

La tragedia purtroppo passò inosservata a causa della sua brevità, cioè il dialogo conteneva soltanto due battute: «Vuol favorire?» «Grazie». Il pubblico evidentemente

⁹ Petronio Giuseppe, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Firenze, Palumbo, 1979, p. 860.

¹⁰ Taviani, Ferdinando, «Commedia corta. Oppure lunga una vita – per figurarsi il teatro di Achille Campanile», in Achille Campanile, *L'inventore del cavallo*, Milano, Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2004, p. 19.

non si accorse che esisteva un umorismo del nonsense. Campanile, che bramava di diventare un approvato autore drammatico, ne rimase deluso. Da qui possiamo dedurre ed immaginare che tipo di aspettative avesse il pubblico degli anni venti.

Di sicuro la forma che Campanile usò fu un elemento assolutamente nuovo e molti non si aspettavano che il dialogo presentato sulla scena consistesse in solo due battute. Del resto

Campanile stesso disse riguardo alle sue freddure che è un teatro che diventa invisibile per velocità. Quasi tutti i suoi atti unici furono accolti tiepidamente, senza entusiasmo. Il suo umorismo assurdo risaltava in quel clima dove tutto sembrava rigido e severo.

Il 12 marzo del 1925 dopo aver assistito ad uno spettacolo al Teatro degli Indipendenti, Silvio d'Amico scrisse nelle sue cronache una modesta osservazione: «Lo spettacolo si chiuse con la replica di *Centocinquanta la gallina canta* di Campanile: capolavoro di idiozia, che ci mandò tutti a male dal ridere»¹¹.

Nel 1925, il critico-filosofo Adriano Tilgher dedica a Campanile soltanto una riga nella recensione ad uno spettacolo strindberghiano: «Chiuse lo spettacolo una graziosissima farsa di Achille Campanile».

Nel corso di un' intervista Campanile disse che i suoi primi lavori «venivano accolti con fracassi, clamori tremendi, battaglie memorabili».

Quando a Roma andò in scena *L'amore fa fare questo ed altro* il pubblico fu sul punto di spaccare il teatro. Il riscontro da parte del pubblico fu identico anche al teatro Manzoni di Milano. Alla fine dello spettacolo ci fu un chiasso infernale, il pubblico urlava e schiantava poltrone. Secondo alcune cronache dell'epoca gli spettatori volevano addirittura «linciare» l'autore.

Ingiustamente sottovalutato Campanile anticipa quello che poi avverrà 30 anni dopo. Il pubblico non si accorse delle gemme che poi sarebbero fiorite nel teatro di Samuel Beckett. «Campanile diventa, tra il Trenta e il Quaranta, l'autore più fischiato d'Italia. I motivi dell'insuccesso sono diversi. C'è, da un lato, da considerare la natura disorientante di queste *pièces* teatrali. Non è facile catalogarle, non entrano nei sistemi d'attesa del pubblico più tradizionale»¹².

Lo scarso interesse della critica e del pubblico provocò la diminuzione delle messe in scena, specialmente dopo il fiasco di *L'amore sa fare questo e altro*, rappresentata nel 1930. Anche se ebbe più fortuna negli ultimi anni della sua vita, soprattutto dopo il secondo premio Viareggio, Campanile come autore teatrale resterà ai margini per il resto della sua vita. Ogni tanto questo silenzio si interrompe con qualche messa in scena delle sue opere teatrali ma «la signorile discrezione di Achille Campanile continua ancora, *post mortem*»¹³.

Zagreb, Croazia

¹¹ D'Amico, Silvio, *Cronache*, Il volume, Tomo II, Palermo, Edizioni Novecento, 2001, p. 478.

¹² Minore, Renato, *Teatro italiano*, Roma, Lucarini editore, 1981, p. 574.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 575.

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L'(IN)TRADUISIBILITÉ DU LANGAGE POÉTIQUE DE BORIS VIAN

Smiljan Kundert

Abrégé

Dans le cadre de cette étude l'auteur suit comme ligne de conduite l'idée que seule une théorie de réunion du langage et de la littérature peut établir le propre du traduire, son immanence. Avec la traduction du poème „Chanson“ de Boris Vian, offerte pour la première fois en Slovène, l'auteur tente de voir si, en effet, les ennuis de la traduction peuvent être éclaircis davantage. La constatation que les traductions ainsi que les oeuvres littéraires existent bien au sein de l'„institution“ littéraire oblige l'auteur à se poser la question de l'(in)traduisibilité du poème „Chanson“ de Boris Vian. Après un bref aperçu historique et théorique sur la traduction cette étude procédant par induction relie les particularités poétiques de „Chanson“, qui se mettent à jour au cours du processus de la traduction même, à des questions théoriques fondamentales sur la traduisibilité. Somme toute l'auteur nous présente la façon propre de penser un discours poétique au cours de sa traduction.

Malgré le fait que l'on traduit plus que jamais et pour des raisons peu claires, la production poétique de Boris Vian, par rapport à ses romans, est très peu traduite en d'autres langues. On pourrait proposer plusieurs raisons de cet état de fait: style particulier, réception de la littérature étrangère, obstacles culturels, commerciaux etc., qui soumettent à notre réflexion l'énigme de la traduction du texte littéraire, et de surcroît, le problème de la traduisibilité de la poésie.

Pour qui est faite une traduction? Qu'est-ce qui est essentiel dans les traductions? Peut-on dire qu'un ouvrage littéraire est intraduisible?

L'idée d'(in)traduisibilité d'une oeuvre littéraire, d'une oeuvre d'art, crée la polémique et divise les théoriciens. Pour trouver une réponse aux questions posées plus haut, il semble utile d'éclaircir ces propos.

Si on veut mieux comprendre la traduction on se posera tôt ou tard des questions sur ses limites et on entre alors dans l'univers de la traduisibilité. Ces questions sont le paradoxe même de la traduction : si la traduction existe, pourquoi veut-on savoir si elle est possible? Ne serait-il mieux de poser une autre question, celle de la place qu'occupe la traduction dans la littérature en général ? En effet, des écarts entre la théorie et la pratique nourrissent le débat polémique de la traduction. Jakobson l'a déjà constaté: „la traduction est peut-être la pierre de touche de toute théorie du langage „ (Pergnier 1993: Préface).

Les vraies pensées sur la traduction se sont présentées au XX^{ème} siècle depuis que la communication a pris une place internationalement importante. Avec la progression de la linguistique, la théorie de la traduction s'est également vue développer.

Comme la grammaire générative, les nouveaux courants linguistiques ne voulaient plus étudier la langue en tant que système symbolique, mais on voulait au contraire la situer parmi les activités sociales fondamentales. Pour pouvoir l'analyser sous des angles différents, on l'a rattachée à d'autres disciplines. La définition de la langue évolue. Désormais, elle n'est plus uniquement considérée comme un système de signes, mais davantage comme un instrument de communication. (Jakobson 1963: 87-99).

Par traduction on entend *l'acte de traduire*. En regardant la notion de traduction de plus près, on perçoit que les linguistes appliquent cet acte sur la forme de la langue tandis que les sociolinguistes préfèrent parler d'une traduction du sens. Selon Paul Ricoeur: „*Deux voies d'accès s'offrent au problème posé par l'acte de traduire : soit prendre le terme „traduction“ au sens strict du transfert d'un message verbale d'une langue dans une autre, soit le prendre au sens large, comme synonyme de l'interprétation de tout ensemble signifiant à l'intérieur de la même communauté linguistique.*“ (Ricoeur 2004: 21).

En conformité avec les théories linguistiques et sociolinguistiques, on oppose donc la forme au sens, la structure au contenu, la langue à la parole.

Le philosophe Georges Steiner (Steiner, 1987) consacre toute une partie de son livre à un chapitre intitulé: „*Comprendre c'est traduire*“. Pour lui, la traduction est l'interprétation du texte source. De son côté, Henry dit clairement que la traduction est une „*opération mentale qui s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un acte de communication*“ (Henry 2003: 65). Henry croit que tous les éléments non linguistiques qui définissent la situation de communication doivent être pris en compte par le traducteur, sous peine de produire une oeuvre nouvelle. Comme Steiner, Henry croit que le traducteur doit d'abord comprendre la séquence ou le texte à traduire. Ensuite, il doit le déverbaliser, c'est la „*saisie du sens par fixation en mémoire des unités progressivement dégagées*“ (Ibid. 65). Finalement, il doit reverbaler l'idée dans la langue cible. La traduction ainsi obtenue doit à la fois rendre le contenu et l'émotionnel du texte source.

Si le débat de la traduction est souvent basé sur la dichotomie de forme ou de sens (signifance), si l'appréciation de la traduction est souvent négative et si la polémique entre la théorie et la pratique persiste, bon nombre de théoriciens ont vu l'importance d'accorder à la traduction son propre champ de recherche.

Mounin est en France le père de la traductologie, le nom qu'on a donné dans les années 70 à ce nouveau champ d'étude. Mounin a fait une étude remarquable avec son oeuvre „*Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction*“, dans laquelle il parle entre autre de l'„*illusion d'optique linguistique*“ quand on pense qu'on ne peut pas traduire certains mots dans la langue ciblée. Selon lui, „*rien ne permet de passer de la constatation que traduire est difficile à l'affirmation que traduire est impossible*“ (Mounin 1994: 50).

Le champ d'étude de la traductologie s'appuie sur des approches différentes. Ainsi elle se base sur le structuralisme mais elle le complète en y rajoutant le caractère polysémique de la langue. La traductologie se base également sur la communication. Mais elle va plus loin. Pergnier déclare ainsi que c'est une „*banalité de dire que la langue est un instrument de communication*“. (Pergnier 1993: 161). Il explique que „*la langue est une structure qui communique des concepts médiatisés à un premier niveau.*“

Elle empêche la communication, lui fait obstacle! C'est cette non-communication qui fonde toute la problématique de la traduction" (Ibid. 162).

Pour Pergnier la traduction est la confrontation des performances et il continue sur la traduisibilité que „*ce n'est pas parce que les univers linguistiques sont différents et opaques les uns aux autres qu'on peut ou ne peut pas traduire: c'est au contraire, parce qu'on traduit que les univers linguistiques deviennent plus transparents les uns aux autres et que les concepts peuvent s'universaliser et se communiquer. On ne saurait donc reprocher à la traduction de ne pas répondre à un idéal de transparence universelle qu'elle seule contribue à créer.*" (Ibid. 258). On voit bien que la traductologie veut une fois pour toutes accorder une interprétation positive à la traduction.

Poétique du traduire d'Henry Meschonnic présente une critique, c'est à dire une base, des fondements qui relient l'acte de traduire à la littérature. L'objet est d'établir la nécessité d'examiner l'acte de traduire, et ses résultats, par le fonctionnement des oeuvres littéraires. D'où résulte une critique de l'étude des traductions comme discipline autonome, qui la réduit à l'herméneutique, aux seules questions de sens, en ignorant que le langage fait autant et plus qu'il ne dit. La longue recherche de Meschonnic donne à la traduction le statut d'un véritable écriture: „*traduire n'est traduire*“, dit-il, „*que quand traduire est un laboratoire d'écriture*“ (Meschonnic 1999: 459).

DE DISCOURS À DISCOURS

CHANSON¹

À Emile Verhaeren

Avec deux couplets

1

Les villes tentaculai-ai-reu
 Les villes tenthaculai-reu
 Les villes tantan
 Les villes tata
 Les villes cucu
 Les villes tantakulè-è-reu
 Les villes thantackulair.

2

Les vils tathankulai-ai-reu
 Les vils thatanculai-reu
 Les vils tata
 Les vils tantan
 Les vils cucu
 Les vils tattanculè-è-reu
 Les vils ttatanckulairs.

PÉSEM

Emilu Verhaerenu

S pripevom

1

Mesta tentabundae-ae-e
 Mesta tenthabundae-e-e
 Mesta tantan
 Mesta tata
 Mesta bunde
 Mesta tantabundae-e-e
 Mesta thantakundae.

2

Malomeščani tathanbundi-i-i
 Malomeščani thatanbundi
 Malomeščani tata
 Malomeščani tantan
 Malomeščani bundi
 Malomeščani tattanbundi-i-i
 Malomeščani ttatankundi.

¹ (Vian, B., 1972, Cantilènes en gelées, 10/18: 8-49).

„... À l'aune de l'ensemble de ses écrits, la production de Vian est mince. De son vivant il ne publia que deux plaquettes, avec quelques poèmes dans *Jazz Hot* et les publications du Collège de Pataphysique. Si l'on y ajoute les recueils et poèmes publiés de façon posthume, le total des textes poétiques atteint moins de deux cents textes, composés de 1940 à 1959. Ainsi est-on tenté de penser que toute les formes de lyrisme éclatent mieux dans ses romans, sinon dans plus de cinq cents chansons signées Vian. Ainsi s'explique-t-on aussi que rares sont les études de la veine poétique de Vian. On est loin de l'importante production de ses amis Queneau et Prévert, avec qui pourtant il se trouve sur le même versant poétique par le goût des formes fixes ou brèves, de la farce unie à l'émotion, de la vie et du macabre, du jeu verbal et de l'invention sémantique.“ (Pestureau 5, 1999).

On a choisi le poème „Chanson“ parmi le „Cantilènes en gelées“, poèmes vertueux, illustrés par Christiane Alanor, dont on sait que R. J. Rougerie (l'éditeur de Boris Vian) imaginait qu'ils soient lus avec accompagnement de trompette pour augmenter la vente du livre publié pour la première fois en 1949.

L'oeuvre littéraire, comme toute production verbale, implique une opération d'énonciation fondamentale, celle de son auteur. Il est néanmoins certain que ce dispositif énonciatif n'est pas réductible à la situation de communication décrite comme archétype. À la différence de l'énonciation orale qui est directe, l'énonciation écrite est une énonciation marquant l'écart: le lecteur ne partage pas la situation d'énonciation du locuteur. Cette dissymétrie est renforcée par la spécificité de l'oeuvre littéraire, qui s'adresse à des publics indéterminés dans l'espace et dans le temps et se caractérise par un élargissement du cadre de réception.

POUR QUI EST FAITE ALORS UNE TRADUCTION?

Un auteur peut concevoir son oeuvre en fonction d'un lecteur précis – ou d'un type de lecteur. Il n'en reste pas moins vrai que l'oeuvre n'est reçue comme littéraire que si son action s'exerce effectivement sur des publics éloignés de ceux de son énonciation“, au milieu de l'“institution“ littéraire.

Le fait que les traductions ainsi que les oeuvres littéraires, selon notre opinion, existent au milieu de l'“institution“ littéraire nous fait renoncer à se poser la question si le poème „Chanson“ de Boris Vian est traductible ou non. Quant à sa traductibilité citons tout simplement Walter Benjamin qui dit: „*La question de la traductibilité d'une oeuvre revêt un double sens. Elle peut signifier: parmi l'ensemble de ses lecteurs, parvient-elle jamais à trouver un traducteur qui lui soit adéquat? Ou encore, et plus proprement: agréé-t-elle, quant à son essence, la traduction, et si tel est le cas – conformément à la signification de sa forme – la sollicite-t-elle?* (Benjamin <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/037299ar>).

ALORS QU'EST-CE QUI EST ESSENTIEL DANS LES TRADUCTIONS?

L'approche structurale quant au discours poétique de Boris Vian relève les différents faits que l'on doit prendre en considération afin de pouvoir répondre à cette question.

Au niveau syntaxique ce poème est structuré de deux noms et d'un adjectif. Ce poème n'a pas de prédicat. La ponctuation à la fin de chaque strophe sert à ordonner le discours dans la langue ce qui assure sa cohésion. L'adjectif „tentaculaire“ est en position de satellite des syntagmes adjectivaux qui structurent les deux strophes. Les différentes formes de l'épithète liée „tentaculaire“ créées par l'imagination de Boris Vian mettent au premier plan l'expressivité des noms „villes“ et „vils“, mais elles-mêmes sortent du cadre lexical. Leurs formes sont inventées et n'existent que dans le poème. L'épithète „tentaculaire“ dans ses différentes formes ne contient qu'une partie qui est porteuse de signification: sa base lexicale. La nature de différentes formes de l'épithète filée y est purement stylistique. Le choix des mots, les sonorités servent à mettre en exergue des significations. L'épithète „tentaculaire“ vient du latin „tentabundus“ et c'est l'épithète de caractère homérique: épithète qui exprime une caractéristique individualisante permettant d'identifier un personnage. Dans ce discours l'épithète „tentaculaire“ est attribuée à un inanimé (aux villes) et à un animé (aux vils).

Chantal Kircher rappelle que les „bases sur lesquelles sont construits les dérivés en –bundus en latin expriment un comportement humain, attitude physique (mouvement de la marche, apte à évoquer la fuite ou l'errance) ou morale (respect, honte, etc.)“ (Kircher <http://www.linguistique.latine.org>).

Partant de la thèse que la traduction est une équivalence linguistique, le changement du signe linguistique d'une langue par un signe linguistique équivalent d'une autre langue, on doit se poser la question : en quoi consiste cette équivalence linguistique? S'agit-il de l'équivalence qui ne doit rien au signifiant ou à l'expérience? Alors dans la traduction les signes ne seront équivalents que par le fait qu'ils soient les signes linguistiques. S'il s'agit de l'équivalence qui ressort de la substance de leurs contenus et non de la réciprocité de leur structure, nous arrivons à une autre définition possible de la traduction qui ne part pas de l'équivalence linguistique mais de la substance de contenu. Nous pouvons dire que dans la traduction le rapport particulier entre les signes linguistiques n'est pas du ressort du domaine linguistique pur et dur. C'est grâce au caractère polysémique de la langue qu'on peut chercher l'équivalence aux niveaux différents. Le caractère polysémique de la langue, du point de vue de la structure et du point de vue du contenu fait que la traduction soit une notion composée d'éléments qui entretiennent des rapports nombreux.

Si le style pose le problème de traduction il faudrait revenir à la question initiale à laquelle se heurte la traductologie: la traduction doit-elle mettre en avant la forme ou la signification du texte à traduire? La problématique c'est que le traducteur doit à la fois transposer le style (la forme) et l'effet de style (la signification). Le problème de la traduction c'est que la signification ne vient pas de l'extérieur du texte mais elle est ancrée à l'intérieur des mots.

Mais dans ce discours de Boris Vian, la signification (le fait d'avoir le sens) vient d'une certaine façon de l'extérieur, c'est à dire du paratexte (du titre et de la dédicace). La signification n'est ancrée à l'intérieur des mots que par l'intermédiaire de paratexte, par la dédicace, qui est ici „*koherenčni pramen besedila*“ („*faisceau de cohérence du texte*“), comme dit Marko Stabej (Stabej 195-204).

Soulignons de nouveau que ce poème n'a pas de prédicat, n'a pas de forme verbale finie qui aurait pu apporter plus d'informations. Le prédicat se construit ici par la

totalité plus large du discours. Alors il est évident que „*la question des relations entre le mot et le monde ne concerne pas seulement l'art du langage, mais bien toutes les formes de discours.*“ (Jakobson 210-211). Les relations entre le discours et l'“univers du discours“ y sont très importantes.

Pour lire et traduire ce discours, pour comprendre sa signifiante, il est nécessaire d'avoir recours à l'oeuvre de Emile Verhaeren et au fait que Boris Vian était un musicien.

La fonction expressive ou émotive y est portée sur les structures syntagmatiques, qui contiennent les différentes formes d'épithète filée „tentaculaire“ et ces différentes formes jouent un rôle poétique. Les sons ou les phonèmes (sont-ils ici les porteurs de sens?) dans les différentes formes d'épithète filée „tentaculaire“ représentent les termes figurés, ils remplacent les signes graphiques du système de notation, éléments constitutifs de la phrase musicale. Les syntagmes adjectivaux y deviennent les phrases musicales. Cette cantilène est composée de deux refrains, qui servent à rythmer ce poème, à le rendre musical, et à créer un effet d'insistance sur les vers porteurs du message. Ce n'est pas par hasard que Vian a choisi le titre „*Chanson*“. Bref, de nombreux traits poétiques relèvent non seulement du langage mais de la sémantique aussi et c'est l'essentiel dans la traduction.

Traduire ce n'est pas uniquement faire passer ce qui est dit d'une langue dans une autre, c'est aussi participer à une activité du sujet qui, de sujet de l'énonciation et du discontinu de la langue, „*peut devenir une subjectivation du continu dans le continu du discours, rythmique et prosodique*“ (Meschonnic 12). La traduction d'un texte littéraire doit ainsi faire ce que fait un texte littéraire, par sa prosodie, son rythme, sa signifiante; ce qui déplace radicalement les préceptes de transparence et de fidélité de la théorie traditionnelle. „...*la traduction n'est ni une science ni un art, mais une activité qui met en oeuvre une pensée de la littérature, une pensée du langage*“ (Meschonnic 16-18).

Après avoir essayé de relever les particularités poétiques de ce poème nous allons brièvement dévoiler la façon particulière de penser ce discours durant le processus de la traduction afin de mieux voir en quoi consiste une approche individuelle de la traduction.

La question sur l'(in)traduisibilité (en tant que l'idée générale et abstraite) de „Chanson“ ne s'imposait pas du tout à la pensée. Elle flottait comme une algue, comme un bouchon au gré des flots. Les pensées avaient plutôt envie de s'occuper de petits „univers“ de ce discours. On pensait tantôt au langage et à sa musique, tantôt aux images provoquées par le contenu. Les pensées ne posaient pas de questions de traduction, elles ne voulaient qu'écrire et réécrire ce langage et ces images et ainsi sans cesse jusqu' ce qu'on atteigne tous les langages et toutes les images qu'on a pu voir dans ce poème.

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CLASSICAL PAST IN BAUDELAIRE'S *LE CYGNE*: A RECONSIDERATION

Marko Marinčič

Abstract

In the the third preface to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire curiously refers to Virgil as the only 'source' for his *Le Cygne*. It has been seen that Horace's description of the living poet's metamorphosis into a swan (*Carmina* 2.20) is a much more obvious classical reference as far as the title character is concerned, and the mention of »l'homme d'Ovide« seems to point the reader to Ovid's narrative of the creation of man in the *Metamorphoses* (1.76-86) as a model *e contrario* for the degradation of the divine bird in Baudelaire's poem. Baudelaire's modern version of the classical symbol of the sublime at first seems to suggest an ironic response to Horace and Ovid. On a second reading, however, the basic 'negativism' of Baudelaire's swan myth reveals a hidden thread of continuity with the classical past: it reveals Ovid's experience as an exilee as the primary parallel to the situations of Andromache and the swan. Conversely, Horace's swan-metamorphosis, though essentially Platonic, provides, through its over-literal, grotesque realism, an *ante litteram* alternative to the Platonising aesthetics of the earlier Romantics.

In a note at the end of the third preface to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire strikingly acknowledges his debt to a number of classical and contemporary poets by a dry list of 'plagiarisms':

Note sur les plagiats. – Thomas Gray. Edgar Poe (2 passages). Longfellow (2 passages). Stace. Virgile (tout le morceau d'Andromaque). Eschyle. Victor Hugo.¹

For a literary historian inquiring into the poet's literary lineage, this short stock of models is an invaluable source of information although it is little more than a reaffirmation of the obvious. Moreover, its risk of diverting the critic's attention from other, less obvious but no less important literary presences in the collection is quite realistic.

Le Cygne is a case in point. Baudelaire's Andromache clearly is a Virgilian character, but only the first part of the first of the two poems (*Le Cygne* I) is conspicuously based on Virgil's *Aeneid*:

Andromaque, je pense à vous ! Ce petit fleuve,
Pauvre et triste miroir où jadis resplendit

¹ Baudelaire 184.

L'immense majesté de vos douleurs de veuve,
 Ce Simois menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit,

5

A fécondé soudain ma mémoire fertile,
 Comme je traversais le nouveau Carrousel.
 Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville
 Change plus vite, hélas! que le cœur d'un mortel) ;

Je ne vois qu'en esprit tout ce camp de baraques,
 Ces tas de chapiteaux ébauchés et de fûts,

10

Les herbes, les gros blocs verdis par l'eau des flaques,
 Et, brillant aux carreaux, le bric-à-brac confus.

Là s'étalait jadis une ménagerie ;
 Là je vis, un matin, à l'heure où sous les cieux
 Froids et clairs le Travail s'éveille, où la voirie

15

Pousse un sombre ouragan dans l'air silencieux,

Un cygne qui s'était évadé de sa cage,
 Et, de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec,
 Sur le sol raboteux traînait son blanc plumage.
 Près d'un ruisseau sans eau la bête ouvrant le bec

20

Baignait nerveusement ses ailes dans la poudre,
 Et disait, le cœur plein de son beau lac natal:
 «Eau, quand donc pleuvras-tu? quand tonneras-tu, foudre?»
 Je vois ce malheureux, mythe étrange et fatal,

Vers le ciel quelquefois, comme l'homme d'Ovide,

25

Vers le ciel ironique et cruellement bleu,
 Sur son cou convulsif tendant sa tête avide,
 Comme s'il adressait des reproches à Dieu!

The obvious 'source' is Aeneas' encounter with the widow of Hector in *Aeneid* III; *le Simois menteur*² unmistakably recalls the miniature model of Troy Andromache shows to Aeneas upon his visit at Buthrotum:

progredior portu classis et litora linquens,

300

sollemnis cum forte dapes et tristia dona
 ante urbem in luco falsi Simoentis ad undam
 libabat cineri Andromache manisque uocabat
 Hectoreum ad tumulum ...

...

talia fundebat lacrimans longosque ciebat

incassum fletus, cum sese a moenibus heros

345

Priamides multis Helenus comitantibus adfert,
 agnoscitque suos laetusque ad limina ducit,

² Baudelaire set as an epigraph to the first publication of the poem a quotation from the *Aeneid*: »*falsi Simoentis ad undam*«; *ibid.* 1008.

et multum lacrimas uerba inter singula fundit.
procedo et paruam Troiam simulataque magnis
Pergama et arentem Xanthi cognomine riuum 350
agnosco, Scaeaeque amplector limina portae ...

I was walking away from the harbour leaving ships and shore behind me when I caught sight of Andromache, offering a ritual meal and performing rites to the dead in a grove in front of a city on the banks of a river Simois, but not the true Simois of Troy (lit. 'the false Simois').

...

She was weeping her useless tears and sobbing bitterly as these words poured from her when the hero Helenus, son of Priam, arrived from the walls of the city with a great escort. He recognized his own people and took us gladly to his home. He too was weeping and could speak only a few broken words to us between his tears. As I walked I recognized a little Troy, a citadel modelled on great Pergamum and a dried-up stream they called the Xanthus.

(Tr. D. West)

The parallel is almost too neat: the *vieux Paris* is as dead as Troy, and the architectural complex constructed by Haussmann in the place of the old quarter between the Arc du Carrousel and the Louvre as a part of the urban renewal of 1852 is an artificial substitute similar to Andromache's miniature model of Troy.³ A further similarity, neglected or considered of marginal importance by most interpreters, is the water imagery introduced by the river augmented by a flood of tears: »ce Simois menteur qui par vos pleurs grandit.« Simois is described as 'false' in Virgil's text; the rendition of *falsus* with the stronger *menteur*⁴ seems to suggest that in Baudelaire's version, Andromache's 'fake Troy' is little more than a delusion metaphorically referred to as a river watered by tears. While the stream of tears is not Virgilian, the underlying idea of a dry riverbed definitely is: Xanthus (=Scamander), the main river in Andromache's *parua Troia* (and indeed the main river of the Troad), is described as 'dry' (*arens Xanthus*, 350; cf. the *ruisseau sans eau* in the swan scene, 20). Taken together, the flow of tears and the attribute *menteur* suggest, or at least make possible, a rationalising explanation of Andromache's 'little Troy' as a psychological delusion produced by grief. Virgil's Simois is a palpable although artificial replica of the real river, and the riverbed of Xanthus is there, even if empty. But the fusion of two Virgilian rivers, one 'deceiving' and the other 'arid', results in the surrealistic metaphor of a dry riverbed filled with tears: even if the little Troy is really there, the big river Andromache sees in the place of the dry channel is a hallucination sprung from 'tearful' memories.⁵

³ Cf. Chambers, *Baudelaire's Paris* 107: »This story is a history of cities, viewable on the one hand as a history of change and progress, as ancient Troy yields to Greece, then to Rome and finally to Paris, but on the other as a narrative of exclusion and suffering that in its essentials has never changed since the sack of Troy.«

⁴ See Hampton 442–43: 'menteur' implies deliberate trickery. Less convincing is the claim that Simois is twice a liar because it conceals its real identity as the Seine.

⁵ Another interesting detail: the lying river is represented as an active agent, and Andromache as a victim not very much different from the swan who is ironically looked down on by the cruel blue sky. The

The imagery of water is one of the few ‘Virgilian’ elements in the second part of *Le Cygne I*. Andromache’s situation is almost literally reproduced in the swan’s dustbath besides a waterless brook: *le beau lac natal* is just a dream inspired by memories. Except for the *ruisseau sans eau*, however, the image of the swan hardly recalls Virgil. It *could* recall the transformation of Cycnus, Apollo’s beloved, into a swan, a metamorphosis curiously narrated at *Aeneid* 10.189–93, but only as one among many ancient passages. What, then, is the swan doing in *Le cygne*?⁶ Curiously enough, the most likely ancient model for the swan is provided by Horace, an author curiously not acknowledged as an influence in the preface.

The text in question is *Carmina* 2.20, a poem in which the poetic ‘I’ intriguingly describes his own bodily metamorphosis into a swan:⁷

iam iam residunt cruribus asperae
 pelles et album mutor in alitem
 superne nascunturque leves
 per digitos umerosque plumae.

iam Daedaleo notior Icaro
 visam gementis litora Bosphori
 Syrtisque Gaetulas canorus
 ales Hyperboreosque campos ...

...
 absint inani funere neniae
 luctusque turpes et querimoniae;
 conpesce clamorem ac sepulcri
 mitte supervacuos honores.

Already, even now, rough skin is forming on my legs, my upper part is changing into a white bird and smooth feathers are sprouting along my fingers and shoulders. Soon more famous than Icarus, son of Daedalus, I shall be a harmonious bird and visit the shores of the moaning Bosphorus, the Gaetolian Syrtes, and the Hyperborean plains. ...

Let there be no dirges or squalid mourning or lamentation at my corpseless funeral. Check your cries of grief and do not trouble with the empty honour of a tomb.

(Tr. D. West)

The gradual transformation of the poet-figure into the feathered white animal repelled critics like Fränkel,⁸ and it might have inspired Baudelaire’s drastic realism, but the fact that Horace’s ‘swanification’ draws on Platonic imagery⁹ is only a further

speaker of the poem, on the contrary, is more self-consciously aware of the illusionary character of visual memories: *Je ne vois qu’en esprit* ... On the self-conscious character of Baudelaire’s spleen (as opposed to the contemplative melancholy of the Romantics) see the fundamental study by Starobinski.

⁶ Terdiman 115.

⁷ On Horace *Carmina* 2.20 as a model Lowrie; Elkins.

⁸ Fraenkel 301.

⁹ Gantar 135–140.

element of dissension between Baudelaire and his classical model. At the same time, the almost parodic degradation of the classical swan marks Baudelaire's own departure from the more classicising stance of his earlier poem, *L'Albatros*:¹⁰

Le Poète est semblable au prince des nuées
Qui hante la tempête et se rit de l'archer;
Exilé sur le sol au milieu des huées,
Ses ailes de géant l'empêchent de marcher.

In *Spleen*, Baudelaire's dialogue with Horace's more famous *Exegi monumentum* (C. 3.30) suggests a decidedly polemical attitude towards Horace's classicising aesthetics: the timeless tyranny of *spleen* materializes in the imagery of death and decay Horace uses only as a negative foil to his claim to eternity.¹¹

Virgil, as far as the author of *Les Fleurs du Mal* is to be trusted, provided the material for »the whole Andromache piece«. The only poetic model explicitly referred to in the poem, though, is Ovid. The mention of Ovid, who described two swan metamorphoses in his epic poem (*Met.* 7.371-81, 12.71-167), might by itself suggest the idea of *metamorphosis*, all the more since the swan is called »a strange and fatal myth« (*ce mythe étrange et fatal*, 24). But again, this self-evident association is glossed over by a more concrete allusion to the creation of man narrated at the beginning of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:

Sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae
deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset:
natus homo est, sive hunc divino semine fecit
ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo,
sive recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto
aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli.
quam satus Iapeto, mixtam pluvialibus undis (!),
finxit in effigiem moderantium cuncta deorum,
pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque videre
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus
(1.76-86)

*A holier creature, of a loftier mind,
Fit master of the rest, was lacking still.
Then man was made, perhaps from seed divine
Formed by the great Creator, so to found
A better world, perhaps the new-made earth,
So lately parted from the ethereal heavens,
Kept still some essence of the kindred sky—
Earth that Prometheus moulded, mixed with water,*

¹⁰ Wright 43: »There (sc. in *L'albatros*), in the last quartain, the point is rather laboriously (!) made that the poet is 'like' this prince of the clouds. ... Together, the albatross and the swan mark the distance covered by Baudelaire in the development of his poetic genius.«

¹¹ On this see Michèle Lowrie's insightful discussion, esp. p. 46.

*In likeness of the gods that govern the world,
 And while the other creatures on all fours
 Look downwards, man was made to hold his head
 Erect in majesty and see the sky,
 And raise his eyes to the bright stars above.*
 (Tr. A. D. Melville)

The innate dignity of Ovid's man, created to look upwards to the sky, is mirrored in the swan as a classical paradigm of the sublime. Interestingly, Ovid presents the creation of man as a metamorphosis, and a very atypical, overtly 'optimistic' instance of metamorphosis: not only is the creation of man from earth and water one of the few instances of transition from dead matter to life (cf. Pygmalion's statue); it also gives birth to a semi-divine *sanctius animal*. Yet at the same time, Baudelaire's antropomorphic (*de ses pieds palmés frottant le pavé sec*, 18) representation of the sublime bird bathing in dry dust opens a still wider gap between the earthly and heavenly realms. The ascension of Ovid's semi-divine man to the ranks of a swan implies a fundamental reversal of status: Baudelaire's swan is not a divine singer but a miserable beast, a parody, as it were, of the classical divine bird. It has literally *returned* to the dust from which Prometheus had created the human race. The absence of the second ingredient used by Prometheus, the 'pluvial water', speaks for itself.

Whereas a metamorphosis of some kind has taken place on the way between the two texts, the reference to Ovid rather calls attention to the fact that the swan cannot escape its present state as an exile by an 'Ovidian' metamorphosis – not even by a symbolic metamorphosis of sorrow into song. Unlike man, whose supremacy over other beings is largely based on the faculty of speech, Baudelaire's swan is an immobilized, silenced exile; his unrealized swan song, as a 'missing' metamorphosis, is a silent expression of spleen, and a testimony to the poem's modernity. »Comme l'homme d'Ovide« is to be read as »à la différence de l'homme d'Ovide«: the only real parallel is Ovid himself, the (almost) silenced exilee, as a parallel to the addressee of the poem, Victor Hugo.¹²

Andromache, the tragic heroine par excellence, undergoes a similar metamorphic degradation (*Le Cygne* II, 37–40):

Andromaque, des bras d'un grand époux tombée,
Vil bétail, sous la main du superbe Pyrrhus,
 Après d'un tombeau vide en extase courbée
 Veuve d'Hector, hélas! et femme d'Hélénus!¹³

The grim wordplay *tombée-tombeau* strips Andromache, bowed in ecstatic mourning, of the last vestige of tragic decorum: she is now only a step away from »the starved and phthisic negress tramping the mud«. Andromache's posture is as un-Racinian as

¹² On the theme of exile as a hidden *tertium comparationis* see also Nelson 340; Hampton 1982, 444. An important contribution to the understanding of the political context is Chambers, *Un despotisme* 1987 (on *spleen* as a form of resistance to the reactionary politics of the time).

¹³ Hampton 443 compares »Veuve d'Hector, hélas!, et femme d'Hélénus« (40) with »me famulo famulamque Heleno transmisit habendam« (*Aen.* 3.329), and »des bras d'un grand époux tombée« (37) with »heu! quis te casus deiectam coniuge tanto excipit« (*Aen.* 3.317–18).

it can be; if there is a tragic model behind Baudelaire's *vil bétail*, then it is Euripides rather than Racine. Her grieving posture and the convulsive gestures of the swan are a testimony to the spleen's antiphrastic relationship to the classical aesthetics, incorporated in the swan as an icon of musical harmony and immortal fame.

Baudelaire's strange modern version of the poetic swan seems to suggest, at least at the surface level, a bitterly ironic response to both Horace and Ovid. As a prisoner of his present exile, immobilized by nostalgia for the past, Baudelaire's *grand cygne* is the exact contrary to his fame-seeking Horatian counterpart, and the reproaches he addresses to the inexorable sky are simultaneously directed against Ovid's optimistic portrait of the first man. On a second reading, however, the basic 'negativism' of Baudelaire's swan myth reveals a hidden thread of continuity with the classical past. The context of the ironic reference to Ovid's semi-divine first man suggests Ovid's experience as an exilee as the primary (and indeed the only possible) parallel to the situations of Andromache and the swan. The same can be said of Horace's swan-metamorphosis: it is essentially Platonic, but it also provides, through its over-literal, grotesque realism, an ante litteram alternative to the Platonising aesthetics of the earlier Romantics.¹⁴ To be sure, this particular point of contact does not invalidate the basic contrast between the white singer triumphing over an empty grave and the silent beast bathing in dust, but it clearly shows that Baudelaire's use of the Horatian myth of poetic eternity is not purely polemical: it presupposes a model that is itself open to ambiguity.

Perhaps there is more than a touch of irony about Horace's mention of Icarus, the mythic paradigm of the artist's downfall, in the context of poetic flight: »iam Daedaleo notior Icaro« (»Soon more famous than Icarus, son of Daedalus ...«).¹⁵ The ironic possibility that the human swan is just a second Icarus might even explain why he so haughtily refuses the idea of a funeral. This is admittedly a very Baudelairean interpretation, but it is in fact suggested by another poem in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, a poem entitled *Les plaintes d'un Icare*:

En vain j'ai voulu de l'espace
Trouver la fin et le milieu;
Sous je ne sais quel oeil de feu
Je sens mon aile qui se casse;

Et brûlé par l'amour du beau,
Je n'aurai pas l'honneur sublime
De donner mon nom à l'abîme
Qui me servira de tombeau.

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¹⁴ Baudelaire's relationship to the Romantic Platonism is conveniently summarized in Wolfreys 43–46.

¹⁵ See Johnson 274–75; Tatum 14–15; Nisbet and Hubbard *ad loc.*; cf. also Sharrock on Ovid's self-consciously ironic use of the myth in *Ars amatoria* II.

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AMBIGUITÉS GÉNÉRIQUES DANS UNE SI LONGUE LETTRE DE MARIAMA BÂ

Florence Gacoin-Marks

Synopsis

La présente contribution a pour objectif de replacer *Une si longue lettre* de la romancière sénégalaise Mariama Bâ dans le contexte du genre épistolaire, d'une part, en montrant son caractère hybride sur le plan formel (ce roman peut être envisagé à la fois comme une lettre, un journal intime et un roman à la première personne) et, d'autre part, en déterminant comment le choix de ce genre spécifique, qui implique l'existence d'un narrataire (destinataire de la lettre), contribue à la transmission du message idéologique (féministe) au cœur du projet romanesque de Mariama Bâ.

INTRODUCTION

Genre mineur et désuet en Europe dès la seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle, le roman épistolaire n'est pas très représenté non plus dans les littératures africaines.¹ Avant la parution d'*Une si longue lettre* de Mariama Bâ en 1979, seuls quatre romans africains relèvent de cette forme : *Lettres d'un Africain, récit épistolaire* (1955) du Malien Ibrahima Mamadou Ouane, *Un Nègre à Paris* (1959) de l'Ivoirien Bernard Binlin Dadié, *Lettres kinoises : roman épistolaire* (1974) du Zaïrois Nsimba Mumbamuna et *Sans tam-tam* (1977) du Congolais Henri Lopès.² Pourtant c'est à cette forme rare que Mariama Bâ, romancière sénégalaise pionnière de la littérature féminine et féministe africaine, a recours dans son premier roman. Dans un entretien, elle s'en explique ainsi : « J'ai voulu donner à l'œuvre une forme originale au lieu de faire l'éternel roman qui commence par *je* ou qui débute par *il y avait*. J'ai voulu une forme originelle et abordable et comme ce sont deux femmes, je crois que le procédé de la lettre se prête mieux à la voix de la confiance. »³ Pour Mariama

¹ Sur l'épistolaire dans les littératures africaines, voir : Mwamba Camakulu, *Forme épistolaire et pratique littéraire en Afrique francophone. État des Lieux*, Saint-Louis, Xamal, 1996.

² À ces quatre romans, il convient d'ajouter *Lettres de ma cambuse* (1956) du Camerounais René Philombe, une longue nouvelle, « Lettres de France », publiée dans le recueil *Voltaire* (1962) du Sénégalais Ousmane Sembène et un roman où les lettres occupent une place très importante, *La Nouvelle romance* (1977) d'Henri Lopès. La fonction du genre épistolaire est généralement de permettre la mise en présence et la confrontation de deux environnements culturels très différents (l'Afrique et l'Europe).

³ Bamba Diallo et E. Sow, « Mariama Bâ, Propos », in : *Zone 2*, 1979, n° 26, p. 19.

Bâ, le roman épistolaire est donc, en quelque sorte, le genre littéraire féminin par excellence.⁴ Or, comme l'ont déjà souligné les chercheurs – sans toutefois rentrer dans les détails – la forme dont relève *Une si longue lettre* est complexe, ambiguë.⁵ Ainsi, René Larrier remarque que « roman épistolaire, journal intime, mémoires sont toutes les formes écrites dont les structures sont combinées, étendues et retravaillées par Bâ ».⁶ Il convient donc d'observer brièvement ce que la romancière sénégalaise a retenu de chacune des formes ainsi mises en présence et comment le genre ainsi renouvelé est particulièrement apte à véhiculer le message que l'écrivain cherche à exprimer dans son roman.⁷

1. ÉLÉMENTS RELEVANT DU ROMAN ÉPISTOLAIRE

Les principales caractéristiques du roman épistolaire peuvent être résumées par les points suivants :

- le roman épistolaire propose une communication entre deux personnes, donc supposant l'existence d'un « je » et d'un « tu » clairement identifiés (un expéditeur, qui signe de son nom sa ou ses lettres, et un destinataire, que l'expéditeur appelle par son nom ou par une autre formule d'appel) ;

- en tant que « mise en écriture » d'une communication, il implique souvent le recours à un registre de langue se rapprochant de l'oralité, de la parole du personnage⁸ ;

- en tant que forme particulière de l'écriture à la première personne, il plonge le lecteur dans l'intimité du personnage ;

- il est écrit majoritairement au présent et propose donc une histoire ou un état d'esprit en pleine évolution, qui se construit au fur et à mesure, tout au long du texte ;

- sa valeur n'est pas seulement informative mais aussi pragmatique (comme le souligne Edgar Pich dans son ouvrage sur *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées* de Balzac

⁴ C'est également ce que constate Jacques Versini dans son ouvrage sur le roman épistolaire : « Consacré aux femmes, composé bien souvent par des femmes, le roman par lettres a pour premier public les femmes » (Jacques Versini, *Le Roman épistolaire*, p. 60). En réalité, dans le cas de Mariama Bâ, d'autres motivations, conscientes ou non, peuvent peut-être expliquer le choix de la forme épistolaire, notamment le besoin de se cacher derrière un personnage de fiction pour délivrer son propre message féministe. Dans sa conférence intitulée « La fonction politique des littératures africaines écrites » (voir bibliographie), Mariama Bâ souligne elle-même la stigmatisation dont sont victimes les femmes osant exprimer ouvertement leurs revendications et même les inscrire durablement sur le papier. Au sujet des conditions de la « prise de parole » des femmes africaines, voir : Christophe L. Miller, *Theories of Africans : Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990 (chapitre 6 : « Senegalese Woman Writers, Silence and Letters: Before the Canon's Roar »).

⁵ Voir les travaux de Mineke Schipper, Florence Stratton, Christophe L. Miller, Renée Larrier et Josias Semujanga, Josias cités dans la bibliographie secondaire.

⁶ René Larrier, « Correspondance et création littéraire... », *op. cit.*, p. 747. « An epistolary novel, a diary, a memoir are all written forms whose structures Bâ combines, extends and reworks. »

⁷ Comme le montrent certains chercheurs, dont Max Andréoli, le roman épistolaire de Balzac n'est pas exempt, lui non plus, d'ambiguïtés. Il suffit de comparer le titre, « Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées », qui laisse attendre un récit autobiographique, et le contenu de l'œuvre, un échange épistolaire polyphonique (majoritairement à deux voix). Voir : Max Andréoli, « Un roman épistolaire : les *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées* », pp. 256 et suiv.

⁸ Sur les signes de l'oralité dans *Une si longue lettre*, voir : Larrier, Renée : « Correspondance et création littéraire : Mariama Bâ's *Une si longue lettre* », *op. cit.* pp. 747-753.

(roman paru pour la première fois en 1842), « les lettres font quelque chose ou tentent de faire quelque chose : séduire, persuader ou dissuader, inviter et refuser une invitation, etc. ».⁹

Une si longue lettre se présente sous la forme d'un roman épistolaire « à une voix », « monodique » ou « monophonique »¹⁰ constitué d'une seule « longue » lettre divisée en vingt sept sections ou chapitres. La lettre commence par une formule d'appel (« Aïssatou, ») et est clos, environ cent cinquante pages plus loin, par la signature de son expéditeur, « Ramatoulaye ». On ne peut donc pas parler d'échange épistolaire. Par ailleurs, les deux premiers tiers du texte relatent des événements passés. On ne peut donc pas dire que la lettre permette de mettre en scène des personnages en cours d'évolution : les jeux sont déjà faits au moment où Ramatoulaye commence son récit.

Notons que, bien que cette « si longue lettre » soit condamnée à ne jamais parvenir à sa destinataire et donc à ne jamais recevoir de réponse, les deux « amies » sont en contact tout au long des événements qui font l'objet du récit. Elles entretiennent même une relation épistolaire suivie à laquelle la narratrice fait plusieurs fois référence : « comme tes lettres me le disent » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 66), « toutes tes lettres » (*Ibid.*, p. 133), « l'écriture soignée qui te reflète » (*Ibid.*, p. 133). Dans les dernières phrases du roman, elle annonce que cette « longue lettre » n'est probablement pas la dernière : « Tant pis pour moi si j'ai encore à t'écrire une si longue lettre... » (*Ibid.*, p. 165). La « si longue lettre » est donc une sorte de lettre perdue, sans fonction pragmatique, à l'intérieur d'une correspondance réciproque.

Enfin, en examinant les différentes sections constituant le roman, nous constatons que la « longue lettre » ne s'adresse pas à un seul destinataire. Ainsi, la cinquième section comporte un passage entier adressé aux invalides (*Une si longue lettre*, pp. 30-31). Fait plus spectaculaire encore : la sixième section est toute entière adressée à un « tu » que le lecteur identifie rapidement comme étant Modou Fall, le défunt mari de la narratrice, et non Aïssatou, l'amie intime interpellée au début du roman et omniprésente dans toutes les autres sections. Vers la fin de cette section, cette dernière est même mentionnée à la troisième personne du singulier : « L'introduction dans notre cercle de ton ami Mawdo Bâ changera la vie de ma meilleure amie, Aïssatou » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 35). La cinquième section pouvant donc légitimement être considérée comme une lettre au défunt Madou Fall, ce qui fait que le roman de Mariama Bâ devient donc un roman monophonique adressé non pas à un mais à deux destinataires distincts. Cet écart surprenant produit un effet très fort sur le lecteur : en prenant à témoin son mari défunt, la narratrice non seulement augmente la dimension tragique et pathétique de son histoire, mais aussi et surtout signe un pacte de sincérité avec le lecteur. Adressée à un mort, la parole de la narratrice peut être mensongère.

Mariama Bâ n'a donc retenu du genre épistolaire que l'adresse à un narrataire déterminé (souvent répétée dans le corps de la lettre), le ton de la confession et les signes de l'oralité mimant la conversation entre deux amies. Son objectif est clair : faire

⁹ Pich, Edgar : *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées d'Honoré de Balzac. Un roman d'identité*, J2C, Lyon, Aldrui, 2004, p. 7.

¹⁰ Termes employés par Jean Rousset (pour les deux premiers) et Jacques Versini (pour le troisième).

entendre la voix d'une femme, ce qui, rappelons-le, a toujours été l'une des fonctions de l'épistolaire.¹¹

2. ÉLÉMENTS RELEVANT DU JOURNAL INTIME

Comme nous l'avons déjà vu, les chercheurs ont insisté sur la parenté d'*Une si longue lettre* avec le genre du journal intime. Le fait qu'il s'agisse d'une seule lettre divisée en vingt-sept sections rappelle effectivement ce genre. De même, la narratrice s'exprime de manière ambiguë quand, au début du roman, elle déclare « j'ouvre ce cahier » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 11), phrase qui peut éventuellement annoncer une très longue lettre, mais qui peut encore plus aisément se rapporter à un journal intime. Enfin, l'intrusion du présent dans le récit majoritairement au passé,¹² peut rappeler un journal qui, bien qu'axé sur les événements passés, s'écrit au jour le jour tout au long du deuil de Ramatoulaye. Par exemple, au début de la vingtième section, nous lisons : « Nous sommes vendredi » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 119). Ainsi, la narratrice justifie son récit en ces termes : « je ne peux m'empêcher de me ressouvenir dans cette solitude et cette réclusion forcées » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 55). Ramatoulaye écrirait donc à son amie une lettre qu'elle n'aurait pas l'intention d'envoyer, une sorte de confidence intime adressée plus à elle-même qu'à l'amie qui semble en être le destinataire. Le roman sénégalais se rapprocherait donc, par sa forme, d'*Obermann* de Sénancourt.¹³ Cette hypothèse permettrait d'expliquer que Ramatoulaye continue à écrire à son amie alors qu'elle sait déjà qu'elle pourra lui parler de vive voix dès le lendemain.

Cependant, certains éléments ne cadrent pas avec le genre du journal intime, notamment la reprise intégrale de la lettre que la narratrice fait parvenir à son soupirant Daouda ainsi que la transcription exacte des dialogues entre les personnages donnant à voir différentes scènes. De même, on sent très bien qu'Aïssatou n'est pas une lectrice passive : la narratrice prévoit ou attend ses réactions, commente ses choix de vie, etc. Ainsi, le texte est parsemé de phrases de ce type : « Adosse-toi. » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 27) « Je t'ai quittée hier en te laissant stupéfaite sans doute par mes révélations » (*Ibid.*, p. 30), « Tu me diras : la vie n'est pas lisse » (*Ibid.*, p. 105), « Tu répondras, logique [...] » (*Ibid.*, p. 107), « Plus commode, diras-tu » (*Ibid.*, p. 165). Ces éléments induisent indubitablement l'existence d'un véritable lecteur (Aïssatou, l'amie de Ramatoulaye et / ou le lecteur anonyme de Mariama Bâ).

¹¹ Voir : Jacques Versini, *Le Roman épistolaire*, op. cit., p. 262. « Si tant de femmes ont en tout temps choisi le roman épistolaire, c'était pour proclamer leur vérité, celle du cœur, celle de leur engagement, irréductibles aux vérités de l'homme. »

¹² Par exemple, au début de la vingtième section : « Nous sommes vendredi » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 119).

¹³ Jean Rousset mentionne également les *Lettres d'une religieuse portugaise* où « l'œuvre révèle la tendance profonde de la lettre vers le journal intime » (Jean Rousset, *Forme et signification*, op. cit., p. 78).

3. ÉLÉMENTS RELEVANT DU ROMAN À LA PREMIÈRE PERSONNE

Il est également possible d'envisager *Une si longue lettre* comme un roman à la première personne.¹⁴ Dans ce cas, Mariama Bâ serait en quelque sorte l'éditrice non pas d'une « longue lettre », mais d'un récit autobiographique rédigé par Ramatoulaye et présenté par cette dernière sous la forme d'une lettre à une amie. Le roman africain serait ainsi, dans une certaine mesure, comparable sur le plan structurel au *Lys dans la vallée* de Balzac.¹⁵

Effectivement, comme la narratrice le souligne à plusieurs reprises, la « longue lettre » est avant tout le récit d'événements passés. Ainsi, la narratrice conclut vers les deux tiers du roman : « J'ai raconté d'un trait ton histoire et la mienne. » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 105). Seule la fin nous montre Ramatoulaye attendant dans le présent de son écriture l'arrivée de son amie le lendemain. En tant que récit d'événements passés, la « si longue lettre » n'immerge pas personnages et lecteur « dans un présent en train de se faire »,¹⁶ comme c'est le cas, en principe, dans les romans épistolaires monophoniques (par exemple, dans les *Lettres portugaises*). Par ailleurs, l'œuvre de Mariama Bâ est un récit adressé à un public extérieur de lecteur qui en est le narrataire second implicite. En effet, si on peut comprendre que Ramatoulaye raconte dans les moindres détails sa propre vie, en revanche il est difficile de justifier le récit de la vie d'Aïssatou si cette dernière est la destinataire, la narrataire de la « longue lettre ». C'est pourquoi la romancière éprouve le besoin de motiver le contenu du récit en introduisant à plusieurs reprises des excuses de la narratrice à son amie. Au début de la quatrième section, nous lisons : « Aïssatou, mon amie, je t'ennuie, peut-être, à te relater ce que tu sais déjà » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 26) et, au début de la onzième section, « Je sais que je te secoue, que je remue un couteau dans une plaie à peine cicatrisée ; mais que veux-tu, je ne peux m'empêcher de me souvenir dans cette solitude et cette réclusion forcées » (*Ibid.*, p. 55). Du reste, comme le remarque Marie Grésillon dans son analyse du roman de Mariama Bâ, le nom d'Aïssatou, si présent dans les premières sections, se fait de plus en plus rare : « *L'absence de destinataire s'accroît* : elle est significative. »¹⁷ Dans le contenu même du récit, certains indices montrent clairement que le lecteur est le véritable narrataire, le plus édifiant étant très certainement la reprise intégrale de la lettre qu'Aïssatou écrit à son mari pour lui annoncer son départ du foyer conjugal (pp. 64-65), reprise inconcevable si le roman est réellement une

¹⁴ Ici, nous éviterons de parler de roman autobiographique. En effet, comme le remarque Josias Semujanga (voir bibliographie), il n'y a ni identité entre l'auteur, la narratrice et le personnage principal, ni « pacte autobiographique » explicite de la part de l'auteur (pour reprendre les éléments caractéristiques du roman autobiographique exposés par Philippe Lejeune dans *Le Pacte autobiographique*, pp. 13-45). Cependant, nous noterons que les chercheurs ont remarqué les similitudes entre les vies de Mariama Bâ et de Ramatoulaye. Par ailleurs, le lecteur – qui n'est pas censé lire tout de suite la signature qui clôt le roman – n'apprend que tardivement (au deux-tiers du récit) que la narratrice et l'auteur ne sont pas la même personne, ce qui renforce chez le lecteur l'impression d'avoir affaire à un roman autobiographique.

¹⁵ Selon Jean Rousset, ce roman, qui se présente comme une longue lettre suivie d'une brève réponse, est « un roman autobiographique au passé » et non un véritable roman épistolaire (Jean Rousset, *Forme et signification*, op. cit., 1962, p. 100).

¹⁶ Jean Rousset, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁷ Marie Grésillon, *Une si longue lettre* de Mariama Bâ, Éditions Saint-Paul, coll. « Les Classiques africains », 1986, p. 60. Phrase soulignée par Marie Grésillon.

« longue lettre » adressée à Aïssatou.¹⁸ Autre fait marquant : les longues digressions où la narratrice expose sa vision de la société africaine et, plus spécifiquement, sa critique de la condition féminine. Comme le remarque Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, « [I]es intrusions de l'auteur traduisent d'une part sa vision du monde et établissent d'autre part un dialogue entre l'auteur et le lecteur. La narratrice interpelle le lecteur, le prend à parti et donne libre cours à des commentaires didactiques, moralisateurs ou philosophiques. »¹⁹

Pourtant, bien que certains éléments internes rapprochent *Une si longue lettre* du roman à la première personne, ici encore, la présence de la narrataire dans le récit renvoie continuellement le lecteur à la macrostructure épistolaire du roman.

4. FONCTIONS DE LA NARRATAIRE

Comme nous venons de le voir, la fonction communicationnelle de la narrataire de la « si longue lettre » est très réduite. De moins en moins présente en tant que destinataire d'un discours qui, comme en témoignent de nombreux indices, ne lui est pas vraiment destiné (le narrataire réel étant le lecteur), Aïssatou joue, en revanche, un rôle capital en tant que personnage. Son histoire aurait pu faire l'objet d'une narration à la troisième personne, aussi devons-nous nous demander ce que la forme épistolaire apporte au roman; c'est-à-dire, en d'autres termes, quelles fonctions particulières remplit le personnage du narrataire par rapport à un personnage dont la narratrice parlerait à la troisième personne.²⁰

La première fonction de la narrataire peut être qualifiée de testimoniale. Elle consiste à accroître la crédibilité du récit de Ramatoulaye. En tant que personnage impliqué personnellement dans les événements racontés, elle est à plusieurs reprises et sous différentes formes prise à témoin, priée de cautionner le récit :

Tu me connais excessivement sentimentale (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 29).

Tu connais ma sensibilité, l'immense amour que je vouais à Modou. Tu peux témoigner que, mobilisée nuit et jour à son service, je devançais ses moindres désirs (*Ibid.*, p. 106).

Notre école, revoyons-la ensemble [...]. Notre école, entendons vibrer ses murs de notre fougue à l'étude. Revivons la griserie de son atmosphère (*Ibid.*, p. 37).

¹⁸ Nous noterons au passage qu'il n'est pas très vraisemblable que la narratrice se « rappelle l'exact contenu » de cette lettre qu'elle n'est pas, dur reste, censée avoir lue (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 64).

¹⁹ Pierrette Herzberger-Fofana, *Littérature féminine francophone d'Afrique noire*, p. 56.

²⁰ Dans son article paru en 1973, Gerald Prince conclut que le narrataire peut « exercer toute une série de fonctions dans un récit : il constitue un relais entre narrateur et lecteur, il aide à préciser le cadre de la narration, il sert à caractériser le narrateur, il met certains thèmes en relief, il fait progresser l'intrigue, il devient le porte-parole de la morale de l'œuvre » (« Introduction à l'étude du narrataire », in : *Poétique*, n° 14, avril 1973, p. 196). Si le « fait de caractériser le narrateur » est bien l'une des fonctions de la narrataire de la « si longue lettre » (c'est ce que nous appellerons la « fonction testimoniale »), en revanche, il convient de définir deux fonctions spécifiques à la narrataire personnage du roman de Mariama Bâ : les fonctions généralisante et exemplaire.

La relation narrateur / narrataire caractéristique de la forme épistolaire, permet à Mariama Bâ de conclure un pacte de sincérité avec le lecteur, le véritable narrataire du roman.

La seconde fonction de la narrataire est généralisante. En effet, l'histoire de Ramatoulaye est un exemple concret des malheurs qu'endurent les femmes africaines : « Être femme ! Vivre en femme ! Ah, Aïssatou ! » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 120), s'exclame la narratrice une fois arrivée au terme de son récit. S'y ajoutent deux autres histoires similaires, celles de la narrataire, Aïssatou, et de Jacqueline, la Congolaise que son mari infidèle a réduite à la dépression (*Une si longue lettre*, pp. 81-88). Ainsi, Marie Grésillon remarque que « [l]e récit du drame d'Aïssatou auquel s'ajoute celui de Jacqueline (chapitre 14) vient étayer la dénonciation de l'ingratitude des hommes par la narratrice [...] et mettre en valeur le malheur et le courage des femmes face à cette situation [...]. »²¹ Or, les trois femmes sont désignées respectivement par les trois personnes grammaticales (Ramatoulaye par la première, Aïssatou par la deuxième et Jacqueline par la troisième), ce qui confère aux trois histoires une valeur universelle. Cette fonction généralisante des trois personnes grammaticales à laquelle contribue la narrataire est soulignée par la narratrice dans la phrase : « J'avais entendu trop de détresses, pour ne pas comprendre *la mienne*. *Ton cas*, Aïssatou, *le cas de bien d'autres femmes*, méprisées, reléguées ou échangées, dont on s'est séparé comme d'un boubou usé ou démodé » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 80 ; nous soulignons). Je, tu, elles, donc : toutes les femmes.

Enfin, la narrataire, sorte d'*alter ego* de la narratrice, représente la femme courageuse, celle qui n'a pas hésité à refuser la polygamie et à quitter son mari. Or, le fait que la narratrice s'adresse à elle à la deuxième personne rend possible l'éloge lyrique de son attitude :

Comme tu fus plus grande que ceux qui sapaient ton bonheur !
On te conseillait des compromis : « On ne brûle pas un arbre qui porte des fruits. »
On te menaçait dans ta chair : « Des garçons ne peuvent réussir sans leur père. »
Tu passas outre (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 64).

Et tu partis. Tu eus le surprenant courage de t'assumer. Tu louas une maison et tu t'y installas. Et, au lieu de regarder en arrière, tu fixas l'avenir obstinément (*Ibid.*, p. 66).

Comme j'enviais ta tranquillité lors de ton dernier séjour ! Tu étais là, débarrassée du masque de la souffrance. Tes fils poussaient bien, contrairement aux prédictions. Tu ne t'inquiétais pas de Mawdou. Oui, tu étais bien là, le passé écrasé sous ton talon. Tu étais là, victime innocente d'une injuste cause et pionnière hardie d'une nouvelle vie (*Ibid.*, p. 69).

L'usage des points d'exclamation, anaphores, interjections et autres procédés rhétoriques témoigne de l'emphase de ce discours laudatif. Notons que le nom d'Aïssatou n'y figure pas, de sorte que le lecteur ou, plus exactement, la lectrice, véritable narrataire du roman, peut un instant oublier la narrataire de la lettre et avoir l'illusion

²¹ Marie Grésillon, *Une si longue lettre* de Mariama Bâ, Éditions Saint-Paul, coll. « Les Classiques africains », 1986. p. 61.

que ce discours lui est adressé. Si le discours féministe est pris en charge par la narratrice (voir, notamment le récit de sa conversation avec Daouda dans la section 19), sa mise en pratique est confiée à la narrataire qui revêt ainsi une troisième fonction que nous pouvons appeler fonction exemplaire. Dans le cadre du message féministe que Mariama Bâ veut délivrer, l'adresse directe de la narratrice à la femme courageuse, à la « pionnière d'une nouvelle vie » permet la mise en valeur de son choix. C'est aussi dans ce sens qu'il faut comprendre l'inclusion de la lettre d'Aïssatou à son mari dans le roman. Mise en abyme (lettre dans une lettre), écart par rapport à la logique du genre épistolaire, écart par rapport à la vraisemblance du récit, cette lettre endosse une fonction illocutionnaire (plus précisément exercitive).²² Au moment où Aïssatou dit : « Je me dépouille de ton amour, de ton nom » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 65), elle le fait. Ici, l'énonciation à la première personne est essentielle. Pour la narratrice, qui se fait dans bien des passages du roman la porte-parole de l'auteur, la fonction exemplaire des femmes osant s'opposer à la condition dans laquelle les sociétés les enferme est primordiale. Ainsi, elle s'exclame vers la fin du roman : « Mon cœur est en fête à chaque fois qu'une femme émerge de l'ombre » (*Une si longue lettre*, p. 164).

La narrataire, Aïssatou, amie intime de la narratrice, joue un rôle important dans le roman moins en tant que destinataire de la « longue lettre » qui constitue le roman (celle-ci étant avant tout adressée au lecteur du roman) que comme témoin des événements, comme femme bafouée parmi les autres ayant eu le courage de reconquérir sa liberté. C'est donc sur elle que repose une grande partie, la partie concrète, du message féministe délivré par Mariama Bâ.

CONCLUSION

Le roman de Mariama Bâ, dont le titre et la macrostructure laissent attendre un roman épistolaire monophonique et adressé à un seul destinataire, n'est pas un exemple canonique du genre.²³ Trop évidents pour être considérés comme des incohérences, les écarts qui rapprochent le roman tantôt du journal intime tantôt du roman autobiographique à la première personne du singulier remplissent des fonctions diverses, mais toujours identifiables. Cela montre bien que ce n'est pas le genre épistolaire en tant que forme qui intéresse la romancière, mais bien plus la situation communicationnelle particulière qu'elle implique (rapport narrateur / narrataire) et les possibilités rhétoriques qu'il offre pour la mise en récit d'une histoire dont l'objectif n'est pas seulement narratif mais argumentatif. La narrataire remplit donc dans le roman une triple fonction testimoniale,

²² Pour reprendre la terminologie proposée par John Langshaw Austin dans ses travaux sur les actes de langage.

²³ Même si, comme le note Christophe L. Miller, « il est dangereux de se livrer à des analogies entre les formes culturelles européennes et africaines » (*Theories of Africans : Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa*, p. 283; « It is dangerous to indulge in analogies between European and African cultural forms »), il paraît, dans ce cas précis, tout à fait censé de se référer aux romans épistolaires français. En effet, comme nous l'avons déjà souligné, le genre épistolaire était trop peu représenté dans les littératures africaines antérieures pour constituer un canon littéraire typiquement africain. Par ailleurs, on ne remarque dans aucun des romans épistolaires africains parus avant 1979 les ambiguïtés formelles décelables dans *Une si longue lettre*.

généralisante et exemplaire qui concourt à la bonne transmission du message féministe et humain au cœur du projet romanesque de Mariama Bâ.

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FORTISSIMUS ROBORE: MARTIN KRPAN AS A CASE OF BIBLICAL RECEPTION

David Movrin

Abstract

Martin Krpan z Vrha, written by Fran Levstik as a conscious experiment in prose-writing, has been interpreted variously during the last century and a half. The duel between a Slovenian peasant and a giant who comes to terrorise Vienna was in turn read by scholars as a political satire, the realisation of a literary and linguistic programme, a literary parody etc. Its motif was mostly interpreted with reference to Slavic folklore characters (Pegam and Lambergar, Prince Marko, Peter Klepec etc.) The analysis according to the model devised by Vladimir Propp, however, shows striking similarities with the Biblical story of David and Goliath (1 Sm 17). The reception of this motif is marked by significant political overtones, already present in antiquity and then interestingly developed in places as diverse as sixteenth-century Florence, Prague, and the Netherlands. As attested by the sources, Levstik used this motif several times; to a certain extent he even identified with its hero.

*Nation – David,
Dance before the Lord!*
Anton Vodnik

SEARCH FOR SOURCES

More than a hundred and fifty years have passed since the publication of *Martin Krpan z Vrha* (Martin Krpan from Hilltop, 1858), a story written by one of the founding fathers of Slovenian literature, Fran Levstik (1831-1887). Consciously designed as such by its influential author, *Martin Krpan* figures as the first important work of Slovenian prose-writing and a milestone of literary narrative. Although the story's tantalising accessibility eventually made it a classic of children's literature, its complex labyrinth of meanings fostered several widely different and often contradictory interpretations. These are sometimes strictly historical,¹ but more often than not they transcend the realm of history. Researchers have pointed out that Martin Krpan was in turn perceived as a political satire, a realisation

¹ See for instance Sergij Vilfan, "K zgodovini kmečkega kupčevanja s soljo: gospodarsko-pravne podlage povesti o Martinu Krpanu," *Kronika* 10-11 (1962-1963): 129-44; 1-12.

of Levstik's literary and linguistic programme, a literary parody and a plain, humorous exercise in storytelling.²

The plot of this multifaceted story is fairly straightforward. It opens with Martin Krpan, a strong and brave man from Inner Carniola, which was then a part of the Habsburg Empire; Krpan is smuggling salt³ on his mare when the Emperor's chariot comes by. The narrow road is filled with snow, and while making way for the chariot to pass, Krpan impresses the Emperor by lifting both the horse and its load. – This feat is remembered a year later when a horrible giant named Brdaus comes to Vienna and nobody is able to defeat him. An imperial messenger comes to Krpan's house in the village of Hilltop by Holy Trinity and asks for help. They both speed off to Vienna, which is draped in black: Brdaus has just killed the Emperor's son. – The Emperor orders some food for the guest and then takes him to the armoury, yet Krpan cannot find anything suitable, everything falls apart in his brawny hands. He decides to fashion his own arms, first something that resembles a butcher's axe and then a mighty wooden club; for this he cuts down a linden tree in the Emperor's garden, thus enraging the Empress. After a skirmish with the sulky Emperor, he goes to pick a horse. Again, all of the available horses are too weak, and it is his seemingly feeble mare that has to be fetched from home. – Finally the day of the fight arrives. When Brdaus sees Krpan, he laughs scornfully at his unmilitary appearance and tells him to get out of his sight while he is still alive. Krpan replies that it is Brdaus who is about to lose his head. When they ride towards each other, Krpan surprisingly parries Brdaus' sword with his linden club and the blade of the giant sinks into the soft wood. Krpan pulls his suddenly incapacitated opponent off his horse, cuts off his head and returns to the city with the people of Vienna shouting: "Krpan has saved us!" – The Emperor promises to grant him every wish, the hand of his daughter included; Krpan, a widower, hesitates to marry again, but then the Empress interferes: "You ruined my tree, I'm not giving you my daughter!" After a heated altercation which the Emperor somehow manages to tone down, Krpan finally leaves the court with a purse full of gold and an imperial letter legalising his salt trade.⁴

Various folk motifs have long been recognised as instrumental in shaping this open and polysemous, playful yet meticulously designed tale. Perhaps the first critic to have pointed out this connection was Josip Stritar, then already the doyen of Slovenian literary criticism, who wrote in 1874 that one of the possible motifs *might* be the well-known folk epic *Pegam and Lambergar*.⁵

This poem, perhaps composed in the fifteenth century, is preserved in several variants and is first mentioned in a source from 1674. It is a description of a duel between a historical figure, a knight from Carniola called Caspar Lamberg, and a mythical one, Pegam, who comes to Vienna and challenges the Emperor to find him a worthy opponent. The Emperor immediately calls for Lambergar, who dutifully leaves his castle and comes to Vienna for the tournament. Obeying his mother's advice, Lambergar ignores the two lateral heads on

² Boris Paternu, "Levstikov Martin Krpan med mitom in resničnostjo," *Slavistična revija* 26 (1978): 234.

³ Krpan's mysterious "English salt" is discussed by Miran Hladnik, "Pa začnimo pri Krpanu," *Sodobnost* 66 (2002): 227-37.

⁴ Anton Slodnjak, ed., *Fran Levstik: Zbrano delo 4* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1954), 36-53; 495-503; for an English translation see Fran Levstik, *Martin Krpan*, trans. Maja Visenjak Limon and David Limon (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 2004).

⁵ Anton Slodnjak, ed., *Fran Levstik: Zbrano delo 6* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1956), 496-97.

Pegam's body, aiming for the central one. They clash three times, and the third time around he cuts Pegam's middle head off, takes it to the Emperor and is given his reward, three castles in Carniola.⁶

Stritar seems to have had his reasons for the guarded circumspection of his statement, as Levstik himself was not particularly talkative about what had induced him to write the story. As late as 1870, he received an admiring letter from Josip Jurčič (1844-1881), the budding author of the first Slovenian novel: "You would do me a great favour if you could once tell me – just me – how you came to write Krpan. Was it the folksong *Lambergar and Pegam* that made you do it? I plan to write about it *ex voto* – because I studied your Krpan with such joy before I started to dabble myself."⁷ There is no trace of Levstik ever answering this request.

Yet what Stritar stated so cautiously was almost self-evident. Introducing Brdaus, the storyteller himself mentions that the giant challenged every champion in the Empire "just like the famous Pegam." More importantly, a poetic recreation of Pegam and Lambergar by Levstik's friend Fran Cegnar was published in June 1858, that is, while Krpan was being written. Levstik immediately produced a devastating review, which the editor diplomatically refused to publish, although Cegnar, who later read it, thanked Levstik for his advice and honesty.⁸ The review shows Levstik's familiarity with both Slovenian and Serbian epic tradition; besides *Pegam and Lambergar*, he quotes two parallel Serbian poems, *Kraljević Marko i Arapin* (Prince Marko and an Arab) and *Kraljević Marko i Musa Kesedžija* (Prince Marko and Musa Kesedžija). Apart from these, Anton Slodnjak has recognised further motifs from Slovenian folktales, based on historical personalities from previous centuries known by their Herculean power, such as *Peter Klepec*, *hudi Kljukec* (Kljukec the Terrible) and *Štempihar*; the last one is also mentioned in the text itself.⁹ Later researchers have noticed further parallels, such as *löl Kotlić* or *Kanjoš Macedonović*, but these may already be contaminated by the popularity of Levstik's story.¹⁰

BIBLICAL PARALLELS

An element so far conspicuously absent from the interpretations of *Martin Krpan* is the Bible story of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17),¹¹ a story that presents its theological

⁶ Zmaga Kumer et al., eds., *Slovenske ljudske pesmi*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1970), 5-15; cf. Monika Krojež, *Od Ajda do Zlatoroga: Slovenska bajeslovna bitja* (Celovec: Mohorjeva, 2008), 56-57; Marija Stanonik, *Interdisciplinarnost slovstvene folklore* (Ljubljana: ZRC, 2008), 402-04.

⁷ Anton Slodnjak, "Uvod," in *Fran Levstik: Martin Krpan* (Celje: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1940), 24.

⁸ For the review see Slodnjak, *ZD* 6, 20-33; 362-67.

⁹ Slodnjak, "Uvod," 13-20. Cf. Paternu, "Levstikov Martin Krpan med mitom in resničnostjo," 238, and Juraj Martinović, "Martin Krpan kao parodija," *Slavistična revija* 18 (1970): 219-40. Both Kljukec and Štempihar and their folklore aspect are analysed by Stanonik, *Interdisciplinarnost slovstvene folklore*, 106-07.

¹⁰ Milko Matičetov, "Löl Kotlić – Krpan iz Rezije," *Sodobnost* 11 (1963): 249-56; Jože Pogačnik, "Martin Krpan in Kanjoš Macedonović," *Jezik in slovstvo* 22 (1976/77): 161-71.

¹¹ Anton Slodnjak cited it very briefly, in a single sentence from 1940, to point out the ubiquity of the motif; cf. Slodnjak, "Uvod," 13-14. In his critical edition of the text, published fourteen years later, the Biblical parallel is not mentioned at all. Similarly, David and Goliath are mentioned *en passant* as a common motif by Boris Paternu, *Slovenska proza do moderne* (Koper: Primorska založba Lipa, 1957), 22, but not in Paternu, "Levstikov Martin Krpan med mitom in resničnostjo," published two decades later.

message, a trusting praise of the Lord of Hosts (1 Sm 17:45), by means of a romantic epic.¹² The narrative patterns used are reminiscent of a folktale¹³ and it has been pointed out that despite its present function as a basic historical metaphor, the story also “bears extraordinary similarity” to Aarne-Thompson-Uther Tale Type 300.¹⁴

The Latin Vulgate was studied thoroughly in the nineteenth-century Austrian gymnasia, and even the teaching of Slovenian was mostly based on stories from the Bible.¹⁵ What is more, due to the Sunday school instruction, even the uneducated audience was more than familiar with the story. Levstik, whose corpus includes translations from the Old Testament,¹⁶ knew the story to the extent that he was able to cite from it effortlessly; in his *Deseti brat* (The Tenth Brother) he mentions how “David kept the lambs of his father,”¹⁷ using a phrase which appears twice in 1 Sm 17.¹⁸ In the same text Levstik links Slavic oral tradition – which he quoted so extensively in his review of *Pegam and Lambergar* – to its Greek and Hebrew counterparts; his main character boasts of having been a shepherd “like David, like Paris, like the Serbian princes.”¹⁹ *Deseti brat* is strongly autobiographical and its thinly disguised hero, who proudly identifies with David the poet – or perhaps David the prophet – is in fact Levstik himself. Another case of Levstik identifying with David is his ghazal *Žensko lice* (Woman’s Visage).²⁰ There even seems to be a biographical explanation for Levstik’s interest in the Biblical character. In his youth, Levstik actually fought and defeated his own Goliath (who happened to be a gendarmerie sergeant major), “an awfully tall man,” in front of awestricken youths from his native village. This incident, celebrated locally and recorded by Josip Stritar, has been interpreted as a key to Levstik’s *Weltanschauung*.²¹

Not surprisingly, this familiarity with the Biblical archetype shows in his *Martin Krpan* as well. While the two plots do not seem strikingly similar at the level of concrete detail, where the parallels with *Pegam and Lambergar* (such as Vienna and the Emperor)

¹² This inventive approach somewhat contradicts the earlier historical layers, such as 1 Sm 16:14-23 and 2 Sm 21:19; it seems that the Septuagint later even attempted to harmonise the text by omitting parts of it. See Gwilym H. Jones, “1 and 2 Samuel,” in *The Oxford Bible Commentary*, ed. John Barton and John Muddiman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 208.

¹³ Felix Hunger, “David und Goliath,” in *Enzyklopädie des Märchens: Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*, ed. Kurt Ranke (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 366.

¹⁴ Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, trans. Jacqueline S. Teitelbaum (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), x. For a detailed analysis of ATU 300 with further bibliography, see Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography, Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2004), 174-75.

¹⁵ Matjaž Kmecl, *Fran Levstik* (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga, 1981), 51.

¹⁶ Job and Judges; cf. Slodnjak, *ZD 4*, 481.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸ Abiit David et reversus est a Saul ut pasceret gregem patris sui (1 Sm 17:15); pascebat servus tuus patris sui gregem (1 Sm 17:34).

¹⁹ Slodnjak, *ZD 4*, 71. Heda Jason, “The Story of David and Goliath: A Folk Epic?” *Biblica* 60 (1979): 38-39, points out that the instances of parallelism in 1 Sm 17 probably betray a *Vorlage* based on oral poetry; her work adopts the methodology employed by Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960). – Levstik was genuinely interested in oral poetry; reviewing Cegnar’s *Pegam and Lambergar*, he even mentions a concept which A. B. Lord would later term the *oral formula*: “Homer and the Serbs sometimes do <repeat their verses>, but only because they can neither write nor read; and the people who composed the Odyssey and Iliad certainly could not either; in order to avoid memorising, they keep singing things which they have sung earlier, with the very same words.” Slodnjak, *ZD 6*, 30.

²⁰ Anton Slodnjak, ed., *Fran Levstik: Zbrano delo 1* (Ljubljana: DZS, 1948), 149.

²¹ Kmecl, *Fran Levstik*, 34-36.

are much more transparent, an investigation on the abstract plane shows markedly different results. The subsequent analysis is based on the chart by Heda Jason, from which the first two columns in the following table are taken. Jason examined 1 Sm 17 according to the functions in the fairy-tale model devised by Vladimir Propp.²²

Abstract plane	Concrete plane (Bible)	Concrete plane (Krpan)
Villain attacks hero's camp (function 8a)	Philistines (Goliath) attack Israel (1 Sm 17:1-11)	Brdaus appears in Vienna
Hero leaves his home in order to meet villain (11)	David's brothers go to war against Philistines (12-15)	Emperor's men from the whole Empire are not afraid to meet the challenge
Hero does not defeat villain (-18)	David's brothers do not go forth to battle and do not defeat Goliath (-)	All who try are defeated; the giant kills every one of them
Villain attacks hero's camp (8a)	Goliath challenges Israel to battle (16)	Brdaus terrorises Vienna, gentry and common folk, men and women alike
Dispatcher sends hero to the battlefield (9)	Jesse sends David to the battlefield (17-18)	Emperor's messenger calls Krpan to Vienna
Hero leaves his home in order to meet villain (11)	David leaves for the field of battle against Philistines (19-20a)	Krpan comes out of his cottage and gets into the carriage, which speeds off to Vienna
Hero arrives close to villain's quarters (15)	David arrives to the field of battle against Philistines (20b)	Krpan comes to the Emperor's court
Dispatcher announces task to hero (9)	Men of Israel announce to David Saul's offer of his daughter to the victor over Goliath (21-30)	Emperor's messenger tells Krpan that he is the last hope of the Emperor and of Vienna
Hero decides to go forth against villain (10)	David announces to Saul his desire to go out against Goliath (31-32)	Krpan promises the Emperor to give Brdaus such a beating that he'll never trouble Vienna again

²² Jason, "Story of David and Goliath," 42-43. The last three functions analysed by Jason, 16, 23 and 27, are not included in the table since the motif of king's daughter – both in the Bible and in *Martin Krpan* – is slightly more complex than they imply *prima facie*; see below. The functions themselves were proposed by Vladimir J. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968 <1928>), 25-65. Propp's model has its limitations when applied to modern tales; cf. Miran Hladnik, "Kako je ime metodi?" *Slavistična revija* 59, no. 1-2 (2001): 4-5. Propp himself points out this problem in his second chapter, limiting his scope to ATU types 300-749. Both 1 Sm 17 and *Martin Krpan* belong to ATU type 300.

Donor tests the hero (12)	Saul tries to frighten David (33)	Emperor tries to frighten Krpan: Brdaus has been using weapons since boyhood
Hero passes test of donor (13)	David is not frightened and proves his heroism to Saul by a story from his past (34-37)	Krpan tells the Emperor not to worry, since he is not afraid of any weapons the giant might have
Donor gives means of help to hero (14)	Saul offers his arms to David; David takes equipment according to his taste (38-40)	Emperor offers his arms to Krpan; Krpan takes equipment according to his taste
Hero meets villain in battle (16)	David fights with Goliath (41-50)	Krpan fights with Brdaus

There are similarities at the level of detail as well. When the Emperor warns Krpan about Brdaus, who “has been using weapons since boyhood,” his phrase echoes Saul’s warning about Goliath, *hic autem vir bellator ab adulescentia sua* (1 Sm 17:33). Krpan’s reaction to the weapons offered by the Emperor again mirrors David’s choice: they both refuse conventional means as inappropriate and provide for themselves. Moreover, there is nothing supernatural in Krpan’s weapons or in his enemy; despite being “a terrible giant,” Brdaus himself, very much like Goliath, “is perceived as a human being and no deeds beyond normal mortal ability are attributed to him.”²³ Likewise, Krpan possesses no supernatural knowledge that would help him in his struggle. The story of Pegam and Lambergar, for instance, is markedly different in this aspect; apart from his own head, Pegam has two demonic heads to deceive the adversary, and Lambergar can only hope to win because of the advice given to him, inexplicably, by his mother, who has the narrative role of the marvellous helper.

The second part of the story is given somewhat less attention in Jason’s analysis, yet a detailed inspection shows further interesting correspondences. On the field of battle, Brdaus starts laughing at Krpan’s appearance, almost exactly like Goliath: *Cumque inspexisset Philisteus et vidisset David, despexit eum* (1 Sm 17:42). After the giant’s threatening speech, Krpan answers calmly, explaining his reasons for fighting and finally adding: “But I am not going until I have your head.” Again, this is reminiscent of the words of David: *Et percutiam te et auferam caput tuum a te* (1 Sm 17:46). It seems that obeying the tradition of ATU Tale Type 300, where beheading is of crucial importance as the proof of the hero’s mission accomplished, is the only reason for the bloodthirstiness of the otherwise good-natured Krpan that has bothered so many readers.²⁴ When the two clash, it is precisely the unconventionality of Krpan’s weaponry that costs Brdaus his head (cf. 1 Sm 17:49-51). Victorious, Krpan returns to the city and people rush to meet him, shouting praises as David’s countrymen do on his return (1 Sm 18:6-7). This seems to be an explanation for the animosity raging at the court, with the Empress yelling at the

²³ Jason, “Story of David and Goliath,” 50.

²⁴ Cf. Paternu, *Slovenska proza do moderne*, 24.

knights present: “Shame on you gentlemen, too, that you let a farmer do your fighting for you” (cf. 1 Sm 18:8-9). Having been promised the Emperor’s daughter, Krpan – who is himself not eager to marry again – is suddenly denied the wedding: “You ruined my tree, I’m not giving you my daughter.” In a like manner Saul withdraws his marital offer once the danger is averted (1 Sm 18:17-19). Instead, Krpan is offered a different reward, a bizarre assortment of food which is actually a trap to make him an object of mockery. Yet he manages to outmanoeuvre the imperial court, and his problematic reward eventually turns to a valuable asset. In the Bible, Saul denies David his daughter Merab, whom he had previously promised, offering him another daughter, Michal, as a trap that could cost David his life (1 Sm 18:20-25), yet David evades the trap and eventually manages to turn Saul’s offer to his own advantage (1 Sm 18:26-30).

POLITICAL CONTEXTS

Levstik’s silence about his reasons for writing *Martin Krpan* necessitates drawing on further, circumstantial sources. Examples from the reception history of the David and Goliath story might provide some further explanation for his use of the motif.

Not surprisingly, the prevalent reading of the David and Goliath story was political. As early as the sixth century BC, its Hebrew audience understood its message within the context of their opposition to Babylonian hegemony, with Saul as an example of a political leader behaving in a manner not worthy of his title.²⁵ This strand of interpretation was again strengthened in the period of Hellenistic and Roman domination²⁶ and then further developed by the Christian exegetic tradition. Patristic authors often used the story as a case in point in their opposition to undeserving emperors; both Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Athanasius of Alexandria employed it against Julian the Apostate.²⁷

Levstik presents his Krpan as “a huge, powerful man,” to whom moving his mare, “load and all,” is like “moving a chair.” In the Bible, David is described as *robore fortissimus*, “a mighty man of valour” (1 Sm 16:18) who can attack a lion or a bear, strike it and kill it (1 Sm 17:34-35). A well-known case of reception stressing David’s physical presence is Michelangelo’s interpretation in marble, ordered by the city of Florence and immediately nicknamed “il gigante,” even in official documents: one of them, from June 1503, stipulates a public presentation of the newly sculpted masterpiece, *adeo quod possit videri gigas marmoreus ab omnibus volentibus videre*.²⁸ Paradoxically, Michelangelo’s David is a *republican* hero, despite his later royal role in the Bible; the statue was ordered by the Signoria in its struggle against the Medici, so David’s strength and self-confidence represent the power of the Florentines. Interestingly, the statue of David in front of the city hall was to be accompanied by another stalwart republican

²⁵ Stefan Ark Nitsche, *David gegen Goliath: Die Geschichte der Geschichten einer Geschichte; Zur fächerübergreifenden Rezeption einer biblischen Story* (Münster: LIT, 1998), 67-70.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 102-48.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 168-73.

²⁸ Michael Hirst, “Michelangelo in Florence: ‘David’ in 1503 and ‘Hercules’ in 1506,” *The Burlington Magazine* 142 (2000): 487.

champion, Hercules.²⁹ Michelangelo's sketch for this planned statue is still preserved.³⁰ Although the project never materialised, its very idea accentuates David's strength and shows the city's determination to show its *robur*.³¹

Following this tradition, David and Goliath became an exceedingly popular motif in European religious and political struggles of the epoch when the modern idea of nationhood slowly started to evolve. The Bible provided a wealth of precious material for forging and developing new identities. When the provinces of the Netherlands in the sixteenth century rejected Philip II – another Habsburg – as their ruler and started their fight for independence, their wood-engravers flooded Europe with iconographic representations of the Biblical duel between David and Goliath, presenting the people of the Netherlands as the new Israel, mining the Bible for both motivation and legitimacy.³² In a parallel case, a newly built theatre was opened in Prague in 1577, with a drama titled *King Saul* performed in the Czech language. During a period of mounting tension between Bohemian aristocracy and the Habsburg emperor, its powerful message about the ruler who had forfeited his God-given authority was a clear signal to both Vienna and the audience.³³ In the course of events, this small contribution to the erosion of imperial authority was brought to fruition four decades later, when imperial regents were thrown out of the windows of Prague Castle in an event that came to be known as Prague Defenestration, a dramatic thirty-metre fall that was providentially stopped by a pile of manure.

Although historical settings are notoriously difficult to compare, these parallels may also throw some light on the atmosphere in which *Martin Krpan* was written. The revolution of 1848 brought a considerable amount of hope to the Slovenian elite as well as the broader population. Both remained loyal to the Emperor and were widely perceived as such, particularly after Slavic troops actually saved Vienna³⁴ from the revolutionary peril: "Wien ist in den Händen von Windischgrätz, Jellachich und Auersperg," Karl Marx moaned when it was all over, thundering against both "the caterwauling of the Austrian nationalities" in general and "the Slavic party and its hero Jellachich" in particular.³⁵ Yet the anticipated reward for this loyalty never came and Slovenian demands – such as the call for a constitution, for an administrative union of Slovenian lands within the monarchy, and for the equality of the Slovenian and German language in schools and offices – were flatly denied, much to the surprise and chagrin of their proponents. Once the revolution was crushed, the Slovenian ethnic territory remained divided, the use of Slovenian was quite limited and even the constitution was eventually repealed. What followed was a grim decade of absolutist rule and strict censorship. Matija Ma-

²⁹ In fact, another *figura Erculis* was already at the Palazzo Vecchio, sporting a Latin epigram that included the line *disieci ingratas urbes sevosque tyrannos / oppressi ...* Maria Monica Donato, "Hercules and David in the Early Decoration of the Palazzo Vecchio: Manuscript Evidence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991): 83-84.

³⁰ Hirst, "Michelangelo in Florence," 491-92.

³¹ For the broader context see Volker Herzner, "David Florentinus I," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* NF 20 (1978), and "David Florentinus II," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* NF 24 (1982).

³² Nitsche, *David gegen Goliath*, 270-91.

³³ Cf. Heinz Kindermann, *Theatergeschichte Europas*, 10 vols. (Salzburg: O. Müller, 1957-1974), 2.403-04; Nitsche, *David gegen Goliath*, 269; 93.

³⁴ Paternu, *Slovenska proza do moderne*, 25.

³⁵ Karl Marx, "Sieg der Kontrerevolution zu Wien," *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, November 7, 1848.

jar (1809-1892), the *spiritus movens* of Slovenian claims in 1848, soon came to a sad realisation: “One cannot do anything with politics these days,” he wrote in 1851, “we should only observe what is going on – and work hard in literature. Literature is our politics now.”³⁶

Levstik, who was perhaps “the most outstanding representative” of the Slovenian programme from 1848,³⁷ decided to obey this principle. His first version of *Martin Krpan*, which he wisely chose not to publish, laid great stress on Krpan’s conflict with the Habsburg court.³⁸ The first-version Krpan is eventually persecuted by the Emperor and has to flee (cf. 1 Sm 19), barely saving his life by climbing a rope from a guarded tower on the eve of execution (1 Sm 19:11-12). This version would probably never have made it to print. Anton Janežič (1828-1869), the editor of the paper where *Krpan* was published, had already timorously distorted a supposedly dangerous section in Levstik’s previous essay, *Popotovanje iz Litije do Čateža* (Travelling from Litija to Čatež), an innocuous literary programme published earlier in 1858.³⁹ Considering all this, Levstik decided to omit the second part of the story entirely and to smooth over the conflict in the part that he eventually published.

All these findings seem to concur with the prevailing appraisal of *Martin Krpan* as a politically charged narrative.⁴⁰ Parallels between Levstik’s writing and the Biblical story are difficult to ignore and are concordant with the author’s intention; yet whether these parallels are a sign of a deliberate effort remains an entirely different question. After all, Levstik was able to write a poem, unwittingly, after a model he forgot ever having seen;⁴¹ subconsciously echoing a thoroughly familiar story would have been all the easier for him. To quote Josip Stritar in the abovementioned letter: “Authors of genius are characterised by the fact that they give more than they promise, they can do more than they want to.”⁴² In any case, *Martin Krpan* remains radically different from its Biblical archetype; its author’s literary ideal, *ridentem dicere verum*,⁴³ and its intricate abundance of sources and references make this disparity very clear. Like everything else, *Krpan*’s Biblical layer is subject to Levstik’s gentle irony; his unlikely saviour who comes from Holy Trinity is first preaching God’s greatness and then pulling horses by their

³⁶ Peter Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države: Slovenska zgodovina od konca 18. do konca 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2006), 68.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁸ Fran Levstik, “Kerpan z Verha,” in *Fran Levstik: Zbrano delo 4*, ed. Anton Slodnjak (Ljubljana: DZS, 1954).

³⁹ Slodnjak, *ZD 4*, 499.

⁴⁰ Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države*, 70; Hladnik, “Pa začnimo pri Krpanu,” 233-34; Paternu, “Levstikov Martin Krpan med mitom in resničnostjo,” 242; Kmecl, *Fran Levstik*, 85. Bojan Baskar, “Martin Krpan ali habsburški mit kot sodobni slovenski mit,” *Emolog* 18 (2008): 89, ignores the first version of the story and remains sceptical of Krpan’s rebelliousness, pointing to the fact that Krpan remains appreciative of and even loyal towards the Emperor. This detail is justified by both historical and Biblical context. Slovenian demands in 1848 included a “Slovenian kingdom,” but within the Habsburg realm; the Emperor’s legitimacy was never disputed. Similarly, David never questioned Saul’s role as “the Lord’s anointed” (cf. 2 Sm 1).

⁴¹ Levstik admitted that his *Božična* (Christmas poem) looked strangely similar to *Christnacht* by August von Platen-Hallermünde (1796-1835), which he reportedly only discovered after having published his poem. Slodnjak, *ZD 6*, 364-65, doubts this, but believes his sincerity.

⁴² Slodnjak, *ZD 4*, 497.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 498.

tails. Still, a closer look at 1 Sm 17 shows that studies of Bible reception in Slovenian literature, which have recently begun to reappear at the forefront of scholarly interest,⁴⁴ need not fear any lack of material.

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⁴⁴ See for instance Janko Kos, "Recepcija Biblije v slovenski literaturi," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 57 (1997): 151-58; Marija Stanonik, "Svetopisemska motivika v slovenskem leposlovju 19. in 20. stoletja," *Slavistična revija* 51, suppl. (2003): 261-307; Vid Snoj, *Nova zaveza in slovenska literatura* (Ljubljana: ZRC SAZU, 2005).

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SUMMARIES IN SLOVENE – POVZETKI V SLOVENŠČINI

UDK 821.112.2(497.4).09–2 Linhart A.T.
UDK 821.163.6.09–2:821.111.09–2 Shakespeare W.

Mirko Jurak

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE IN SLOVENSKI DRAMATIKI (I) A. T. LINHART: *MISS JENNY LOVE*

Eden izmed pokazateljev univerzalnosti dramskih del Williama Shakespeara je tudi njihov odmev v delih drugih dramatikov. To velja tudi za dramsko delo Antona Tomaža Linharta (1756-1795), čigar tragedija *Miss Jenny Love* nedvomno odraža številne značilnosti iz dram tega angleškega pisca, še zlasti misli, metaforiko in strukturo njegovih tragedij kot so *Macbeth*, *Kralj Lear*, *Hamlet* in *Othello*. Linhart je to dramo napisal v nemščini med svojim bivanjem na Dunaju, konec leta 1779, objavljena pa je bila naslednje leto spomladi v Augsburgu, v Nemčiji. Na Dunaju je Linhart videl ne le uprizoritve različnih predelav Shakespearovih tekstov, temveč tudi uprizoritve originalnih tekstov, ki so mladega Linharta popolnoma "očarale", kot je sam zapisal v enem izmed pisem prijatelju Martinu Kuraltu. V študiji skušam najprej opozoriti na angleške predelave Shakespearovih dram, ki jih slovenski kritiki doslej niso upoštevali. Omenjam tudi vplive nekaterih nemških dram, zlasti Schillerjevih, ki so jih slovenski literarni zgodovinarji že pogosto navajali kot izrazite vplive na to Linhartovo tragedijo. Krajši prikaz Linhartovega življenja in dela naj osvetli njegovo ustvarjalno pot in tudi njegov filozofski odnos do človekovih eksistenčnih in religioznih spoznanj. Linhart je v svoji knjigi "Cvetje s Kranjskega" objavil tudi krajši esej, v katerem je povzel nekatere najbolj pomembne misli iz pesnitve "Esej o človeku", ki jo je napisal angleški pesnik Alexander Pope. Postavljam tudi domnevo o nekaterih tematskih vzporednicah med posameznimi Linhartovimi pesmimi ter njegovo dramo *Miss Jenny Love*. Njeno dogajanje je Linhart postavil v sodobnost in se odvija na Škotskem.

Slovenski kritiki so doslej pogosto primerjali tragedijo *Londonski trgovec*, ki jo je napisal danes malo znani angleški dramatik George Lillo, in Linhartovo tragedijo. Pisec

pričujoče razprave se strinja z nekaterimi dosedanjimi ugotovitvami slovenskih literarnih zgodovinarjev, da je ta tragedija v določeni meri vplivala na Linhartovo dramo, vendar ne v tolikšni meri kot so jo doslej pripisovali temu tekstu. V nadaljevanju so omenjene številne konkretne vzporednice med zgoraj navedenimi Shakespearovimi tragedijami, kot npr. v upodobitvah posameznih likov, v podobnih mislih teh oseb o življenju in smrti, o njihovih etičnih dilemah. Zlasti so očitne vzporednice med Shakesperovo Ofe-lijo in Linhartovo Jenny, med kraljem Klavdijem in Macbethom ter med Linhartovim zločincem lordom Heringtonom in deloma tudi med Jennyjevim očetom Sudderleyem. Več je v Linhartovi drami tudi scen, ki so tematsko in vsebinsko podobne prizorom v Shakespearovih tragedijah. Žal se Linhart ni uspel izogniti pretirani sentimentalnosti in patetičnemu govoru posameznih likov, premajhna je vzročnost in povezanost med preteklimi dejanji posameznikov in sedanostjo, liki so preveč enodimenzionalni in ne dajejo videza realnega življenja. Ob koncu razprave tudi polemično ocenjujem stališča slovenskih književnih zgodovinarjev in kritikov do te Lihartove igre. Njene dramaturške slabosti so bile nedvomno razlog, da je bila *Miss Jenny Love* le redko uprizorjena na slovenskih odrih. Vsekakor pa to delo predstavlja "prvi in težak korak" na Linhartovi poti do njegovih uspešnic, do njegovih v slovensko okolje postavljenih komedij, *Županova Micka* in *Ta veseli dan ali Matiček se ženi*.

UDK 821.111.09–312.4 Walters M.:821.111.09–312.9 Lewis M. G.

Vesna Marinko

GOTSKI ELEMENTI V SODOBNI DETEKTIVKI: PRIMERJAVA MED MATTHEW GREGORY LEWISOM IN MINETTE WALTERS

Matthew Gregory Lewis je leta 1796 napisal enega najbolj šokantnih gotskih romanov. Njegov roman *The Monk* vsebuje vse tipične gotske elemente kot so na primer grad v ruševinah, nasilen podlež 'villain', ženske v težavah, vzdušje strahu in groze ter drugi. Članek analizira in primerja v kakšni meri so gotski elementi 18. stoletja preživeli v sodobni detektivki *The Ice House* (1993), ki jo je napisala Minette Walters in kako so se ti elementi spremenili.

UDK 821.111.09–312.9 Morris W.

Matic Večko

WILLIAM MORRIS IN KRITIČNA UTOPIJA VISOKE FANTAZIJE

Romana Williama Morrisa *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894) in *The Well at the World's End* (1896) veljata za prva primera tipa literature imenovanega "visoka

fantazija". Gre za eno izmed komercialno najbolj uspešnih zvrsti fantazijske literature. Deli sta analizirani iz perspektive kritičnega utopizma, kot se artikulira skozi posebno estetsko zgradbo, ki jo vzpostavita romana in je postala značilna za zvrst visoke fantazije. Pisec članka predlaga, da je morda prav ta kompleks estetske strukture in pripadajočega utopičnega impulza eden izmed pomembnih dejavnikov pri trajni popularnosti visoke fantazije.

UDK 81'255.4:821.111(73).03=163.6 Cooper J. F.

Darja Mazi – Leskovar

USNJENA NOGAVICA: SLOVENSKI PREVODI V 20. STOLETJU

Pričujoča študija prikaže prevode knjižne serije *Usnjena nogavica* ameriškega pisatelja Jamesa Fenimora Cooperja, ki so v dvajsetem stoletju izšli v slovenskem jeziku. Razprava se osredotoča na udomačitvene in potujitvene prevajalske strategije, ki so jih prevajalci uporabili v prevodih romanov, ki so izšli od leta 1926 do 1993. Avtorica prispevka izhaja iz predpostavke, da uporaba navedenih strategij praviloma odraža stopnjo medkulturne sporazumevalne zmožnosti med slovenskim in ameriškim prostorom. Analiza besedil in predvsem opomb, ki so jih prevajalci v tridesetih, šestdesetih in devetdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja vključili v prevode v želji, da bi literarno besedilo čimbolj približali slovenskemu bralcu, dokazuje, da je medkulturna sporazumevalna zmožnost v šestdesetih letih 20. stoletja omogočila prvo izdajo neskrajšanih prevodov. Prirejene izdaje, ki so izšle v sedemdesetih letih, niso prepričljive, saj so prevodi nemških priredb, izdaje v devetdesetih letih pa se ponatisi prevodov iz šestdesetih let. Prispevek v zaključku opozori na možnosti, ki jih za poživitev zanimanja za Cooperjevo uspešnico nudijo nove tehnologije in netiskani mediji.

UDK 81'255.4:821.111.03–313.1=163.6 Spiegelman A.

Jerneja Petrič

STRIP KOT KNJIŽEVNOST: ARTA SPIEGELMANA MAUS V SLOVENŠČINI

Strip se je v Sloveniji prvič pojavil leta 1927 (Sitar 9) in bil, tako kot drugod po svetu, uvrščen med manj resno, zabavno branje. Šele v novejšem času se s pojavom romana v stripu ta žanr približa resni književnosti. Poleg obilice izvirnih stripovskih del smo Slovenci dobili tudi prevod s Pulitzerjevo nagrado ovenčanega dela Američana Arta Spiegelmana s konca osemdesetih in začetka devetdesetih let, *MAUS I* in *MAUS II*. Gre za ambiciozen projekt, s katerim je avtor želel ovekovečiti trpljenje svojih poljsko-židovskih staršev med drugo svetovno vojno in posredno, preko njune zgodbe,

postaviti spomenik vsem žrtvam holokavsta. Slovenski prevod je izšel dvakrat, prvič leta 2003, drugič pa v neke vrste ponatisu leta 2006. Delo je prevedel Oto Luthar, razlika med prvo in drugo slovensko izdajo pa je v tem, da je besedilo v izdaji iz leta 2003 tiskano, v ponovni izdaji leta 2006 pa ročno napisano. Študija obravnava izdajo iz leta 2003 s stališča nedeljivosti risbe in besedila v stripu (Eisner, McCloud). Ugotavlja, da je odločitev izdajateljev prve slovenske izdaje Spiegelmanovega grafičnega romana prikrajšala bralca-gledalca za celovit estetski užitek in predvsem zreducirala močan čustveni naboj, ki ga premore izvirnik. K temu je deloma pripomogla tudi odločitev prevajalca, da junakovo poljsko-židovsko obarvano angleščino prevede v knjižno slovenščino in s tem odvzame besedilu dobršen del njegove sočnosti. Zato ne preseneča ponovna izdaja leta 2006 z ročno napisanimi črkami in Spiegelmanovim imenom med v kolofonu navedenimi pisci besedila.

UDK 821.111(94:=99).09–1 Taylor A.

Danica Čerče

“MAKIN IT RIGHT” S POEZIJO ALFA TAYLORJA

Izhajajoč iz trditve, da avstralska staroselska poezija ni samo družbeno in politično angažirana, ampak tudi osebno izpovedna, avtorica članka podrobno predstavi vrsto pesmi sodobnega avstralskega staroselskega pesnika in pisatelja Alfa Taylorja in opozori na tematsko raznolikost njegovega pesniškega ustvarjanja. Poleg kritičnega opazovanja avstralske socialne in politične scene in smelega razgaljanja njenih napak in krivic, ki jih je pesnik boleče izkusil na lastni koži, Taylorjevo poezijo namreč zaznamujeta tenkočuten pogled v človekove duševne tokove in z njim povezano iskanje medsebojnih čustvenih povezav, kar ji daje pečat individualnosti, pa tudi splošne veljavnosti.

UDK 821.111(73).09–2 Albee E.:792.02(497.4)

Polonca Zalokar

UPRIZORITVE IGER EDWARDA ALBEEJA V SLOVENIJI IN ODZIVI KRITIKOV

Prispevek predstavlja kritiške odmeve štirih del Edwarda Albeeja, ki sodijo v gledališče absurda in ki so bila uprizorjena v slovenskih gledališčih: *Zgodbo o živalskem vrtu*, ki je bila doslej uprizorjena štirikrat, *Ameriški sen* in *Kočljivo ravnovesje*, ki sta bila do sedaj enkrat predstavljena slovenski publiki in Albeejevo najbolj poznano dramsko delo, *Kdo se boji Virginije Woolf*, ki je bilo uprizorjeno kar šestkrat v slovenskih

gledališčih. Avtorica se v nadaljevanju osredinja na podrobnosti uprizoritve vseh štirih dramskih del (pristopi režiserjev, mnenja igralcev, obisk predstav itd.) in s pomočjo kritiških odmevov ter lastnih spoznanj ugotavlja uspešnost predstav ter sprejem Albeejevih del na Slovenskem.

UDK 323.13(94:=96)

Adi Wimmer

AVTONOMNE DOMORODSKE SKUPNOSTI V AVSTRALIJI: KAKO NAJ NAPREDUJEJO, ČE SO OBLEGANE S ŠKANDALI IN KORUPCIJO

Podobno kot v Evropi so se tudi v Avstraliji avtonomne domorodske skupnosti pogosto omejevale s sintagmo o "plemenitem divjaku". Ena izmed praktičnih posledic takih diskurzov je bila ustanovitev samoupravnih domorodskih skupnosti v osemdesetih letih dvajsetega stoletja, večinoma na Severnem teritoriju. Arhitekt tega načrta je bil visok državni uradnik v administraciji avstralske vlade v Canberri, Nuggett Coombs, ki je bil svetovalec v Whitlamovi in Hawkovi vladi. Njegova ideja je bila, da se dovoli domorodcem takšen stil življenja, kot so ga imeli pred prihodom belcev, ki naj bi jih ščitil pred "slabimi" vplivi. Toda izkazalo se je ravno nasprotno, tako da je levičarsko liberalno soglasje kako naj bi v Avstraliji dali moč domorodski kulturi, prešlo v svoje nasprotje: v degradacijo, alkoholizem in spolno nasilje. To ni samo posledica pasivnosti teh skupnosti, temveč tudi več desetletij trajajoča disfunkcionalnost "belih" sodišč, akademikov in zakonodajalcev.

UDK 821.111(71).09 Gould G.

Jason Blake

POGOSTO SLABO PISANJE PIANISTA GLENNA GOULDA

Glenn Gould je bil poznan predvsem kot pianist. Ljudje so hvalili njegove interpretacije Bacha, tarnali nad njegovim Mozartom ter dvomili v njegove nenavadne poglede na glasbo. Čeprav je bil v prvi vrsti pianist, je Gould menil, da je veliko več kot samo to. Napravil je vrsto radijskih in televizijskih dokumentarnih oddaj z najraznovrstnejšo tematiko – od glasbe do življenja na severu Kanade. Samega sebe je imel samo delno za pianista, saj je hrepenel po tem, da bi bil priznan tudi kot pisatelj. Po krajši predstavitvi Glenna Goulda kot kanadske kulturne ikone, se pričujoča študija posveča manj znanim delom njegovega opusa, pri čemer izpostavlja nekatere stilistične pomanjkljivosti Gouldovega pisanja in slednjič zastavlja vprašanje: »La zakaj bi se trudili in ga brali?«

Maria Bryk

ARNO GEIGERJEV *ES GEHT UNS GUT* IZ VIDIKA SODOBNEGA
DRUŽINSKEGA IN GENERACIJSKEGA ROMANA

Besedilo poskuša predstaviti stalno bolj priljubljeni žanr – družinski in generacijski roman – na primer priznanega dela Arno Geigerja *Es geht uns gut* (2005). Naloga zastavlja vprašanje, zakaj je ta literarni žanr dandanes tako aktualen. Eden izmed možnih odgovorov je dejstvo, da družinski in generacijski roman odlikuje velika vsestranskost, univerzalnost in povezovanje različnih tako tradicionalnih kot tudi sodobnih imen.

Družinski in generacijski konflikti predstavljajo glavni motiv žanra, ki je pogosto, kot pri Geigerju, tesno povezan z drugo pomembno temo, kot je obračun z zgodovino – v primeru nemških romanov predvsem z nacizmom. *Es geht uns gut* ne skuša pri tem pokazati na objektivni način »zgodovinske resnice«, ampak predstavlja preteklost kot je »prisvojena«, shranjena in posredovana v »družinskem spominu« z njegovo tendenco do izpodrivanja in nevtralizacije negativnih dogodkov. Veliko pozornosti posveča Geiger tematizaciji družabnih sprememb, predvsem na primeru borbe protagonistk romana za izboljšanje njihovega položaja v krogu najbližje družine in družbe. Besedilo proučuje tudi tradicionalen motiv žanra – vzpon in propad družine.

Es geht uns gut predstavlja zanimiv primer sodobnega družinskega in generacijskega romana, ker se navezuje na tradicijo žanra, sprejema tipične motive in se hkrati z njihovo bolj sodobno realizacijo.

UDK 821.131.1.09–312.9 Landolfi T.

Patrizia Farinelli

THOMMASO LANDOLFI: *JESENSKA POVEST*

Nekatere značilnosti fantastične pripovedi 19. stoletja v Landolfijevi *Jesenski povesti* ne pomenijo, da je treba slednjo uvrstiti v to literarno zvrst. V njej, kakor tudi v drugih delih tega avtorja, retorični in diskurzivni postopki, na primer fikcijska konvencija ali zvrstno prepletanje, namreč radikalno potvorijo elemente, ki omogočajo prepoznavanje in določanje fantastično pripovednega koda, katerega značilnosti je kritika (Todorov) na osnovi korpusa iz 19. stoletja, ko je bila ta zvrst na vrhuncu, definirala v drugi polovici 20. stoletja. Sicer ključna dvoumnost kot posledica z logiko okoliščin nerazložljive situacije, se pri Landolfiju umakne z ravni zgodbe, še boljše, za subjekt fantastični dogodek ni več epistemološki izziv. Dvoumnost postane stvar govora, ki v skladu z Landolfijevo poetiko kaže na nezanesljivost – jezika.

Melani Mamut

ACHILLE CAMPANILE

Achille Campanile (1899-1977) je bil italijanski humorist, ki je pisal za gledališče, poleg iger tudi skeče in gege, vendar tudi romane in literarne kritike za razne revije in časopise. Imel je smisel za nesmiselno in iz tega paradoksa izvira absurdnost njegovih del, kjer prevladujejo besedne igre in dvojni pomeni, zaradi katerih prihaja do napačnega razumevanja. Najplodnejše obdobje njegovega ustvarjanja je bilo med leti 1924-1935, sledi pa mu obdobje ustvarjalnega zatišja, katerega razlog je morda nezadostno zanimanje občinstva, to pa je avtorja potisnilo na obrobje kulturnega dogajanja, kjer je ostal vse do smrti.

UDK 81'255.4:821.133.1-1 Vian B.

Smiljan Kundert

(NE)PREVEDLJIVOST PESNIŠKEGA JEZIKA BORISA VIANA

V okviru pričujoče študije avtorja usmerja predvsem spoznanje, da je bistvo prevajanja in njegova imanenca možna zgolj v okviru teorij, ki združujejo nauk o jeziku z literarno izkušnjo. Na osnovi prevoda pesmi "Pesem" Borisa Viana, ki je tokrat prvič prevedena v slovenščino, si avtor prizadeva ugotoviti ali je pravzaprav možno bolje raztolmačiti težave, ki nastajajo pri prevajanju. Prav ugotovitev, da prevodi prav tako kot literarna dela spadajo v "inštitucijo" literature, avtorja prisili, da se vpraša, ali je pesem «Pesem» Borisa Viana (ne)prevedljiva? Študija po kratkem zgodovinskem in teoretičnem uvodu z induktivno metodo poveže poetične posebnosti "Pesmi", ki se kažejo med samim prevajanjem, z osnovnimi teoretičnimi vprašanji o prevedljivosti. Avtor ob prevajanju predstavlja lastni način razmišljanja o poetičnem diskurzu.

UDK 821.133.1.09-1 Baudelaire C.:821.124'02.09-1

*Marko Marinčič*KLASIČNA PRETEKLOST V BAUDELAIROVEM *LABODU*: DRUGAČEN POGLED

V tretjem predgovoru k *Rožam zla* se Baudelaire presenetljivo sklicuje na Vergilija kot na edini 'vir' za *Laboda*. Kot je bilo večkrat opaženo, je – vsaj kar zadeva naslovni lik – veliko bolj očitna antična referenca Horacij s prikazom pesnika, ki se pri živem telesu preobrazi v laboda (*Carmina* 2.20). Poleg tega »l'homme d'Ovide« bralca

zlahka napoti k Ovidijeви pripovedi o stvarjenju človeka v *Metamorfozah* (1.76–86); Ovidij je tako zgled *e contrario* za degradacijo božanske ptice. V Baudelairovi moderni različici laboda, klasičnega simbola vzvišenosti, je sprva mogoče zaznati ironični odziv na Horacija in Ovidija. Ob bolj poglobljenjem branju pa temeljni ‘negativizem’ Baudelairovega mita o labodu razkrije vez kontinuitete s klasično preteklostjo: Ovidijeva izgnanska usoda se ponudi kot primarna vzporednica k situaciji Andromahe in laboda; Horacijeva labodja metamorfoza pa izgubi platonistični nadih in s svojim pretirano dobesednim, grotesknim realizmom nakaže alternativo tudi v odnosu do platonizirajoče estetke starejših romantikov.

UDK 821.133.1(663:=96).09–312.7 Bâ M.

Florence Gacoïn-Marks

ŽANRSKA HETEROGENOST V ROMANU *DOLGO DOLGO PISMO*
MARIAME BÂ

Avtorica članka poskuša umestiti roman *Dolgo dolgo pismo* senegalske pisateljice Mariame Bâ v tradicijo pisemskega romana. Vsled tega prikazuje žanrsko heterogenost romana, ki ga lahko beremo kot pismo, dnevnik ali osebno-izpovedni roman s prvoosebno pripovedovalko. Različna odstopanja od pisemske oblike, ki bi jih lahko na prvi pogled razumeli kot žanrske nedoslednosti, imajo vsa enak učinek, saj povečajo izrazno-čustveno moč pripovedi. Iz tega sledi, da je Mariama Bâ pisemsko obliko izbrala predvsem zato, ker ta predpostavlja obstoj naslovnika (prejemnika) pripovedi. Prijateljica, na katero je pismo naslovljeno, ima v romanu tri funkcije: pričevalno, posplošitveno in eksemplarično funkcijo. S svojim pričevanjem podkrepi verodostojnost pripovedovalčine pripovedi, z lastno zgodbo omogoča prikazovanje težav afriških žensk nasploh, hkrati pa igra vlogo zgleada, saj se je za razliko od pripovedovalke usodi uprla in je z ločitvijo od moža prekršila tradicijo. Pisemska oblika kot ubeseditiv medsebojne komunikacije torej pripomore v romanu *Dolgo dolgo pismo* k učinkovitejšemu posredovanju ideološkega (feminističnega) sporočila, ki je v osrčju ustvarjanja Mariame Bâ.

UDK 821.163.6.09–323 Levstik V.:27–23:27–243.32

David Movrin

FORTISSIMUS ROBORE: MARTIN KRPAN KOT PRIMER RECEPCIJE
SVETEGA PISMA

Levstikova prelomna povest *Martin Krpan z Vrha* je zaradi svoje odprte strukture v zadnjih 150 letih našla vrsto razlag. Raziskovalci so v boju slovenskega kmeta z

velikanom, ki pride razsajat po Dunaju, našli politično satiro, uresničitev literarnega in jezikovnega programa, literarno parodijo itd. Motiv so iskali predvsem v likih iz ljudskega izročila (Pegam in Lambergar, kraljevič Marko, Peter Klepec, hudi Kljukec, Štempihar, Iol Kotlič, Kanjoš Macedonović). Toda analiza po Proppovem funkcijskem modelu kaže, da se *Martin Krpan* presenetljivo natančno ujema s svetopisemskim motivom Davida in Goljata (1 Sam 17). Recepcija tega motiva je bila že od antike dalje izrazito politično obarvana; posebno zanimivi so novoveški primeri rabe v Firencah, na Nizozemskem in na Češkem. Viri kažejo, da je Levstik zgodbo o Davidu in Goljatu uporabil večkrat in se je do neke mere celo poistovetil z njenim junakom.

