

ACTA NEOPHILOLOGICA

37. 1-2 (2004)

Ljubljana

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RICHARD WRIGHT, TONI MORRISON, AND UNITED STATES BOOK CLUBS

Mark Madigan

Abstract

This essay focuses on the influence of commercial book clubs in the United States. It will examine the country's oldest commercial book club, the Book-of-the-Month Club (BOMC), Oprah's Book Club (OBC), which bears the name of its founder, television personality Oprah Winfrey, and their roles in the careers of two African-American authors, Richard Wright and Toni Morrison.

The BOMC is a privately-owned company and like all such businesses it is meant to earn a financial profit. It was started in 1926 by an advertising executive, Harry Scherman, who envisioned a company that would distribute newly published books, chosen by a panel of literary experts, through the mail. By calling his new enterprise a "club," Scherman wanted to give its "members," as they are known in BOMC terminology, the impression that they were part of a select group of book lovers, rather than mere customers. His strategy worked. The BOMC was an immediate success, claiming more than 60,000 subscribers in its first year. The operating principles were straightforward: members agreed to buy the monthly selection at full price with an option to exchange the book upon inspection for an "alternate" choice. Soon after, readers were asked to buy only four books per year and allowed to substitute the alternate selection before shipping. The books designated as monthly selections and alternate choices were reviewed in the *BOMC News*, a publication edited by Scherman and mailed to subscribers (Lee 30-43). Today, the BOMC operates in much the same way and remains the leader in what has become a crowded field of mail-order book clubs.

When Winfrey started her book club in September 1996, her stated intention was to help "get this country reading again" (Johnson 47). She has become famous as the host of what is known in the U.S. as a television "talk show," which features interviews with celebrities, discussions of social issues, and her book club. Begun in 1986, the "Oprah Winfrey Show" is broadcast for one hour each weekday afternoon. It reaches an audience in excess of 20 million people and has been the number one rated talk show for fifteen consecutive seasons. Winfrey is also an actress, television producer, and magazine publisher. Last year, she was voted the second most admired woman in the United States (with Hillary Rodham Clinton being the first) and a recent *Life* maga-

zine cover story called her the “most powerful woman in America.” Given that she has amassed a fortune from getting people to watch her television program, Winfrey’s sponsorship of a book club might appear to be ironic. Yet she is an avid reader and a self-professed lover of books.

Oprah’s Book Club differs greatly from the BOMC in its structure and operating methods. It is fashioned after a book discussion group of the kind that has become popular in the U.S. in the last decade. In this model, a group of people chooses a particular book and then gathers at a later date to discuss what they read. The difference between these informal groups and the OBC is that the latter’s “meetings” are broadcast on her television show and facilitated on-line. Oprah’s Book Club functions this way: Winfrey announces her book choice, gives her audience time to read it, and then selects several club “members” who discuss the book with the author on the show. Her next book selection is usually announced at the end of that televised discussion. The club’s website features a plot synopsis of the current selection, reviews written by club members, lists of questions to guide reading group discussions, an archive, and excerpts from previously televised reading groups with the authors participating. Winfrey’s book choices are based on her own tastes and interests; she does not solicit new works from publishers, nor does she have a financial interest in the books she chooses. Worth over half a billion dollars, she is already the world’s wealthiest entertainer.

There can be little argument that she has also emerged as one of the most influential arbiters of literary taste in the United States. The announcement of her book selection has become one of the most anticipated events in the publishing world. Books selected by OBC are guaranteed more than a million sales as a result. Nonetheless, in early 2002, she announced that she was putting the club on hiatus because she felt its purpose had been fulfilled and a number of other similar clubs could continue its mission. A year later, the club resumed operation owing to requests from fans and Winfrey’s persistent desire to promote her favorite books. This time, however, her selections would be limited to older, “classic” titles. Her first choice for the revived club was South African Alan Paton’s 1948 novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*.

In her show business endeavors, Winfrey has demonstrated a desire to not only entertain, but also educate her audience. Her choices for her book club reflect her aesthetic *and* social interests, particularly her support of multicultural education. Winfrey, who is African-American, has made a point of introducing her viewers to writers of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. She has been especially drawn to the work of African-American Nobel Prize-winner Toni Morrison, choosing four of her novels for her club, the largest number by any single author. Winfrey has called Morrison “the greatest living American writer” (Johnson 56). Morrison has referred to Winfrey’s book club as “a revolution” (Johnson 47).

The multicultural selections of Oprah’s Book Club have a precedent. The Book-of-the-Month Club also included literature by culturally diverse writers among its early selections. Most of its choices in its first fifteen years were written by white American men and women about white American men and women. However, one member of the Club’s five person Committee of Selection responsible for choosing the book-of-the-month, was especially interested in diversifying its choices. That per-

son was Dorothy Canfield Fisher, a bestselling novelist and prolific author of non-fiction, who was involved in a number of social causes. Her 1921 novel *The Brimming Cup* was the first bestseller to directly address the issue of racial discrimination against African-Americans. In 1951, Eleanor Roosevelt called her one of the ten most influential women in the United States. Fisher, who served on the BOMC Selection Committee from its inception until 1951, believed that white, middle-class Americans—the large majority of the Club’s membership—would do well to read multicultural literature, just as Oprah Winfrey now advocates.

One of the authors Fisher championed early in his career was Richard Wright. His first novel, *Native Son*, was selected as a book-of-the-month upon her strong recommendation in 1940. At that time, the 32 year-old African-American Wright was struggling financially and had published just one book, a collection of short stories entitled *Uncle Tom’s Children* in 1938. *Native Son* would make him one of the best-known writers in the United States. Five years later, his autobiography, *Black Boy*, was also chosen as a book-of-the-month, with Fisher again arguing convincingly for its selection. Wright published four more novels and several volumes of non-fiction before his death in 1961 and is, by any standard, now considered a major American author. What I will address in the remainder of my paper is the role of the BOMC and OBC in Wright’s and Morrison’s careers respectively. As I aim to show, the two book clubs were responsible for introducing large numbers of new readers to their books. The practices of these clubs have been the subject of some controversy, however, as I will also discuss.

The first BOMC Committee of Selection was composed of five respected literary figures who were offered substantial salaries to read a selection of new books and meet once a month in New York to make their choices. Fisher was regarded as one of the “most influential” members of the committee and its only woman. For her, the BOMC represented more than a promising financial venture or vehicle for self-promotion. It was through the lens of public service that Fisher saw her role on the Selection Committee. With a family background in education and the arts, she was raised to believe that books were vital to the development of healthy individuals and societies. In the BOMC, she saw the possibility of distributing books as efficiently as other goods, and moreover, distributing a product with the potential to counteract the racial and ethnic bigotry she saw around her in the United States.

In Richard Wright’s *Native Son*, Fisher saw a book with the potential to do just that in a compelling fashion. The novel remains one of the most powerful indictments of racism against African-Americans. The importance of the novel’s bestseller status to Wright cannot be overestimated. It gave him confidence and the money necessary to support himself early in his career. What is not often discussed about the crucial position of this book in Wright’s career is the key role the BOMC played in its success. *Native Son*¹ was an unlikely candidate for selection by the club, which had not yet

¹ Arnold Rampersad, editor of *Native Son* in the Library of America series, provides a comprehensive analysis of the BOMC’s involvement with Wright in his introduction to the volume. Wright scholars are indebted to Rampersad for his groundbreaking research and editing. See also Clare Joly’s essay “Richard Wright and the Book-of-the-Month Club,” *Richard Wright Newsletter* 6 (Spring/Summer 1998): 8-11. For a discussion of the BOMC and *Black Boy*, see Janice Thaddeus’s essay “The Metamorphosis of Richard Wright’s *Black Boy*,” *American Literature* 57 (May 1985): 199-214.

chosen a novel by an African American writer. Perhaps the most unlikely Wright supporter was Fisher, whose literary taste was conservative when it came to “rough” language or the graphic depiction of violence. In *Native Son*, the protagonist, Bigger Thomas, is an impoverished, alienated young African-American man living in Chicago’s racially segregated South Side. Early in the novel, he accidentally kills a white woman and then decapitates her corpse in order to dispose of it in a furnace. He later rapes and murders his own girlfriend. Following a citywide manhunt, Bigger is captured and the novel ends with him in a jail cell awaiting execution.

Despite *Native Son*’s violence, Fisher was Wright’s strongest ally at the BOMC, in large part because of her spirited opposition to racial prejudice. Due mainly to her persuasion of her fellow Selection Committee members, *Native Son* was chosen as the book-of-the-month for March 1940. Although Fisher would later write that the Committee had doubted whether *Native Son* would be “at all acceptable” to the American public since there had been “very little crack in the solid crust of prejudice against the Negro” (Starr 89), the book was met with positive reviews and record-breaking sales. The Book-of-the-Month Club played an important part in the novel’s reception. Most obvious was the large number of sales attributable to its designation as a monthly choice. BOMC membership reached 500,000 that year, nearly half of whom regularly bought the book-of-the-month. *Native Son*, published with an introduction by Fisher, sold 200,000 copies in under three weeks and was number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list for several weeks.

Ironically, the selection of *Native Son* as a book-of-the-month served Wright best with the very target of his social criticism: the white middle-class readers who formed the core membership of the BOMC. A quotation from one review of the book attests to the BOMC’s intermediary role: “. . . it is not strange that the publishers, a little alarmed at what they had caught in their net, should have invited Dorothy Canfield to write an introduction preparing the reader for the impact of the novel. . . . What is surprising is that the BOMC dares to send this powerful book to its . . . members” (Reilly 41). Nor did that observation escape Fisher, who wryly noted that potential readers would perceive her introduction as being from “a respectable old lady” (Starr 90). She felt the Committee had taken an attitude of “mild heroism” in choosing the book at the risk of losing subscribers (Starr 90). Considering the volatile subject of the novel, Fisher’s introduction was especially important. She once said that it was the job of the BOMC to hasten the public recognition of a writer who has something to offer and such was true in the case of Richard Wright and *Native Son* (Starr 8-9).

When Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, it marked the first time that an African-American writer had been so honored. While she has published in multiple genres, it is upon her eight novels that her reputation rests. The first, *The Bluest Eye*, was published in 1970; the most recent, *Love*, appeared in October 2003. In the United States, Morrison’s work is not only favored by critics, but also widely read. This is no small achievement for an author whose formally complex fiction addresses difficult issues of race, gender, and class.

What has saved Morrison from joining the ample ranks of critically acclaimed authors of serious fiction with small readerships? In 1998, she offered a partial an-

swer, "I always thought that the best art is the only thing that would attract the largest number of people. . . . The more complex it is, the more resonant it is. That's when the audience is wider, not when you dumb it down!" (*Boston Globe*, 3/10/98, D1,D6) Another reason for her popular success is Oprah Winfrey, who has selected the following Morrison novels for her book club: *Song of Solomon*, which was selected in October 1996; *Paradise*, selected upon publication in January 1998; *The Bluest Eye*, selected in April 2000; and *Sula* selected in April 2002. *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Song of Solomon* were Morrison's first three novels, published in 1970, 1973, and 1977 respectively. Their selections by Winfrey brought them renewed attention and sales twenty to thirty years later. In *Paradise*, Winfrey endorsed what is arguably Morrison's most ambitious and difficult novel. The plot centers on the planned murder of four women by the most prominent citizens of a small Oklahoma town in the 1970s. Reviewers were divided on the issue of whether the novel was up to the same high level as her previous work. The author's lyrical prose was praised, but several critics judged that the plot was overly-complicated and would have benefitted from tighter editing. The imprimatur of OBC undoubtedly accounted for considerable sales of *Paradise* to readers who otherwise would not have purchased such a daunting novel. Finally, Morrison's appearances on Oprah's television show have literally brought her image into the homes of millions of Americans.

Morrison's novel *Love* examines the life of a former owner of an Atlantic seaside resort hotel which catered exclusively to African-Americans in the 1940s and 50s. Among the shortest of Morrison's novels, it is typically complex and populated by a large cast of characters. The large majority of U.S. reviews were laudatory. *Love* was named a BOMC main selection upon publication. Presumably, Winfrey will not select it, given her book club's new focus on established literary classics.

Thus far, I have presented a favorable view of the BOMC and OBC. Before concluding, I want to point out some controversial issues relating to these book clubs as well. In Wright's case, the BOMC not only sold and distributed *Native Son*, but also insisted on shaping its content. Passages from the novel, mainly pertaining to the protagonist Bigger Thomas's sexuality, were cut by the author at the club's request. Sadly, it seems that it was at the time acceptable for an African-American to be portrayed as brutally violent, but not a sexual human being. The Library of America edition of *Native Son*, published in 1991, has restored these deleted passages to reflect Wright's original authorial intention.

Controversy surrounding OBC has focused on the manner in which it markets its selections. Each of Winfrey's choices are published with her club's logo on the cover. Author Jonathan Franzen, whose novel *The Corrections* was selected by Winfrey in September 2001, objected to this practice, saying, "It's an implied endorsement, both for me and for her. The reason I got into this business is because I'm an independent writer, and I [don't] want that corporate logo on my book" (Anft). As I have noted, authors of OBC selections are also expected to appear on her show. Franzen, who was to have been the forty-second novelist to do so, objected to this practice, too, on the grounds that television has had a detrimental effect on American culture. A compromise was reached when his publisher printed a limited number of books without the

OBC logo and Winfrey excused him from the television appearance while retaining the novel as an official selection (Anft).

In the nearly eighty years since their inception, commercial book clubs have proliferated and become more specialized. A recent internet search turned up no fewer than 127 clubs in 20 categories (www.book-clubs.com). In the last decade, electronic media and on-line reading groups have transformed the very concept of the through-the-mail book club established by the BOMC. The BOMC, OBC, and other book clubs like them are positioned at the intersection of American culture and commerce. They are at once commercial enterprises and cultural institutions which can exert significant influence on authors and the reading public. Their roles in the careers of Richard Wright and Toni Morrison underscore a number of literary issues. These include the function of a cultural intermediary in presenting the work of a controversial author, the negotiation of authorial intention and corporate marketing, and the relationship between electronic media, such as television and the internet, and traditional printed books. The importance of these book clubs in the marketplace of American dollars and ideas is undeniable.

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LOUIS ADAMIC AND THE BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH CLUB

Jerneja Petrič

Abstract

To Slovene readers the honoring of Louis Adamic's book *The Native's Return* as the Book-of-the-Month Club selection for February 1934 came as a surprise. This article, however, provides an overview of events and actions that culminated in the decision of the Club's judges in order to show that the whole success story had been carefully planned by Louis Adamic who had put an enormous amount of effort into making his book a bestseller, and succeeded.

Slovene readers knew little if anything about book clubs in the United States until Louis Adamic's work came under scrutiny pending the celebrations at home and in the U.S. to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the author's death in 1981. A dual symposium was organized, in Minneapolis, MN, and in Ljubljana, Slovenia, to honor the man who, between 1920 and 1951, succeeded in placing one of his books on the bestseller charts, winning a Guggenheim Fellowship and an Anisfield Award, and even getting invited to the White House. But the pinnacle of his career was the day his book *The Native's Return* was pronounced the Book-of-the-Month for February 1934.

To begin with, the *Oxford Companion to American Literature* explains American book clubs as follows,

Book clubs select books issued by regular publishers for release to their members, at retail prices or less, and with dividends of extra books. The first U.S. organization, the Book-of-the-Month Club, was founded in 1926 with 4,750 subscribers, and in 1946 had nearly 1,000,000 members. In 20 years it distributed some 70,000,000 volumes, and set the pattern for most book clubs. Its board of judges selects a newly issued book (or a dual selection of two short books) for the members who guarantee to accept four selections a year. Members receive a dividend upon joining, another for every two books purchased, and a monthly literary review /.../ In 1946, at the height of the plan, there were some 25 clubs distributing some 75,000,000 books annually and grossing one-sixth of all U.S. book sales /.../ The effect of these organizations on literary taste has been much discussed" (Hart 89).

A quarter of a century ago, as a young student, I was leafing through Louis Adamic's papers in search of pertinent material for my M.A. thesis on Adamic as a literary critic. I was not particularly interested in Adamic's relationship with the Book-of-the-Month Club at that time. What astonished me most in those days was the simple fact that Adamic apparently knew – it seemed to me — like half of the population of the U.S. personally. Name after name popped up, many of them were mentioned with a casual sort of attitude, many reappeared. Names like Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Henry Seidel Canby or Maurice Hindus. I did not pay much attention to them then but have not forgotten them either. Mark J. Madigan, visiting Fulbright Professor at the English Department of Ljubljana University in spring of 2004 and connoisseur of Dorothy Canfield Fisher's work (see bibliography), revived my interest in half forgotten matters. I returned to investigate Adamic; indeed, a closer inspection of his career and work reveals why the above people were important to him and how they influenced his career. As they were all, in one way or another, connected with the Book-of-the-Month Club, the purpose of my paper will be to explore the nature of Adamic's relationship with them as well as the resulting consequences. I will begin with a minor diversion.

Adamic's fellow immigrant, lifelong admirer and friend Janko N. Rogelj, who had established himself as a Slovene American author, actor, theater director and public personality,¹ dedicated a good number of pages of his then unpublished memoir *Spomini* to his interaction with Adamic. Rogelj was editor of the Slovene language newspaper *Nova Doba* (*New Era*) that announced in January of 1934² the honoring of Adamic through the Book-of-the-Month Club: "The Book-of-the-Month Club, America's largest book club, selected the above-mentioned book as the best out of almost 1,000 books"³ (Rogelj II, 326). Rogelj hastens to add that the board of judges consisting of Henry Seidel Canby, William Allen White, Christopher Morley and Dorothy Canfield Fisher voted unanimously in favor of Adamic's book. The latter will be published on February 1 in 55,000 copies all of which will immediately be sent to the Club members nationwide. Additional 50,000 copies will be printed for sale in bookstores and the publisher plans an English edition as well as translations into Russian, French, Spanish and Czech (*Ibid.*). Later on, on p. 330 of his memoirs, Rogelj confirms the realization of the above plans: Adamic's book did appear in all of the languages mentioned plus additionally in Danish. The English edition was published in the U.S., Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia and South America (!).⁴ Rogelj's article goes on to mention the January, 1934 issue of the *Book-of-the-Month Club News* that contained two important articles: one, written by Henry Seidel Canby⁵ titled "The

¹ More on Rogelj in J. Petrič. "Janko N. Rogelj". *Slovenska izseljenska književnost 2. Severna Amerika*. Janja Žitnik and Helga Glušič, Eds. Ljubljana: Rokus and ZRC SAZU, 1999, 196-201, 437-8.

² Rogelj wrongly dates the paper as December 1934.

³ My translation.

⁴ Adamic's letter to I.F. Lupis Vukić dated February 25, 1934 contains the following: "Rec'd a cable from Stockholm for Swedish rights to my book. That's the ninth translation. Am I dreaming?" (Nacionalna i sveučilišna biblioteka Zagreb)

⁵ Henry Seidel Canby (1870-1961), former Yale professor of literature and editor of *The Saturday Review of Literature*. He published a number of books of literary and social criticism as well as newspaper articles.

Native's Return" and another, written by Maurice Hindus⁶, titled "Louis Adamic". Both articles were translated into Slovene and published by the Slovene language newspaper *Prosveta* in two installments⁷, however, Rogelj deemed it necessary to translate the articles himself "so as to be able to include them in my memoir" (Ibid.).

Canby's article begins on an enthusiastic note: he names the reasons that made him decide in favor of Adamic's book, the main one being the novelty of Adamic's endeavor. According to Canby Adamic was the first immigrant author who returned to his homeland to take a look with new, American eyes. Adamic, Canby says, has described his homeland the way no European nor American has done so far. Canby's laudatory article recommends *The Native's Return* to prospective readers as one of the finest books in its genre. He constantly extols Adamic's power of narration, the richness of topics, the mix of tragedy and comedy, Adamic's humor and his style (334).

Rogelj was right in stating that Canby's article represented a piece of extremely good criticism that added its bit to the overwhelming market success of Adamic's new book. According to Rogelj, his position within the Book-of-the-Month board of judges gave Canby's enthusiastic appraisal very significant weight. Maurice Hindus' in-depth report on Adamic's life and career as well as his very sympathetic portrait of Adamic as a human being⁸ rounded the promotion of Adamic's new book off perfectly. It would be interesting to know whether Dorothy Canfield Fisher touched upon the issue of honoring Adamic's book in her correspondence. *Keeping Fires Night and Day: Selected Letters of Dorothy Canfield Fisher* by Mark J. Madigan contains 189 letters written by Canfield Fisher, however, there are no letters between October 5, 1933⁹ and (presumably) August 1934,¹⁰ which means that the time when the board of judges took its decision concerning Adamic's book is not covered in the book.

On the other hand, Adamic's ties with the Book-of-the-Month Club were strong; he even wrote *The Native's Return* with the purpose of making it the Club's selection. In a letter to Henry Hoyns and Cass Canfield, respectively Chairman of Board and President of Harper and Brothers, dated February 13, 1934, Adamic claims to be absolutely positive his book was selected because it had been written with a clear purpose in mind:

You may not know it, but it so happens that I started to work on the Book-of-the-Month idea more than a year ago, and I am certain the book

⁶ Maurice Gerschon Hindus (1891-1969), Russian born-author, came to the U.S. in 1905, graduated from Colgate and often revisited Russia. Author of non-fiction and fiction as well as criticism. He was a good acquaintance of Louis Adamic if not a friend. In 1961 he visited Slovenia and came to see Rogelj at his birthplace; he also came to see Adamic's brothers.

⁷ No title. *Prosveta*, January 10, 1934, 8. "Kaj pravijo ameriški kritiki o novi Adamičevi knjigi", *Prosveta*, January 17, 1934, 3.

⁸ Relatively little is known about Adamic as a private person. Hindus portrays Adamic as a social person, a good listener who never interrupted the speaker, a very matter-of-fact and dignified man, at times as witty and simple as a Slovene peasant. It did not bother him to live with his mother-in-law. He could eat everything (except cucumbers) and sleep anywhere. He hated barbers, such that Stella, his wife, had to trick him into having a haircut. He loved football, going to the movies, a good book and a long walk in the country.

⁹ Letter to Alfred Harcourt.

¹⁰ Undated letter to Harry and Bernardine K. Sherman.

was selected mainly, if not solely, because I've been working on the thing all this time. Last fall I was nearly 100% sure that the Book-of-the-Month would take it (ask Miss Herdman) (Princeton University Library).¹¹

Adamic and Henry Seidel Canby were personal friends. When he learned that Canby and his wife were planning to go to Europe he gave them a letter of reference for a friend of his, the Croatian Ivo Frano Lupis Vukić.¹² The Canbys were the first in a line of individuals and groups sent by Adamic to see his friend at his home in Split, people like Harry Sherman, President of the Book-of-the-Month Club (sic!) and his wife, New York *Herald Tribune* literary critic Lewis Gannett and wife and others. The Shermans were supposed to visit Lupis Vukić in the summer of 1934 but the visit never took place due to their son's sudden illness.

Adamic's letter introduces the Canbys as good friends of himself and Stella. Dr Canby, the editor-in-chief of the prestigious American literary review *The Saturday Review of Literature* was on his way to an international congress of the P.E.N. club. Adamic suggested a sightseeing plan for their short visit in Split (Ibid.).

The Canbys did meet with Lupis Vukić who showed him Solun, Trogir and Šibenik. Mrs Canby sent a postcard to Adamic to thank him for his mediation (225). In a further letter to Lupis Vukić Adamic mentions a dinner he and Stella had with the Canbys after Adamic's return from his one-year ship to Yugoslavia: "They remember you with deep affection" (Nacionalna i sveučilišna biblioteka Zagreb).

The most interesting among Adamic's letters to Lupis Vukić is the one dated December 19, 1933. It was written in New York to report the most wonderful news to his friend – the Book-of-the-Month Club's selection of his book *The Native's Return* for the month of February 1934. Adamic explained to his friend the consequences of the above decision:

That means that in February this organization will send to its subscribers 55,000 copies of the book. The subscribers are scattered all over the U. S. These 55,000 are apart from the regular sales which will be handled by Harper & Brothers, my publishers. The regular sales are found to be over 20,000, but may go past 50,000. The book will be reviewed in a big way in about 800 of the largest American newspapers and magazines. In other words, next February Yugoslavia will be put on the map so far as the Americans are concerned (Nacionalna i sveučilišna biblioteka Zagreb).

Adamic also informed Lupis Vukić about the forthcoming translations. He believed that his book would prompt 10,000 Americans to visit Yugoslavia in 1934. But he also prophesied that the book would be banned there (as it indeed was). Adamic concluded by asking his friend to spread the above news among the Yugoslav press without naming him as a source. He was well aware how dangerous an openly con-

¹¹ Ramona Herdman was a member of the Harper publicity staff (Christian: Typescript 256).

¹² Lupis Vukić lived in Split on the Dalmatian coast. He had been in the U.S. twice and had published a Croatian language newspaper in Chicago, "had toured North and South America to study life and conditions in Croatian "colonies", and had maintained a strong interest in emigrants since resettling in Split" (Christian: Unpublished typescript 197).

fessed friendship with him might be for Lupis Vukić at the time. He even suggested his friend should publicly renounce their friendship for his own safety. In a P.S. Adamic added it was Dr Canby who took much of the credit for the selection of *The Native's Return* (Christian 238). Adamic's next letter to Lupis Vukić was written on 24th January 1934. Still in New York, Adamic confirmed the receipt of two letters by his friend but confessed he could not remember whether he had replied or not. He complained about having to work day and night and informed his friend to expect a package containing *The Native's Return*. Adamic happily reported excellent sales of the book, 6,000 copies having been sold before the book had even appeared in print, and estimated the sales numbers for 1934 at more than 100,000 (239-240).

The Book-of-the-Month Club selection of *The Native's Return* had a marked impact on Adamic's future as a writer. As soon as the decision was made public, the book and its author were advertised nationwide; after the release on February 1, 1934, the papers were overflowing with reviews. Adamic was all of a sudden snowed under heaps of fan mail and his life took a completely new turn. He was thrilled nevertheless: in the above mentioned letter to Lupis Vukić he mentioned having seen a very positive review written by William Soskin to be published in 12 Randolph Hearst papers on February 1 (Ibid.). He did his best to keep his friend updated. First he sent him the book and then press cuttings on several occasions. He further reported on the book's success:

It's three weeks after publication and the book is in the ninth printing. It's selling over 1,000 copies a day in addition to the 55,000 copies which the Book-of-the-Month distributed. It's liable to reach 100,000 or more. (...) Now I understand that *The Native's Return* is in first place as a non-fiction bestseller. Two novels, one by Sinclair Lewis, are ahead of my book. Note also the big ad which appears today (Sunday) in the New York Herald-Tribune BOOKS section and the New York Times Book Review Section. The ad costs over 700 dollars in the Times for one insertion. It's fantastic (Nacionalna i sveučilišna biblioteka Zagreb).

Although he had obviously planned the whole story very carefully, Adamic was nevertheless caught unawares by the booming success and the amount of work he consequently loaded upon himself so as not to let the golden opportunity slip through his fingers. He immediately made plans and arrangements for the future: lecture tours, newspaper interviews, radio speeches, and a new book about the U.S. — a follow-up to *The Native's Return*... As it happened, *My America, 1928-1938* did not appear right away but in 1938 as it was preceded by the novel *Grandsons* (1935) that, much to Adamic's disappointment, failed to become yet another bestseller. The book's reviews were, according to Adamic, "very interesting" and the sales were "very good"; however, in a letter to Lupis Vukić dated April 11, 1935 he mentions 15,000 sold copies and complains about the inability of American readers to fully comprehend his new book:

A great many of them feel a vague resentment against it, and so they cavil over the form which is somewhat casual and unorthodox for a novel.

Mr. Canby's paper, for instance, dismissed it with a paragraph, which was a surprise to me. I had expected him to be broad enough to get it. We met since then, but avoided speaking of it (Ibid.).

In spite of his disappointment and evidently somewhat cooled relationship with Canby, Adamic tried to put on a brave face assuring his friend that his personal relationship with Canby was not affected. "Canby is a fine fellow, but he is an old-time American, slightly (unconsciously) resentful of us foreigners who dare to tell America where to get off; also, his background is academic and classical" (Ibid.).

Adamic remained in touch with the Canbys, notwithstanding their difference of opinion. He helped organize the Canbys' summer trip of 1935 to the island of Korčula where Lupis Vukić was to host them.

Thanks to the Book-of-the-Month Club Louis Adamic became a celebrity; a whole generation of Americans grew up knowing his name. This seemingly overstated idea was confirmed to me years ago by an American professor; it was also confirmed in black and white by Carey McWilliams, a New York lawyer and author as well as Adamic's long-time friend. In 1935 he published a 100-page booklet *Louis Adamic & Shadow America* that begins with the following words:

With increasing frequency during the last few years, I have been asked: What sort of person is Louis Adamic? In truth, I distinctly remember being asked this question years ago by friends who had merely heard that I knew an interesting chap who worked in the pilot commissioner's office in the harbor of San Pedro, California (McWilliams 7).

McWilliams' account attempts to satisfy the curiosity of people like himself – intellectuals – therefore it is not surprising that he mainly probes Louis Adamic's mind, explains his views, ideas and aspirations as a writer. He writes about a man who " /.../ wasn't a native, [who] could stand apart" (22). Williams further speaks about Adamic as being " /.../ instinctively hostile to typically middle-class concepts" (23). He had "a deep feeling for a free and exciting existence, largely racial in origin" (24),

Interestingly though, McWilliams does not touch upon the Book-of-the-Month episode in Adamic's life. However, a remark in Chapter Three of his book is, to my mind, crucial for our understanding of the gradual decline of Adamic's popularity as a writer:

"With a certain feeling for what is sound, simple and charming, Adamic has slight aesthetic sensitivity. He has an inveterate habit of regarding books as documents (and what he thinks about the arts of painting and music, I know not) /.../ If the human significance of a book touches him, he is almost certain to regard it as a masterpiece" (45).

A little further on, McWilliams adds, "Hence I say that Adamic has some of the instincts of an artist, but that he is not primarily an artist" (47).

Although the publication of *The Native's Return* in 1934 brought about challenges, excitements and rewards (also in financial terms), the euphoria lasted only for a couple of months. Adamic was a very highly strung person who lost no time turning

his numerous ideas into actions: "I was nervous, hectic as the devil most of the time", he writes in *Grandsons* (Adamic in McWilliams 27).

Between January of 1934 and the fall of 1936, he published *The Native's Return*, *Struggle*, *Grandsons*, *Lucas*, *King of the Balucas*, *Cradle of Life*, and a number of articles and reviews. He was a true workaholic who continued publishing until his untimely death in 1951. No other book of his became a selection of any book club in the U.S., but the selection of 1934 remains a unique achievement no other Slovene American could ever repeat.

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LITERARY JOURNALISM: THE INTERSECTION OF LITERATURE AND JOURNALISM

Sonja Merljak Zdovc

Abstract

Literary journalism is a style of newspaper and magazine writing that developed as a reaction against factographic and objective journalism. Rather than answering the informational who, what, when, or where, it depicts moments in time. It has also managed to eschew the formula of newspaper feature writing, with its predictability and clichés. Instead, it appointed the techniques of realistic fiction to portray daily life. The author of this paper attempts to present the genre that belongs at the same time to literature and journalism; it combines the best of both practices in order to give the reader the most vivid and accurate picture of society. The author of this paper also attempts to present literary journalism as it exists in Slovenia.

In 1965, the American novelist Truman Capote published a work entitled *In Cold Blood*. Soon followed Norman Mailer with *Armies of the Night* (1968). Both works raised many eyebrows. Were they literature? Or journalism? Even today people are confused when deciding whether to classify them as fiction or non-fiction. The confusion stems already from the subtitles that both authors used. Truman Capote named his work a non-fiction novel; Norman Mailer wrote that *Armies of the Night* was History as a Novel, the Novel as History.

Because *In Cold Blood*, a story about a murder of a prominent farmer's family in Kansas, had been written by a novelist, many critics placed it in fiction. On the other hand, in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., it can be found among non-fiction. American critic John Hollowell, for example, who claimed that in the sixties it became almost impossible to draw a division line between pure literature and pure journalism, said that *In Cold Blood* belongs to literature. Why? Because it is a result of the author's imagination. The author of this paper agrees with him only in the sense that non-fiction belongs to literature, too. But *In Cold Blood* is a work that is based on years of research and as such it is clearly a work that belongs to literary journalism, a genre that lies between literature and journalism and combines the best of both fields: the writing style of literature and the veracity of journalism.

Why is it important to combine both of the two? Because real life is even more interesting and fascinating than fiction; besides, readers like to read about reality. A good piece of writing can also more easily explain even the most complicated things,

topics and events to the readers. Literary journalism articles and books explain science, technology, politics and business. But most important of all, they also speak about contemporary everyday life which would otherwise not be recorded for future generations.

Hollowell compared Capote's *In Cold Blood* with *An American Tragedy* by Theodore Dreiser, and here he clearly made a mistake. Whereas on one side Dreiser based his novel on a newspaper article, Capote on the other side talked to people he described in his work and wrote it as he would have written a journalistic piece. Clearly, he obeyed the main rule of literary journalism which is to write literature which is true. Even though some critics argue that Capote could not capture the dialogue he wrote in such a detail, therefore concluding that he made it up, most of literary journalism theorists agree that *In Cold Blood* is an excellent example of what literary journalism is: a true story that reads like a novel. Nothing is made up, nothing is a result of the writer's imagination.

What exactly happened in the sixties? Why did such a prominent young novelist turned to something that was at the time regarded as the lowest form in the writing hierarchy – journalism? Why, soon after Capote, did other follow in his footsteps? And why did they both claim that they discovered a new genre?

In the sixties, American authors realized that in a traditional way they could not adequately react to the contemporary social phenomena. Philip Roth expressed the frustration of many novelists of his generation in a 1961 article: »The American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality ...« (Hollowell 1977: 5).

It is because of that feeling that many novelists decided to write in a genre that Tom Wolfe later in his anthology called New Journalism. After Capote and Mailer, there followed another writer: Joan Didion wrote *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* in 1968. At about the same time Hunter S. Thompson published *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang* (1967), and Tom Wolfe, the pioneer of New Journalism, as literary journalism was known in the sixties and seventies, was already famous because of his collection of articles *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (1965). Literary journalism was one of the two creative responses to the feeling that many writers of the time shared. Namely, that American society, with its hippy culture, Vietnam war divisiveness, race riots, sexual revolution and drugs, was changing so fast, it was hard to keep up with it.

The rise of literary journalism does not mean that at the time important novelists did not write about contemporary reality. In fact, many of them, including Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth, and William Styron, wrote novels that were revealing the dilemmas the contemporary man faced; but they were mainly focused on the middle class. At the same time, especially younger novelists did not want to continue with the old patterns of writing. For them social realism was an outdated literary form in which they could not express the social reality. For them the era of the novel as a literary genre had ended. They began experimenting with different forms. Some of them started writing surrealistic novels, and others became fabulists, as the American critic John Hellmann named them.

But many, as I mentioned, turned into literary journalism as the best way to portray the contemporary society. They started describing the world around them as they saw it. Literary journalism thus took over the role the Novel had in the nineteenth century. Its authors were bringing the news from the contemporary world to their readers. At the same time some journalists also realized that the rules, formulas and constraints of the inverted pyramid made it impossible for them to deal with contemporary subjects. The events that might have been overlooked by the so-called objective or traditional journalists became the focal points of their writing. Literary journalism allowed them to give their readers an insight into the reality, life, or human behaviour of Americans in the sixties and seventies. And, because the works of literary journalists were esthetically, culturally and politically important, they changed both – American literature and American journalism.

Literary journalism, however, was not in fact born in the sixties. Truman Capote was wrong when he claimed that he discovered a new genre. Roots of literary journalism lie in the works of such distinguished writers as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane and Ernest Hemingway. Still, the author of this paper agrees with those scholars of literary journalism who think that *In Cold Blood* might be the first accomplished piece of writing in the genre. Tom Wolfe, for example, explained in his anthology that he did not consider any of the aforementioned writers as literary journalists. They used some of the techniques of literary journalism, but they remained »not half-bad candidates« (1973: 45).

How did literary journalism evolve? According to critic Thomas B. Connery the first wave of literary journalistic writing appeared in the late nineteenth century when such articles were published in large amounts in American newspapers and magazines for the first time. Literary journalists were writing about themes that could not be presented in traditional articles. They wrote about life in city slums (Jacob Riis, *How The Other Half Lives*, 1890) and through these articles they were able to explain why there were increasingly more people moving into the cities and how they ended up living there. If they had chosen traditional journalism, they would have been able to give the readers just the facts. Literary journalists of the first wave tried to answer readers' questions, but they also raised new ones.

The second wave followed in the thirties when the literary journalism mainly appeared in magazines and books. One of the most important works that appeared then was *Let Us Now Praise the Famous Men* by James Agee. In the forties and fifties literary journalism was kept alive by Joseph Mitchell, A. J. Liebling and other writers for the *New Yorker* magazine. Only in the sixties and seventies has it spread to other magazines, such as *Esquire*, *Village Voice* and *Harper's*. New Journalism, as it was called then, was in fact the most important and significant part of literary journalism. Then, for the first time, a large number of [literary journalism] articles appeared, and was critically accepted.

Literary journalists wrote about true events. They were not making anything up; they were only describing life as they saw it. In this way they managed to fulfill the role of the nineteenth century novelist who was bringing news to his readers. At the same time they were able to portray society more thoroughly to all the readers of the

newspapers and magazines who were not satisfied with objective reporting which remained on the surface of the contemporary events.

The difference between them and traditional journalists was that they were not only interested in newsworthy events. They started to write also about things that would never have made it to the newspaper, things that were not considered newsworthy: things such as people and their every day life. With the literary elements they gave people and events a lasting meaning. John Hellmann said that literary journalists had in common the subject that was based on facts and an aesthetic form and function. According to him, the aesthetics was not a result of the techniques they used but of an artistic approach to the subject (1981: 25).

Let us take Truman Capote for an example; he did not only present a criminal act of two people, he also revealed the state of mind of Midwest America in the sixties. And Norman Mailer was not only writing about the march to the Pentagon, but also about the anti-war movement that was getting prominence at the time. In *Dispatches* (1978), Michael Herr described not only single events from Vietnam war, but also its effects on people. In *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, Joan Didion was trying to portray California in the sixties, with its hippies and searchers for the American dream who got lost on the way. And Tom Wolfe was interested in lower class people trying to build themselves monuments with their own status symbols.

Truman Capote is perhaps the most world-renowned writer of literary journalism; one only needs to mention *In Cold Blood* to tell what he has in mind when one speaks about literary journalism. But Tom Wolfe is probably the single most important theorist and author of New Journalism. He wrote articles, non-fiction novels and even essays on New Journalism. His most important works are: *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (1965), *The Pump House Gang* (1968), *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1969), *Radical Chic & Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers* (1970), *The New Journalism: With An Anthology* (1973), *Mauve Gloves & Madmen, Clutter & Vine* (1976), *The Right Stuff* (1979).

He mentioned in his anthology *New Journalism* that for many of the journalists of the sixties becoming a novelist was the main objective. They were writing articles only to pay the rent, get to know the world and master the writing style (1973: 9). Tom Wolfe became a novelist in the late 1980s when he published his first novel *Bonfire of Vanities* (1987). Later followed his second novel, *A Man in Full* (1998). Nevertheless, his most important contributions to American literature and journalism are his »New Journalism« pieces.

Tom Wolfe defined literary journalism as reporting that read like fiction. He described it as »intense« and »detailed« reporting presented with »techniques usually associated with novels and short stories« (Wolfe 1973: 15). According to him, four techniques were commonly used by the new journalists: i. scene-by-scene construction, or depicting people in dramatic scenes as in traditional storytelling; ii. complete dialogue as recorded and remembered rather than journalism's selective quotations; iii. varying the point of view, and even using third person point of view; and iv. status details or the habits, mannerisms, gestures, and so on that distinguish people, societies, and subcultures (31-33).

Tom Wolfe was a master of words. He was the first journalist to use techniques that were previously reserved only for literature. Although American journalist Gay Talese might be considered as the first author to start regularly writing literary journalism early in the sixties, Tom Wolfe was the one who brought genre to its most extreme. If Gay Talese is on the journalistic side of literary journalism, Tom Wolfe is certainly on the literary, given his use of onomatopoeia, italics, stream-of-consciousness and other literary techniques.

Why was it so useful for Tom Wolfe to use literary techniques? Because the subjective kind of writing which was the result of that could bridge the gap between the event and the reader. The reader would not have connected so much with something he knew it was not true and he would also not feel empathy for something that was presented to him in a very factographic way. Tom Wolfe managed to catch the interest of his readers because he wrote so well. The reader would otherwise probably not have been interested in many of his topics (i.e. custom-made cars in California or the life of female prisoners in a New York prison).

Though literary journalism is not the prevalent form of literary or journalistic writing today, by the end of the twentieth century it had been accepted in the mainstream media. It is very expensive to write in this style, but regardless it can be found in many newspapers and magazines, particularly *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The St. Petersburg Times*, and *The Oregonian*, as well as *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *The Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone*.

In America, publishers are increasingly aware that in the 1990s literary journalism was the only true journalistic »antidote« among the many remedies (e. g., more celebrity and sports reportage, colour printing, fuller TV schedules) to be applied to such widespread current business problems as declining or stagnant circulation and aging readership. As Mark Kramer wrote in his article, it alone moved newspapers toward deeper coverage, toward fulfillment of the civic mission that distinguishes the worthy profession (Kramer 2000). Some scholars even argue that literary journalism could also narrow the gap between journalists and those readers who see them only as vultures. Why? Because this kind of journalism connects writers not only with the mind of their readers but also with their heart. Today, many American writers turn to literary journalism when they write book-length work about contemporary society because they know that readers will be more likely to read it if it reads like a novel and not like a dry documentary.

What can be said about literary journalism in Slovenia? A kind of journalistic writing that could be associated with literary journalism appeared approximately at the same time as New Journalism in the United States. Nevertheless, the occurrence of the new style is not related to the American New Journalism. Slovene journalists were not very familiar with what was going on overseas; one of the reasons was that they were not so fluent in English. The new style of writing appeared mainly for political reasons: Since journalists could not openly state their opinion of the political system, they wrapped it up in a feature story that had elements of short stories from the era of social realism. When painting the picture of poverty, they actually criticized the socialist authorities. Many of the literary elements were used only to add colour to the articles.

The author of this paper found only two pieces of journalistic writing that could be compared with Tom Wolfe's rules for New Journalism: one, »Adria Foxtrot Charlie«, has been published in the weekly *Tovariš*, the other, *Macesen*, is a non-fiction novel. Because my research was focused on the year 1965, I cannot discount the possibility that more writing in the style was published later.

In the contemporary Slovene media only a few literary journalism articles can be found. The story-like or narrative kind of writing is not appreciated; even newspaper feature writing is less and less frequently published. One of the possible reasons could be that literary journalism requires time and money, and the Slovene writers lack both. Perhaps in the future, editorial interest in literary journalism will stimulate journalists to use it more. But first, the editors will have to realize that readers like stories about people and that literary journalism is very useful in conveying more complex information on personalities and society in general. Slovene writers, on the other hand, will also need to understand that readers like stories about real people, and start to write them. Then, perhaps, they will be able to attract even more interest.

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Note: the article is based on the author's Ph.D. thesis which was supervised by Professor Jerneja Petrič.

SELECTED AMERICAN AND SLOVENE CRITICAL RESPONSES TO THE WORK OF EMILY DICKINSON

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Abstract

Emily Dickinson, deemed one of the greatest and most prolific American woman poets, published only a handful of poems during her lifetime. Since its posthumous discovery, however, her opus has aroused innumerable critical debates, which mainly fall into the following three categories: psycho-biographical, strictly analytical and feminist. On the contrary, Slovenes have still not yet fully discovered all Dickinson has to offer. In addition to providing a short overview of American criticism on Emily Dickinson, the author of this article attempts to suggest some potential reasons as to why this is so, largely by drawing a comparison with the Slovene woman poet Svetlana Makarovič, who bears a striking resemblance to Dickinson.

Emily Dickinson was born in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts. She studied at Amherst College and Amherst Academy, both of which affected the intellectual tone of the town, and at 16 she entered Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, where young women made active use of the years before entering into a marriage. Dickinson, however, opted not to walk down the aisle, although her relationships with men have never ceased to pique people's interest. What is more, her close affective ties with Susan Huntington Gilbert, her sister-in-law, have repeatedly been brought to attention by scholars and biographers. For a number of possible reasons – either because the then public was still reluctant to appreciate her unconventional poetry, or because she was discouraged by her would-be mentor, Thomas W. Higginson, who praised her “wholly original and profound insight into nature and life” (Higginson 417) but criticized her ‘ungrammatical’ forms – Dickinson never craved public recognition. After 1860, she gradually withdrew from the world, devoting all her time to poetry and her rose garden. She died in 1886.

While her relatives were for the most part aware she wrote poems, everyone was confounded by their quantity (1775); some of the poems were soon published by Mabel Loomis Todd and Th. W. Higginson (*Poems by Emily Dickinson*, 1890; *Poems: Second Series*, 1891; *Poems: Third Series*, 1896, Todd and Higginson), but it was not until 1955 that Thomas H. Johnson edited and published all of them (*The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Johnson 1955). In 1958, her rich private correspondence, the other aspect of her self-expression, was published (*The Letters of Emily Dickinson*, eds.

Johnson and Ward 1958). In the past, correspondence was obviously essential for communication, but for Dickinson, who does not appear to have kept any other form of a personal record, this was also a way of developing skills to put her own sensibility into practice, thus blurring the line between a personal letter and a poem (Salska 8-9). Although her first letter to Higginson demonstrates excessive self-control and shrewdness (15), it is also incredibly personal and marks a start of their professional as well as amicable relationship. To put it differently, because she believed a poem is an intimate message, she concluded that her friendship with the critic would aptly replace professional acknowledgement.

Nineteenth-century Amherst was changing rapidly; with the Calvinistic belief in predestination inevitably leading to religious apathy and the Church failing to keep its influence, the Transcendental concept of self-reliance became more acceptable. Emily, the only Dickinson who did not join the Congregational Church, regularly attended sermons and was well-acquainted with the Bible. Despite her Puritan mentality (preoccupation with death, the belief in self-denial), she could also identify with Transcendental views on authority, self-reliance, individuality and intuition, and the absoluteness of the Soul. The rapid increase in the country's wealth after 1848 (the high tide of the Romantic Movement in Germany and France) was conducive to the production of literature; New England had a long literary tradition since institutions, like the church, the school and the local newspaper, were well-established there. The cultivation of poetry was an inevitable by-product of early 18th century literary education; nonetheless, a woman was not supposed to turn her literary engagements into a career – they were supposed to merely serve as a diversion.

Since Dickinson, who read several literary magazines of the period (e.g. *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Springfield Republican*), disagreed with the contemporary American literature of ideology and was unable to relate to it or the current social circumstances, she greatly admired the Romantic, Victorian and Metaphysical poets; she also found pleasure in works by Shakespeare and Sir Thomas Browne (*Religio Medici*, 1643). It was Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), however, who applied two important aspects of European Romanticism (the cult of nature, the revival of the past) to American poetry, which developed its own distinctive style after the Civil War from 1865 to 1890. Some of the major American literary works published in the 1850s are: Emerson's essay "Representative Men" (1850), Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851), Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), and Whitman's seminal collection of poems, *Leaves of Grass* (1855).

1. American Critical Responses to Emily Dickinson's Poetry

At first, it was mostly the idiosyncratic Dickinson's style (e.g. punctuation, ambiguity, unusual syntactic structures) that stirred up severe criticism (e.g. *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, 1947). Having lost sight of the relationship between literature and life, a great number of the Southern critics (e.g. R. P. Blackmur and others) doggedly persisted in detailed research of her poetic technique (esp. language and imagery). After 1931, however, the attitude changed considerably and it

now seems that the analysis of Emily Dickinson's work is crucial to understand the late-19th- and the-early-20th-century American culture and literature. Gay Wilson Allen, for instance, regards her technique as a link between Emerson and the modern free verse movement; he claims her rhythm is "surprisingly original for the epigrammatic diction and thought" (Allen 179-80) and cautions against laying too much stress on 'the irregularities', sustaining that printed versions seldom correspond to Dickinson's drafts¹. Therefore, it hardly comes as a surprise that in some subsequent surveys (e.g. *American Literature: A Complete Survey*, 1962) Dickinson is treated as one of the major American authors of the late 19th-century literature:

She wrote a verse that, in its spirit and technique, belongs more to the 20th than to the 19th century [...] Emily Dickinson was a poetess, far in advance of her times. She contributed to American literature a verse that was unbounded by time or by fashion, a verse that was totally 'free', before the new generations of poets were to declare themselves in revolt against poetic standards of the past. (Smith 109-10)

In *The (Macmillan) Literature of the United States of America* (1988), she is regarded as a forerunner of Modernist poetry:

If by 'modern' is meant a historical period lasting from about 1910 to 1940, Emily Dickinson's withdrawal and her highly individual use of imagery, off-rhyme and unconventional syntax give a foretaste of modernist emphases on impersonality and language. (Walker 116)

Regardless of what has been said thus far, the true value of Dickinson's poems is still not estimated as can be proven by *The Literature of the United States* (1991): while she is recognized as "America's greatest woman poet" (Cunliffe 297), a forerunner of Modernism, Marcus Cunliffe frowns upon her "erratic prosody", "conflicting images" and "abnormal use of the verb"; for this reason, she is "[t]echnically a poor poet, [but] [...] does effective violence to vocabulary" (300).

It is safe to say that in Dickinson's case critics were, for many years (and sometimes still are), far more curious about her life than her work; as she has always been considered a private poet, it was thought that her poems could not be properly interpreted without taking her life into account. It is a common Romantic belief that literature is an expression of the author's individuality and personality, and a critic has to respond to it emotionally; this resulted in a great number of the so-called critical biographies in the early 20th century. To enumerate but two:

- In *Ancestor's Brocades* (1945), Millicent Todd Bingham claims that "[t]he objective factual account of the literary debut of Emily Dickinson is inseparable from the characters and interrelationships of the persons who were closest to it [...]" (Bingham xviii).

- In *This Was a Poet* (1938), George F. Whicher maintains that the analysis of Dickinson's private life would lead to the apprehension of her poetry because the bulk

¹ It is common knowledge that the editors have generally tried to 'correct the irregularities' of her verse and that her handwriting was not particularly legible.

of it was directed at a man she could not marry; the profound grief she suffered over that resulted in fragmentary, ambiguous and incoherent poems (Whicher 1957).

It is certain that particular elements in a work of art can be explained through the author's biography, personal perspective, social status, and name, which evoke certain expectations from the reader; nevertheless, when it comes to identifying the *poet* with the *speaker* of a poem it is essential to be cautious:

Personality is a legitimate interest because it is an incurable interest, but legitimate as a personal only; it will never give up the key to anyone's verse. [...] The effect, which is her poetry, would imply the whole complex of anterior fact, which was the social and religious structure of New England. (Tate 157)

[...]

The poet may hate his age; he may be an outcast [...]; but this world is always there as the background to what he has to say. It is the lens through which he brings nature to focus and control – the clarifying medium that concentrates his personal feeling. (165)

The 1960s brought about a shift in Emily Dickinson criticism. Charles R. Anderson published what is still considered to be one of the most noteworthy studies, *Emily Dickinson's Poetry: A Stairway of Surprise* (1960); the part examining her conception of poetry is particularly intriguing:

Within each group the interrelations of her poems are such that they illuminate one another, the language forming a rich spectrum, the images and ideas radiating out from a central vision.

(Anderson xiii)

Anderson identifies the following distinctive features: (1) *wit* enabled her to achieve the modern artist's alienation from society (11); (2) *language* originated from the Bible (juxtaposition), Shakespeare, and the Metaphysical poets (the reader has to be actively involved in the aesthetic experience by studying the origins of key words), the language of Amherst (regional expressions are contrasted with scientific terminology in the same way modern doubts challenge the tradition and religion of Dickinson's ancestors)²; (3) *Circumference* denotes unlimited radiation from the *Center*, which is

² In *Recycling Language: Emily Dickinson's Religious Wordplay* (1992), Linda Munk draws attention to the manifold connotations of the few symbols we use:

Words are revived by a new relation between words – metaphor, displacement, paradox, wordplay, juxtaposition. [...] Dickinson turned her Calvinist vocabulary back on itself like a uroboros, the snake with its tail in its mouth. This study explores the nature of that transformation.

(Munk 83)

By discovering its etymological roots, the poetic significance of the word may be restored; the language of religion can be made secular again by giving it its pre-Christian meaning. According to Martin Bickman (qtd. in Munk 90), by enhancing Christian symbols with their powerful archetypal meanings Dickinson is able to convey her personal etymology of the Christian myth (e.g. # 1068). On the other hand, she repeatedly makes use of religious puns to question religious decorum; thus in "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church" (# 324) bird songs overpower the pretentious tone of a sermon, which demonstrates that clergymen are uncalled for if one can hear the voice of God without mediators.

an inquiring spirit whose task is to explore the infinite universe; (4) *perception* discloses the external reality of the object but deprives one of its mental equivalent (Locke's philosophy of sensation: the primary qualities of an object are absolute, existing regardless of our perception, and determine its secondary qualities); Dickinson's attitude is modern: she can only know what she perceives, which suggests that the absoluteness of the object is nonexistent (80-92); (5) a keen interest in potential *cosmic anomalies*.

With the emergence of the New Criticism in the early 20th century (T. E. Hulme; T. S. Eliot: "Tradition and the Individual Talent", 1917), psychobiography was reduced to one of its methods. The so-called close reading, aimed at interpreting texts on the basis of the hermeneutic circle and words' connotations and denotations, does not call for any external information. Due to its unconventionality, Dickinson's poetry was once again exposed to severe criticism. The New Criticism paved the way for Jacques Derrida's philosophical theory of Deconstruction, which was also adopted by Paul de Man and partly Harold Bloom in the USA. A variety of subsequent interpretative models has attempted to discover the gist of literary works through their inner contradictions, which originate in antagonisms between the logic of the work and its rhetoric. In Dickinson's case this is perhaps best represented by Clark Griffith's *The Long Shadow* (Griffith 1964) and Alfred Gelpi's *The Mind of the Poet* (Gelpi 1965).

For the most part, *The Long Shadow* is a study of the poet's inner life while basic biographical data only account for certain aspects of her behaviour. The author's concern is more with the milieu (specifically the decline of Transcendentalism); he also insists that isolation was vital in order to liberate Dickinson's talent (Griffith 15). According to Griffith, Dickinson uses "an ironical aesthetic" (57): typically, she introduces a well-thought-out ambiguous image (its vagueness is reinforced by the dash), negates the initial interpretation, arouses mistrust and thus forces the reader to participate. These seemingly naïve child poems (e.g. # 520) are in fact 'unromantic': namely, the Ocean, which constantly seduces and harasses the innocent girl, leads one to believe that Nature is unpredictable, sly, and destructive of anything sacred to man; what at first seems to be innocence is just a disguise for the poet's disdain.

As to the problem of time and transition in Dickinson's work, Griffith's approach is somewhat more philosophical:

For the real problem of the momentous transition lies, precisely, in the metaphysical uncertainties which time and change are constantly occasioning. (87)

It seems as if the aim of change is to prevent the poet from understanding the world and finding stability in it (90). This is clearly related to her attitude to death, which is twofold (e.g. # 712): it can either cause aversion (when she empathizes with the living) or yearning (when she sees through the eyes of the dying).

On the subject of love poems, Griffith (182-83) is under impression that they do not mark Dickinson's literary peak, partly also because she eliminated any direct sexual experience by her self-imposed seclusion. In contrast, Alfred Gelpi (*Emily Dickinson: The Mind of the Poet*, 1965) believes that by becoming a voluntary recluse, she accomplished emotional and spiritual objectivity and independence (Gelpi 110):

So from within the tightening circle – the circle tightening around herself by choice and despite choice [...] – she negotiated with man, God, nature, and language to carry on the business of circumference. (175)

Emily Dickinson devoted more attention to the communication of feelings (Griffith 244-45); to avoid abstraction and sterility, the language she used needed to be concise and, above all, precise, which was later typical of the Symbolist poetry (245). In “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” (# 280), for example, the funeral takes place exclusively in the poet’s mind and thus represents the decay of man’s inner world. Griffith compares the poem to Charles Baudelaire’s *Spleen*, Yeats’s “On a Picture of a Black Centaur by Edmund Dulac” and Eliot’s “Gerontion”.

To sum up, according to Griffith and Gelpi, biography has two notable functions from the critic’s point of view: it may either clarify the artist’s motives to write (Dickinson’s themes suggest poetry helped her to ease the load of her personal anxieties) or enable one to distinguish between the artist’s private distress and the way it is manifested.

With the 1960s coming to an end, various schools of literary criticism emerged, feminist studies being one of them. In the 1970s some of the most prominent (American) feminists (e.g. Gilbert and Gubar) started dealing with Emily Dickinson and the question of the so-called ‘female aesthetics’ (the term ‘gynocritics’ also applies). Their premise is that any kind of writing is determined by the author’s gender; they examine every aspect of female creativity (history, styles, themes, genres, structures, and psychodynamics), which supposedly differs from the male creativity in four modes: biological, linguistic, psychoanalytic and cultural. The representative studies are by Sandra Gubar and Susan Gilbert, Paula Bennett, Camille Paglia, and Betsy Erkkila.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer in the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination*, 1979) take Ellen Moers and Elaine Showalter’s view when they claim that the 19th-century woman writers and poets (e.g. Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath) had both their own literature and culture (Gilbert and Gubar 16-17). Moreover, they defend a well-known Bloom’s standpoint that the so-called ‘strong poets’ (including Dickinson) define the originality of their work against the achievements of their poetic precursors; they rebel against being spoken to by dead men (Lodge 247):

[...] the dynamics of literary history arise from the artist’s ‘anxiety of influence’, his fear that he is not his own creator and that the works of his predecessors, existing before and beyond him, assume essential priority over his own writings. (Gilbert and Gubar 46)

In Dickinson’s case (and woman poetry in general) this is even more transparent since *she* can never become her *male* precursor; it was not only that she felt the “anxiety of authorship”, it was indeed a mental and physical torment she was enduring, a kind of anorexic state. The latter was associated with agoraphobia, the fear of being over-exposed in the literary market (578), which the then patriarchal authority had established control of. In contrast to her fellow woman writers, however, Dickinson

swore her unquestionable loyalty to poetry, which was predominantly a 'male' genre; yet the fact that her poetry was greatly influenced by women's fiction should not be ignored. Next, Gubar and Gilbert recognize the ambiguity concerning the relationship between the female 'I' and the male 'Other' (who can either be an adorable Apollo or a ruthless tyrant) as Dickinson's central enigma. The white she wore almost all her life itself represents several paradoxes as well: the energy of Romantic creativity on one hand and the loneliness it leads to on the other; the divine innocence and glory and the Victorian adoration of a woman's chastity contrasted with the frost of death, the weariness of winter and the infernal terror; by way of white election the poet chose to become an 'unconsecrated' nun, buried alive in her own society.

In her far-reaching study, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1990), Camille Paglia is concerned with the role of gender and eroticism in nature as well as culture, on the subject of which she challenges some of the most extreme feminist theories (Paglia 1-3). With regards to Dickinson, Paglia argues that she wrote "dark, sexual songs of experience" (623), which are characteristic of late-phase Romanticism. The poet has two representational modes: the Sadean ("is the female Sade, and her poems are the prison dreams of a self-incarnated, sadomasochistic imaginalist") and Wordsworthian (usually known as sentimental), both of which are complementary and need to be recognized as such by critics (624). In her opinion, Dickinson's lurid metaphors belong to late-phase Renaissance and her lurid concretization is late-phase Romantic (629): "In her poetry, things become persons and persons things, and all press physically on each other in nature's brutal absolutism." (637) Paglia strongly believes Dickinson has always been underrated and she "still waits for her readers to know her" (673).

In the study *Emily Dickinson: Woman Poet* (1990), Paula Bennett strives for the same aim, that is to say, to make the poet better known with her readership: firstly, Bennett is of an opinion that the boundaries Dickinson had set for herself won her freedom, and the erotic commitment to her sister-in-law was her key life experience since it is only in relationships with women she did not feel inferior (Bennett 154-60): "the struggle for sexual equality was not a battle Dickinson could win" (162). Secondly, she believes that the grammatical 'flaws' are actually a protest against traditional forms and that the multiple variants of individual poems are an essential part of the poetic process (to publish them one alternative would have to be decided upon, which would substantially impoverish their many-levelled meaning³). Betsy Erkkila (*The Wicked Sisters*, Erkkila 1992), however, assumes Dickinson refused to publish because she did not wish to comply with public taste or with the editors; she was convinced her poems were too exceptional to be ruined by the conventions of the period.

In conclusion, as elusive of criticism as Emily Dickinson is, the majority of American studies about her work are actually psychobiographies, and only during the last twenty years has the feminist approach prevailed.

³ In *Emily Dickinson: A Poet's Grammar* (1987) Christanne Miller says that in Dickinson's case the reader has to constantly put an effort in choosing an appropriate word to stabilize the poem, not to mention the fact that the choice has to be continually validated within the context of the poem (qtd. in Bennett 28).

2. Slovene Critical Responses to Emily Dickinson

Whereas an abundance of critical material on Dickinson exists in the USA and Britain, the Slovene situation is quite the reverse: it was not until the mid-1960s that her name began to gain serious attention, and only in the 1980s was a more thorough study conducted by Mart Ogen (a translator, essayist and poet). It is to his credit that at least a few of her poems were published in Slovene (*Emily Dickinson*, Ogen 1988). Even so, with the exception of Slovene literary experts, specialists in (American) poetry, and higher-level grammar-school students, who are familiar with at least one of her poems (# 1510), Dickinson's work remains yet to be discovered. But the case with Slovene woman poets has curiously stayed much the same, and the reasons could likely be of socio-political nature. Namely, in Slovenia and former Yugoslavia, these circumstances have never been favourable to a woman writer (as during Dickinson's lifetime), because the role as a mother and a housewife has been understood as inconsistent with that of an intellectual. Among Slovene woman poets, Svetlana Makarovič bears some striking similarities with Emily Dickinson in her attitude to the literary market and the reader. They also share unique and provocative poetics, which will be discussed later in the article.

Dickinson was virtually unknown in Slovenia prior to 1961 when she was briefly mentioned in the article by Alberto Moravia on contemporary American literature in the fortnightly *Naši razgledi*⁴; in 1966, a notice of Alfred Gelpi's *The Mind of the Poet* was given in the same periodical⁵; in 1968, Jolka Milić mentioned Emily Dickinson in connection to Pavle Zidar's prose work *Marija Magdalena*, the content of which is similar to the lifelong Dickinson's project of fighting "the average woman's life and marriage" (Milić 324).

I have previously noted that in Slovenia Emily Dickinson was not thoroughly studied until the 1980s⁶. In 1988, Mart Ogen published a collection of 96 poems in Slovene, together with a brief analysis and chronology of Dickinson's life and work. Ogen's attitude to this "samonikli, ostri in nadarjeni duh" ('original, penetrating and gifted mind'; Ogen 1987: 90), which helped to revolutionise poetic expression (rhythm, rhyme, metaphor, syntax), is not exactly ground-breaking. He maintains that her vocabulary is no more bizarre than that of Keats or Emerson; what is new, however, is her approach to language in a broader sense (Ogen 1988: 118). In view of this, he interprets words whose meanings have been revived and examines several other idiosyncrasies of individual poems: (1) Circumference (a borderline between life and death); (2) the archaic subjunctive and half-rhymes (which establish and stabilize the relationship between formal and informal language); (3) the dash (denotes a union of

⁴ Moravia, Alberto. "Nič pa amen." *Naši razgledi* 10. 14 (1961): 342.

⁵ "Mala kulturna panorama: Novitete o Emily Dickinson." *Naši razgledi* 15. 24 (1966): 512.

⁶ Interestingly enough, already in 1979 Vatroslav Grill, a Slovene emigrant to the USA, published a translation of six of his favourite poems by Dickinson (# 258, # 288, # 441, # 449, # 1322, # 1409,) in his memoirs *Med dvema svetovoma* (Ljubljana: MK, 1979. 512-17).

⁷ In the same year (1986) an article by Igor Maver was published: "Pesem (Emily Dickinson), ki se je zazrla vase." *Delo, Književni listi*: 10. 7. 1986: 9.

the idea and the individual experience and, at the same time, stands for her artistic effort to find a suitable expression); (4) hymn measure and religious poems (119-20); (5) analogies (always functional); and (6) death, her 'royal subject matter' (127).

After almost a decade, in *Orfejev spev* (Grafenauer 1998; *Orpheus Song*), the anthology of world poetry as selected by several Slovene poets, the Slovene readership was given another, perhaps crucial, opportunity to discover Emily Dickinson. Aleš Debeljak's choice (# 915) is based on those poets who bear witness to the universal core of an individual experience, and he justifies his decision by saying:

Namesto celotnega tradicionalnega kolektiva se nedoseženi sublimnosti torej lahko približa le pesniški vizionar, ki ceno za intimno modrost plačuje s socialno izolacijo, o kateri je – živeč vse svoje življenje stare device v puritanski družinski hiši v še bolj puritanskem Bostonu – Emily Dickinson srhljivo zgledno pričala na ravni danes bržkone že povsem nepredstavljivega biografskega izkustva. Ne bi bilo pretirano trditi, da je prisila zunanje askeze za Emily Dickinson pomenila prvi, četudi ne zadostni pogoj za graditev brezbrežnega mostu do intuitivno upesnjene absolutne vsenavzočnosti, 'ki veže to, kar vidimo / s Prizorom, ki ga ne —'.⁸

(Debeljak in *Orfejev spev* 535-36)

Ivo Svetina (# 290) expects a poet of the world to display not *mimesis* (imitation, reproduction), but outstanding poetic creativity, whilst the meaning of the 'world' has to be met in the sense of time and place. Moreover, such poetry inevitably addresses the question of 'the supreme Being' (Svetina in *Orfejev spev* 355). Dickinson, he concludes, definitely is such a poet:

[...] mrtva sestra hroščev, ki še vedno romajo na njen visoki grič, 'otok sredi trave oskrunjene', njen grob; je tisti glas, ki sredi maše mrtvega boga zakliče: "What once was 'Heaven' is 'Zenith' now!" in takó poezijo zasidra v 'Nadglavišču' in ji s tem podeli mesto samega Nébesa, kjer nikakršen malik ne prebiva, le Duh biva, ki kliče k sebi, vabi, zahteva!⁹

(359)

As for Komelj, he chooses Emily Dickinson (# 67) because she has the power to follow the dying 'into the place across the borderline between life and death' ("v prostor čez mejo med življenjem in smrtjo"); she does not, however, interfere with what only

⁸ The traditional collective subject is thus replaced by an individual poetic visionary, who is the only one to be able to come near the unattained sublime, yet who has to compensate for the intimate wisdom by enduring social isolation. On the level of a personal experience this was eerily exemplified by Emily Dickinson, a spinster who spent her entire life in the Puritan family house in even more Puritan Boston, which is quite inconceivable to modern man. It would not at all be an exaggeration to say that it was the compulsion of the external asceticism which initially (although not exclusively) led Emily Dickinson to build a pierless bridge to the absolute and intuitively portrayed omnipresence, who is 'Supporting what We see / Unto the Scene that We do not —'.

⁹ [...] the dead sister of beetles, which still make pilgrimage up her high hill, 'An Island in dishonored Grass —, her grave; by calling out in the middle of the dead god's mass: "What once was 'Heaven' is 'Zenith' now!" she anchors poetry in the 'Zenith' and entrusts it with the position of Heaven itself, where no deity resides, only the Spirit, who calls to him, invites, demands!

they can say but merely wants to be able to listen to them (Komelj in *Orfejev spev* 633). The anthology ends with short portrayals of the selected poets. The poet Uroš Zupan makes the following attempt to define the literary period Dickinson belongs in:

Za njeno poezijo bi bila verjetno ustrezna oznaka, da gre za globoko občutene intimne pesmi, ki so v veliki meri nagnjene k mistiki. Pisane so v zelo zgoščenih podobah, njihova pomenskost pa je večplastna. Emily Dickinson je predhodnica pesnikov 20. stoletja.¹⁰

(Zupan in *Orfejev spev* 679)

Putting aside the rather unimpressive Slovene contribution to Emily Dickinson criticism, it is nonetheless interesting to look at the points of resemblance between the great American poet and Svetlana Makarovič, a contemporary Slovene woman poet and writer. (i) They both keep away from the public eye, but at the same time occupy a pivotal position in their national literatures. (ii) In his introduction to Makarovič's collection of poems *Pelin žena*, the poet Niko Grafenauer (whose choice of terms – 'tragic', 'ironic', 'grotesque' – again reminds one of Dickinson) draws attention to the ambiguity of meanings in her poetry:

Gre torej za takšen tip poezije, ki je od vsega začetka usmerjen v izrazit lirizem, za katerega pa je značilno, da se ne more nikoli prevesiti v romanticistično samozadostnost, saj je vseskozi opredeljen s spletom tragičnih in ironičnih sestavin, ki pri priči razveljavijo vsakršno tovrstno težnjo, namesto tega pa vnašajo v besedila svojo groteskno razsežnost.¹¹

(iii) Svetlana Makarovič, too, is a 'brave writer'

[...], ki si je upala kljubovati monopolnim državnim institucijam, kakršne so bile npr. državne založbe (in v ta namen skupaj še z nekaterimi avtorji razglasila kulturni molk, ki se ga je nato edina dolga leta tudi dosledno držala) [...]¹² (Borovnik 83)

Perhaps her poetic stance is similar to Dickinson's, especially because in Slovenia, as during Dickinson's lifetime, poetry has always been within the male domain. Therefore, it is not unexpected that Makarovič feels her status to be far from equal to that of male fellow poets, although the quality of her work may not be any poorer:

V poplavi babje poezije skoraj izključno moških pesnikov, ki je preplavljala slovenski kulturni prostor takrat in ga še zdaj, je moja poezija izpadla nekako moško. Do takrat se je ženska poezija obravnavala v smislu

¹⁰ It would probably be best to depict her poetry as deeply felt, personal and much influenced by mysticism. Her poems are brimming with dense imagery and manifold meanings. Emily Dickinson is a precursor to twentieth-century poets.

¹¹ Makarovič, Svetlana. *Pelin žena*. Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1974.

It is the type of poetry unfailingly pointed into the direction of undisguised lyricism, which as a rule never results in the Romantic self-sufficiency owing to its tragic and ironic elements; the latter would instantly negate any such tendency by substituting it with their grotesque dimension.

¹² [...], who dared defy the monopolistic state institutions such as state-supported publishing houses (for this reason she and a few fellow-authors sparked off a protest against cultural politics, but she was the only one among them to stand her ground for many years to come) [...]

nežnejših pesnic, ki pišejo izpovedno poezijo o svojih erotičnih doživetjih, o svojih družinskih odnosih, spominih na mladost in tako naprej. Jaz sem to pač presegla in kot prva dama sem morala nositi tudi posledice. Nosim jih še danes, samo da sem zdaj na to že navajena.¹³

(Makarovič qtd. in Borovnik 88)

Let us briefly examine the position which Slovene woman writers have held in the society for generations. In *Pišejo ženske drugače?* (1995), Silvija Borovnik deals with the so-called 'women's literature' (i.e. literature written by women). In Slovenia such literature emerged as late as the 19th century (e.g. Josipina Turnograjska) and it was not until 1897 that the women's monthly literary paper *Slovenka* was published, stressing the need for equality between the sexes, better education for women and solidarity among them. In the coming years, the socio-political situation was extremely limiting for woman writers: for instance, when in 1947 Mila Kačič tried to publish her first collection of poems, she found that it was neither time or place for personal or confessional poetry¹⁴ (the same occurred to Ada Škerlj); even now, despite the many studies of her work, Kačič is not included in any Slovene anthology. What is thought-provoking, though, that at roughly the same time the collection of deeply personal poetry by four prominent male poets (*Pesmi štirih*, 1953) was published with tremendous commercial and critical success (of course, one may always argue that neither Kačič's nor Škerlj's poetry is of the same quality as that of their male contemporaries – nor of Makarovič's for that matter). (iv) Makarovič also mirrors Dickinson in that she does not want to renounce her poetic style for the sake of public acknowledgement; to take any other decision would mean commercialization. During the period 1983-1993, for example, she decided to publish privately for political reasons and

[i]z prepričanja, da njene individualistične ideje niso sprejemljive za 'široke ljudske množice' in da mora umetnik živeti sam kot najbolj skrajna manjšina, je izstopila tudi iz Društva slovenskih pisateljev.¹⁵ (84)

Not to mention the fact that she forbade her poems to be included in anthologies and textbooks:

Umetnino je treba zavarovati pred tem, da bi jo lahko vsak prijel v roke, da bi vsakdo vtaknil noter svoj nos in kar odločal o tem, ali je cena primerna ali ne, in celo o tem, ali jo bo kupil.¹⁶ (85)

¹³ In comparison to womanish poetry, which was (and still is) flooding the Slovene cultural scene at that time, and was written almost exclusively by men, my poetry struck one as somewhat masculine. Until then, female poets had been regarded as delicate women who wrote confessional poems on their erotic experiences, their family relationships, their childhood recollections, and so on. I went beyond that and, as the first lady to do so, I had to accept the consequences. I am still suffering, but then again, I have now grown to it.

¹⁴ This is also discussed in the author's graduation thesis *Osebnizpovedna lirika kot literarna kategorija* (Ljubljana: FF, Oddelek za primerjalno književnost in literarno teorijo, 2000).

¹⁵ [...] has resigned from Slovene Writers' Society because she does not find her individualistic ideas to be acceptable to 'the masses', and because she believes an artist, as the most extreme example of a minority, has to live alone.

¹⁶ A work of art should be protected from the possibility that anybody might hold it, stuck their nose in it, and comment about the in/appropriacy of its price, and even whether they will buy it or not.

In 2002 Makarovič published a very limited number of the collection *Samost* ('Solitude') at an exorbitant price, which she thought would guarantee that only the most devoted admirers of (her) poetry would buy it. Svetlana Makarovič is considered to be the leading Slovene writer, original, blunt, unorthodox and provocative, who refuses to comply with the popular literary style. (v) While Dickinson took delight in puzzling the reader with her etymological discoveries, Makarovič achieves the same effect by filling the pattern of the earlier folk poetry with modern existentialism and surrealistic imagination (87). (vi) Although Makarovič finds the division between 'male' and 'female' literature highly questionable, the fact remains that in her poetry she accentuates femininity (89) much the same as Dickinson, who spares no effort to propose female creativity as a legitimate alternative to the male's, as gender should not be of significance when acquiring spiritual experience is at issue. (vii) The first two Makarovič's poetry collections (*Somrak*, 1964, *Kresna noč*, 1968) exhibit Dickinsonian 'affection for the extraordinary' ("nagnjenje do drugačnega") or even 'love for the ugly and the forsaken' ("ljubezen do grdega in zavrženega") and fondness for those non-conforming female characters in Slovene mythology (e.g. 'desetnica', the tenth daughter, who has to leave home; the cuckoo) who win personal freedom by becoming social outcasts (90). (viii) Both Dickinson and Makarovič disprove of the doctrine of the established Church. They believe God is devious (e.g. Makarovič in "Preštevnanje", "Romanje"; Dickinson in # 476) and stand up to any system of dividing people in a society because they find the role of the woman in it unacceptable (100).

Ženska v poeziji Svetlane Makarovič pa ne premore le svojstvenega intelektualnega odnosa do sveta, v katerem živi, temveč je *nekonvencionalna tudi na erotičnem področju*. Le-ta zanjo ni nikakršen prostor vdanega in ponižnega pričakovanja, temveč pravica, ki ji pripada z enako samoumevno svobodo kot moškim.¹⁷ (99)

(ix) In addition, both poets opt for seclusion to secure the freedom of their mind. (x) Some further similarities can be observed in the personification of nature (e.g. Makarovič's "Gora" and Dickinson's # 258); in their views on time (e.g. Makarovič's "Ura" and Dickinson's # 322); the motifs (the snake, the grave, the rope); the way they title their poems with one nominal word (when considering the few poems Dickinson actually titled herself, e.g. "Snow Flakes," and Makarovič's "Sončnice"); the way they both use regional expressions, archaisms, obsolete words, neologisms and the language of science. The following example is taken from "Pot" (cf. Dickinson's # 916 or # 602):

[...] vi zviti, vi *presukani*
in za denar *prefukani*,
prefukani odspred, odzad,
naduto, *volhka* služinčad
[...]

(my emphasis, Makarovič 8)

¹⁷ *The woman in Svetlana Makarovič's poetry does not only have a unique intellectual view of the world she lives in, but is also unconventional in the area of eroticism, which she refuses to regard as obliging and humble anticipation; on the contrary, it is a right women can naturally and freely enjoy in the same way men do.*

One cannot but conclude that in the case of Slovene woman poets there is considerable imbalance about their wifely functions on one hand and their intellectual pursuits on the other, that is to say: "A woman who tried to reach higher [...] was sure to get cut down." (Bennett 152)

In sum, the superficial knowledge about the great American poet and the lack of interest Slovenes hold for her work must primarily be a result of the general atmosphere of repressing and undermining women's poetry; the fate which all world-class Slovene woman poets (e.g. Lili Novy, Neža Maurer, Mila Kačič etc.) have to degree met originates in the socio-political situation, which has only recently started to change. Svetlana Makarovič, painfully honest and straightforward, has indisputably made a valuable contribution towards the changed circumstances in which Slovene readers will be able to appreciate the work of Slovene as well as foreign woman poets.

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- Note: the article is based on the author's M.A. thesis, which was supervised by Professor Igor Maver.
- The author's translations from Slovene in the footnotes are in italics for the sake of clarity.

SLOVENE REACTIONS TO TRUMAN CAPOTE'S WRITING

Nataša Intihar Klančar

Abstract

The article focuses on Slovene reactions to Truman Capote's writing. It takes into consideration both his early and his later work. The former (as e. g. *Other Voices, Other Rooms* and *A Tree of Night and Other Stories*) earned him recognition as a talented young author whose fame rested on stylistically accomplished short stories, while the latter (as e. g. *In Cold Blood*) praised him mainly as the father of the so-called "non-fiction" novel. It is somehow hard to believe that his openly acknowledged homosexuality still represents an intriguing enough theme for Slovene literary critics to comment on, and thus a very recent article on the subject is dealt with as well.

In Slovenia, Truman Capote's early writing (in the 1940s and the 1950s) did not receive a lot of critical attention, nor were his early works translated into Slovene. Nevertheless, a few articles and reviews can be found in Slovene magazines and newspapers, concentrating mainly on Capote's extraordinary style but at the same time expressing doubts whether this is a good enough point to sustain his career. It should be mentioned, however, that not only did the critics deal with his work, they also fancied writing about his vivid personal life marked by his openly acknowledged homosexuality.

Capote's first novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948) and short stories compiled in the volume entitled *A Tree of Night and Other Stories* (1949) earned him recognition as a talented young author. His early work met with immediate critical reaction in the USA, while Slovene literary critics did not consider him too seriously and carefully. The works mentioned have not yet been translated into Slovene and have thus stayed unknown to the widest array of Slovene readers (and critics). There have been, however, a few enthusiasts and literary experts whose interest in American literature of the 1940s and 1950s was wide enough to include Capote's first novel and his short stories into their reviews as well. Janez Gradišnik, for example, spent quite some time describing the development of American literature of the 1940s and the 1950s. His analyses offer an insight into the writings of the young generation of American writers and Gradišnik discusses the ups and downs of their literary achievements, Truman Capote included.

The magazine *Novi svet* published the article "Pogled na ameriško literaturo v letu 1950" (A Look at the American Literature in 1950) where Gradišnik focuses on

the American literary scene in 1950, comments on various publications and gives mixed reviews. Truman Capote is mentioned because of the publication of his first novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms* which, according to Gradišnik's opinion, classifies him as one of America's finest writers of the time. Furthermore, he is seen as one of the most promising young American authors.

The young generation of American authors was put into the spotlight again in the article that appeared in the magazine *Nova obzorja* in 1958 under the title of "Sodobno svetovno pripovedništvo in naša prevajalska dejavnost" (Contemporary World Fiction and our Translating Activity). Here Gradišnik draws parallels between the changes in society and the way these young writers write, the differences being clearly visible not only in the choice of their style but also in the subject matter. These were not "časi hudih socialnih bojev, stavk, spopadov, gospodarske krize, obubožanj, samomorov in organiziranega nasilja, v katerih je pisal svoja močna socialno kritična dela John Steinbeck" (the times of great social unrest, strikes, conflicts, economic crisis, impoverishment, suicides and organized crime, when John Steinbeck wrote his powerful socially critical works) (Gradišnik 1958b: 226). Steinbeck, too, followed the changes in society – his novels became less complicated and a humorous note was added, which enabled the author to make the presentation of his protagonists more to the point. His heroes, consisting mostly of people living on the verge of society, were thus brought closer to the reading masses. It should be noted, however, that Steinbeck was one among many who opted for something new in order to attract the readers' attention and make the American readership less apathic and more involved.

Such were also the attempts of the young generation who, by using in their novels and/or short stories various themes of conflicts between different races and nationalities within the USA, sparked public interest in their work. Furthermore, they often resorted to describing their heroes' search for identity, most often their search to find themselves sexually. The theme of homosexuality appeared quite often, Gradišnik (in the same article) lists three authors dealing with this theme, namely Gore Vidal, Frederick Buechner and (of course) Truman Capote. His views are critical for he claims the authors in question got stuck "v nekakšnem skonstruiranem svetu, ki ga drži pokonci le rafiniranost njihovega sloga" (in some sort of artificially constructed world, sustained by the refinement of their style only) (Gradišnik 1958: 226). Furthermore he seems to know the answer as to why the Slovene translators have not yet reached out to their work and brought it closer to the Slovene public: the reason lies in the simple fact that underneath the works filled with metaphors and mysteries there is really not that much left. Supposedly the authors hide behind such characteristics as to avoid having to struggle with the cruel and unpleasant real world that surrounds not only the protagonists of their novels but themselves as well.

The article entitled "Ameriška 'ne-jezna' mlada generacija" (American "Un-angry" Young Generation) shows Gradišnik's views on the American literary scene compared to the one in Great Britain. No such movement as "Angry Young Men" appears in America. There is no need for it; namely, the American society of the 1950s thinks very highly of the artists, writers included. They are widely accepted and have their own position in the world – no contempt can be traced towards them and therefore an artist need not be "angry" with society.

Truman Capote, Gore Vidal and Frederick Buechner are once again put into the spotlight and mentioned as typical representatives of the young generation and Gradišnik once again salutes their style. In them he sees "nekaj izjemno nadarjenih mladih ljudi, ki so z dvajsetimi ali celo osemnajstimi leti v svojih prvencih kazali že slogovno mojstrstvo, kot ga težko doseže zrel pisatelj" (some exceptionally talented young people who at the age of twenty or even eighteen showed stylistic mastery in their first novel, not easily achieved even by an experienced writer) (Gradišnik 1958: 252). Unfortunately the rapid success of their first books seemed to have put these "Wunderkinder" to sleep and their mastery has (unfortunately) come to a standstill. Their future remains unknown even to the world of critics.

Vlado Habjan is another critic who critically evaluated recent American fiction in the newspaper *Primorski dnevnik*. While Gradišnik makes comparisons between American and British authors of the time, Habjan puts into perspective the authors of the so-called "Lost Generation" with the ones blossoming in the 1950s. In the article "Nekaj misli o sodobni ameriški književnosti" (Some Thoughts on Contemporary American Literature) he concludes that the former enjoy the fruits of their labor, "medtem ko se morajo mlajši še truditi, da bi dosegli pri kritikih in založnikih vsaj kanec razumevanja za svoje probleme in za svoj pisateljski način" (while the young authors still have to strive for success with critics and publishers to acquire at least a basic understanding of their problems and their way of writing) (Habjan 1951: 4). The article moves on to introduce a few young authors, whom "ameriška kritika po stari navadi odreja kvaliteto in jih naziva 'nova izgubljena generacija'" (American criticism according to its usual practice diminishes their quality and calls them "The New Lost Generation") (Habjan 1951: 4), but at the same time optimistically wonders which one of them is to become the new Steinbeck, Dreiser or Faulkner. Despite the fact that "ljubljenec prvih povojnih let ne more iz blestečih, a primeroma tesnih okov svojih zgodnjih pisateljskih uspehov" (the darling of the postwar years cannot escape the glamorous, yet appropriately tight chains of his early literary success) (Habjan 1951: 4) Truman Capote is mentioned as one of the possible candidates.

In the same year the unknown author of the article "Povojni roman v Ameriki" (Postwar Novel in America) – published in *Vestnik*, the daily regional newspaper for economy, politics and culture – critically evaluates the writings of the young generation and reproaches them for not having any ideas nor wish to change the world as such. The criticism is directed at their indifferent attitude towards the world and towards their obvious apathy. Truman Capote (similarly to his contemporaries Frederick Buechner and Speed Tamkin) avoids any contact with what is happening in the (outside) world and stays shut in a world of his own.

Capote's writing is the focus of another article published in the magazine intended for the youth *Mladinska revija*. In it an unknown author (signed by his initials only) not only speculates on Capote's career but also informs its readers about his vivid personal life. Prior to his career as a writer Capote took up several jobs in order to survive. His jack-of-all-trades jobs include: being a dancer on a ship, writing speeches for a local politician, reading the scripts to documentaries, trying his luck painting on glass and spending some time fortune telling.

A description of his (writing) career follows where a somewhat unusual comment stands out. Namely, Capote's snobbery seemed to pervade all his being so that he defied being called the author of the American South, claiming this had never done him honor whatsoever. The author of the article does not dwell on it but quickly moves on to summarize the novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms*, at the same time calling Capote "umetnik, ki se zaveda svojega poslanstva" (the artist who is aware of his mission) (Ocvirk 1950/1951: 500).

Such an artist is highly appreciated in France as well, which can be seen in an article "Truman Capote, novi ameriški pripovednik" (Truman Capote, the New American Story-teller) from the fortnightly review for intellectuals *Naši razgledi* where an unsigned author presents Truman Capote as a new writer from the United States whose quality has also been recognized in Europe. A French translation of his volume of short stories, originally titled *A Tree of Night and Other Stories*, turns out to be a success in Paris, enabling Capote to make his mark with the European literary circles. The critics agree that his writing differs considerably from that of Faulkner, Hemingway, Dos Passos and Steinbeck and have high expectations for his future work.

Another unknown author comments on the literary development in America in the 1950s. In "Študija o sodobni ameriški književnosti" (The Study on Contemporary American Literature) published in the review *Naši razgledi* he relies on Malcolm Cowley's study on contemporary American literature titled "The Literary Situation". One of the main tendencies of the time was the great variety of novel writing in which various types of novels appeared, one of the seven different types mentioned being also a novel whose main tendency is a keen interest in the protagonists' love life and their (typically teenage) problems, highlighted by strong melancholic feelings connected with the author's regular meditations on childhood and teenage years that have gone by too quickly. Capote's novel *Other Voices, Other Rooms* is given as a representative example. Furthermore, it is not only similar subject matter that binds these artists pertaining to this type of novel writing together – it is characteristic of them to live in isolation, appreciate a peaceful life and modesty. The critic suggests that these characteristics, however, do not hold true for Truman Capote, for he was one of the first true so-called celebrities who enjoyed most being in the spotlight, enjoying all the media attention he could get. He regularly appeared on covers of newspapers and magazines, may it be due to his open homosexuality, drug addiction or wild parties he held (to mention his notorious private life only, leaving his work in the background). His fame thus rested both on his career choices/moves and on his wild personal life.

The publishing company Obzorja in Maribor decided to dedicate a few of its books to the lively literary scene in postwar America. By 1955 two of the books belonging to the series "Naša doba v knjigi" (Our Time in a Book) had already been published. An unsigned author of "Zakaj ne rajši kar tam?" (Why Not Rather There?) published in the fortnightly review *Naši razgledi* critically evaluates both of these books – one dedicated to Italian literature, the other to American. The latter is reviewed and the critique is aimed at the editor who limited his choice to the publication of eight short stories only, thus leaving out many masterpieces that (according to the author of the article) should have appeared in the volume. Young authors were largely overlooked. Among the youngest, at least Truman Capote should have been included.

Here, too, emphasis was given to the all-important matter of style, being rich in symbolism and in the use of dark images.

The name of Truman Capote did not only appear in newspaper articles, it also enriched the theater bulletins of the Mestno gledališče (The Municipal Theater) and of the Slovensko narodno gledališče (The Slovene National Theater) commenting on the season's hottest premieres, naming both the Broadway and the Vienna's Volkstheater productions of *The Grass Harp* an instant success. The memorable production of the above-mentioned sentimentally poetical drama brings Capote closer to a new sort of public – the theatergoers, who make his name even more recognizable in the mid 1950s (for more details on the productions see “Kaj pa po svetu?” (“What About Around the World?”) and Langer's “Dunajska gledališka pisma” (Vienna's Theatrical Letters).

The early 1960s not only aroused curiosity about Capote's work within the scope of the printed medium but moved one step forward to bring it closer to the television world (and viewers). The article published in the main Slovene newspaper *Delo* from September 10th 1960 entitled “Naš podlistek” (Our Feuilleton) expresses the opinion of an unknown author, naming Capote a widely known American author with whom the Slovenes would like to be better acquainted. His award-winning short story “Miriam” has been a source of great fascination to a wide audience, owing to its depiction of the world of the subconscious. Due to its strong emotional value it has applied to the masses worldwide (Slovenes included) it played a crucial role when television producers decided to present “Miriam” in a show dedicated to culture – Slovene television aired it in September of the same year.

The author's early period did not have a strong impact within Slovenia. Nevertheless, his early literary achievements and a lively personal life caught some attention, which can be seen from the articles discussed above. It is mainly the young author's style that was greeted with gasps of admiration, while any career prospects for the future were carefully refrained from. Theater-related literature mentioned the successfully staged *Grass Harp*, while more recent authors elaborate on his sexual orientation (see Andrej Karoli's article discussed below). It should be pointed out, however, that his later work evoked a much stronger critical response in comparison to his early writings. The critics' enthusiasm about the novels *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *In Cold Blood* can easily be seen through the sheer abundance of notes, remarks, articles and short comments.

Capote's short novels, *Breakfast at Tiffany's* being the most popular, strongly appealed to readers worldwide. In 1966 the novel was translated into Slovene by Maila Golob, thus bringing it to the attention of more readers. An unknown author of the article “Prave knjige za počitnice” (The Right Books for the Holidays) published in the newspaper *Delo* praises the novel and comments on its rightfully earned place in the Zenit collection as one of the fifty most beautifully written and artistically accomplished works of both foreign and Slovene literature. The great popularity of the book can be seen from the article published in one of the main Slovene newspapers *Ljubljanski dnevnik* (09. 09. 1965), where an unknown author gives numbers on the best-selling books in Ljubljana bookstores, where *Breakfast at Tiffany's* took second place (following Erich Maria Remarque's *A Time to Love and a Time to Die*). Further on, the

author comments on the literary situation in Slovenia and points to the often (too) high price of books, resulting in a steady decline of buying power: books sold are mainly those of high quality and/or the ones recommended by friends.

The article “Razočaranje Trumana Capota” (The Disappointment of Truman Capote) published in the regional newspaper *Večer* cannot overlook the critically much acclaimed movie with the talented Audrey Hepburn based on the equally popular Capote’s novel, but at the same time (as its title suggests) shows the dark side of “novel-treatment”. The theatre production of *Breakfast at Tiffany’s* fell through and proved a costly failure. The musical comedy on Broadway appealed to practically no one – neither the critics nor the audience accepted it and therefore the play was not a part of Broadway repertory for long. Not only did the unsuccessful stage production leave a bad taste in the producers’ mouth but it also turned out to be a loss-making business. Rumor has it (according to the unknown author of the same article) that it sustained losses of no less than \$400,000.

The Broadway fiasco contrasts sharply with the international acclaim won by the movie shot in 1961, starring Audrey Hepburn. It proved a major commercial success, won public applause and many television reruns followed it. The viewers and the critics were swept off their feet, mainly due to the phenomenal above-mentioned leading actress – Audrey Hepburn (1928-1993) whose interpretation of the heroine Holly Golightly masterfully brought to life her romantic and dreamy nature, parallel to her longing for freedom, accompanied by the simultaneous realization one cannot lead a fulfilling life without the company of others. The Slovene review, together with the praise for Hepburn’s glorious performance, is the main theme of the article entitled “Pogled na platno” (A Look at the Screen) published in the newspaper *Delo* in May 1965.

An article, written by an unknown author and published in previously mentioned *Naši razgledi* in 1963 does not focus on one individual Capote’s work but instead offers an insight into the author’s whole opus, ranging from the beginning to the mentioned year. The unknown author of “Mala kulturna panorama” (Little Cultural Panorama) emphasizes Capote’s use of a wide variety of styles as well as a number of themes he provides and thus divides his writing into many phases, also shown through the choice of Capote’s collected works. *Selected Writings of Truman Capote* incorporate early novelettes and short stories, as well as his more humorous work, commentaries and (last, but not least) his mature, stylistically more accomplished writings. The article is clearly a tribute to Capote’s mastery and great variety of styles. He obviously managed to find (and express) the best and the most heterogeneous he had to offer and aroused the readers’ enthusiasm for his novels. A survey, obtained from an unknown source and published in already mentioned *Nedeljski dnevnik* in “Nedeljski mini magazin” (Sunday Mini Magazine), summarizes Capote’s words: “Vsi ljudje imajo sposobnost delati ustvarjalno, samo mnogi med njimi tega sploh ne opazijo” (All people have the ability to be creative in their work, but many of them do not even notice this) (*Nedeljski dnevnik* 1970: 21). Without doubt, Capote did not have any problems with it – given the rich variety of his work, crowned by the publication of *In Cold Blood* that made him the father of the so-called non-fiction novel.

The latter was highly acclaimed by Adrijan Lah who was one of those Slovene critics who showed great interest in American literature. It is the 1960s and the early 1970s that are put in the forefront of his research. Lah's commentaries, reviews and articles thus often mention the name of Truman Capote. He praises highly Capote's novel *In Cold Blood* and in his article "Svet v knjigah" (The World in Books) published in the weekly newspaper *Nedeljski dnevnik* draws comparisons between this non-fiction work and J. D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. While commenting on William Styron's *Lie in the Darkness* in an article of the same title ("William Styron: *Lezi v temo*"), Lah once again describes Capote as one of the most significant American authors of the time, whose work had an impact in Slovenia as well.

The novel that exerted the strongest impact among (also our own Slovene) literary circles was undoubtedly *In Cold Blood* which was based on real-life facts about a brutal multiple murder that had taken place in Kansas. Its publication made a stir in America as well as in other parts of the world. The interest grew steadily even prior to the publication and Capote devoted six years of his life to a thorough investigation of the murders themselves. The novel was an instant success, it brought Capote fame and international recognition, not to mention financial success. Its morbid theme captivated readers and the novel soon became a bestseller, placing Capote on a pedestal and making him the father of the non-fiction novel.

The novel itself was first mentioned as early as in 1966 (the year of its publication). In the regional newspaper *Večer* an unknown author critically comments on the literary scene in New York and in the article "Kulturna panorama" (Cultural Panorama) declares Capote's non-fiction novel a bestseller: "Med nebeletrističnimi deli je na prvem mestu knjiga *Ohlajena kri* Trumana Capoteja" (Among the non-fiction work, Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* ranks first) (*Večer* 1966: 9). Not only that, there is also a photo of the author included. The title of the novel, however, is translated very clumsily if not inaccurately as *Ohlajena kri*, which contrasts sharply with the original translation that appeared a year later by Maila Golob (Golob 1967). She opted for the title *Hladnokrvno*, under which the novel has been known to the Slovene readers ever since.

A lively response followed and the article "Hladnokrvno" (*In Cold Blood*) published in the 9th issue of the magazine mainly intended for librarians *Knjiga* (1967) introduces the novel as a horror story about a multiple murder. The unknown author also mentions Capote's attempt to make it as realistic as possible by constantly repeating how true-to-life it was – both, the characters and the scenes being taken from real life. The stress is also put on the fact that this kind of writing is something that had not existed before and many compliments are paid to Capote's mastery in his being able to combine the numerous police notes into a meaningful new whole, representing a literary masterpiece that is a source of fascination to a wide readership. The latter appears as the main topic of an article published in the June issue of the regional *Večer* (1967), the author unknown yet again.

Not only did the literary critics respond to Capote's *In Cold Blood*; the writer's active involvement in the murder case and his at times perilous collaboration (he was the assistant confessor to both the murderers) was crowned with great success – not only by the fact that the book immediately became a bestseller, but it was also filmed.

The film rights to his novel were soon paid to him and supposedly this earned Capote a real fortune, making him an even bigger celebrity than he had been anyway. Some critics accused him of being “worldly” – cf. “Mala kulturna panorama” (Little Cultural Panorama) from the January issue of *Naši razgledi* (1966). Financial profit was something many critics turned up their noses at. An unknown author of the article “Brooks hoče živčni zlom” (Brooks Wants a Nervous Breakdown) published in *Večer* in June 1967 states the numbers clearly: Capote allegedly received no less than half a million dollars for film rights and 33% awaited him from box office receipts. Not bad for a guy from Louisiana.

The shooting of the film shortly followed the publication of the novel. Richard Brooks, a well-known director who is still in the film business today, responded enthusiastically to the great challenge of making the film as realistic as possible, sticking to all the sordid details from the novel, shooting on locations in Kansas where the multiple murder actually took place. *In Cold Blood* is still considered one of the scariest in its genre, for it terrifies the viewers with its close-to-life scenes. The unknown author of the article “Brooks hoče živčni zlom” (Brooks wants a Nervous Breakdown) from *Večer* comments on the shooting, telling the readers a not very humorous anecdote of how a certain student suffered a nervous breakdown after a scene that obviously imitated facts a bit too precisely. The author moves on to give Capote’s rather brief and passing comment: “Če prikrijemo le majhno resnico, sploh nimamo niti najmanjše priložnosti, da bi reš prikazali resnico” (If we conceal the slightest truth, then we have no opportunities whatsoever to really reveal the truth) (*Večer* 1967: 13).

The film (together with its true-to-life story) left a lasting impact on Robert Blake, the male lead. Blake, whose popularity reached new heights after appearing in the infamous film, made another appearance on the covers of tabloid newspapers and television shows in 2002. Obviously he took his role of the murderer too seriously and transferred the filmed version into reality. As seen on television, he was arrested for murdering his ex-wife, Bonnie Lee Bakley, an actress and a model, and was committed for trial. Truman Capote could not have imagined such a development – not even in his wildest dreams. Be it as scary as it is, the truth remains (in my opinion) that even such unfortunate events bring the name of the artist to the forefront, keeping him interesting for masses and known to younger generations, too.

Capote’s popularity nowadays has (unfortunately) much more to do with his lifestyle than with his work. His overt homosexuality never ceases to amaze all sorts of critics and scholars, putting his name next to an array of other prominent 20th-century artists (see below). Being different is the main concern of Andrej Karoli’s very recent article that appeared in the daily *Dnevnik* in June of 2003 – his meditation on being different. The question of who is “normal” enough to judge it arises. Karoli hopes that there are many people, “ki se [jim] zdi, da drugačnost ni in ne sme biti problem, če si le pripravljen na debato in tudi kompromise” (who think that being different is not and cannot be a problem as long as you are ready for discussion and making compromises) (Karoli 2003: 16). He respects their rights and cherishes their individuality, at the same time providing a long list of famous artists whom he (and the public) appreciates despite their being different e. g. Hans Christian Andersen, Jack Kerouac, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Giorgio Armani, Elton John, Frida Kahlo,

Freddy Mercury, Leonardo DaVinci, Peter Illyitch Tchaikovski and last, but not least, Truman Capote.

As already mentioned above, the artist's later work received a lot of critical attention – not only at home, but also worldwide (Slovenia included); *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *In Cold Blood* being in the forefront. Slovene critics praised Capote as one of the finest American authors of the time, they had nothing but praise for his brilliant non-fiction work *In Cold Blood*. The book (as well as the film) was well received by the Slovene audience, and so was *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Both novels were translated into Slovene by Maila Golob (*Breakfast at Tiffany's* appeared in 1965 as *Zajtrk pri Tiffanyju*, while *In Cold Blood* was translated two years later and is known under the title *Hladnokrvno*). Nowadays Truman Capote is most often seen as an author of great skill, evolving from his stylistically accomplished early darker stories and novels to a widely accepted non-fiction novel *In Cold Blood*. It is somehow hard to believe that his sexual life should still remain intriguing as well.

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Note: the article is based on the author's M. A. thesis, which was supervised by Professor Igor Maver.

RESPONSES TO THE WORKS OF JOHN UPDIKE IN SLOVENIA

Tamara Klanjšček

Abstract

Since the beginning of his writing career, John Updike has been considered by many as one of the most prominent American authors of our time and his language and subject matter have attracted many readers world wide. Notwithstanding, it appears that the Slovenes have failed to notice his literary merits as there has never been a real critical response to him or his work and as only a few works have been rendered into Slovene. One of the reasons which could account for the scarcity of translations and critical material is Updike's employment of extratextual information which is specific to the American milieu and thus to the Slovene society. This article offers an overview of the translations and critical material on Updike in Slovenia and highlights Updike's references to the USA on the examples taken from the translations of *Rabbit*, *Run* and *Rabbit Redux*.

The writer, poet, essayist, journalist, editor, reviewer, and an occasional writer of children's literature John Hoyer Updike was born in 1932 in Reading, Pennsylvania, which has often served as a model of his fictional Brewer in his novels. He started his literary career fairly early, a year after graduating *summa cum laude* in English Literature from Harvard University in 1953. His first work, the short story "Friends from Philadelphia" (1954) appeared in *The New Yorker*. Four years later, he published his first collection of poems *The Carpentered Hen*, followed by his first novel *The Poorhouse Fair* in 1959.

American critics responded mostly positively to his work and soon Updike became one of the most acclaimed contemporary American writers. Nowadays, he is often referred to as a very accurate observer of American life, one who does not hesitate to tackle many a burning issue of contemporary America. He writes in detail about family life, marriage, religion, love, sex, ageing and death, man's shallowness and his alienation in the urbanised world but he also ventures into witchcraft, golf, the writing life and other, more trivial, subjects. His main character is usually a middle class white male a WASP whose life is presented through commonplace events.

Updike is an extremely prolific and versatile writer who is gifted with an extraordinary feeling for the language. Not surprisingly, he has received a number of literary awards. The most renowned are certainly the two Pulitzer Prizes for Fiction he received for his novels *Rabbit is Rich* in 1982 and *Rabbit at Rest* in 1991. What is more, he has been awarded many honorary Litt.D. degrees from various American

colleges and Harvard University and his short stories have often been included in *The Best American Short Stories* series.

Taking into consideration especially Updike's success as a novelist and short story writer and the fact that he is considered by many critics as one of "the major writers of our time" (Markle 1973: 1) and sometimes compared even to Ernest Hemingway's and William Faulkner's grandeur (Hayman 1967: 667) one cannot but wonder why only six of his novels and fourteen short stories (with various reprints) have been translated into Slovene. Moreover, it is also to be noticed that the Slovenes were rather slow to respond to Updike's success since the first translation appeared in Slovene as late as in 1965 in one of the country's northern regional dailies, *Večer*. Symbolically, the first translated work was Updike's very first short story "Friends from Philadelphia" ("Prijatelji iz Philadelphie"), which later on witnessed four more reprints in various newspapers and general interest magazines. Interestingly enough, all the fourteen translated short stories (and even two novels) appeared in a somewhat scattered fashion in Slovene periodicals and the press. Most of them date back to the first two decades of his writing career. In fact, fourteen translated works appeared in the sixties, followed by ten a decade later. The eighties already showed a sharp decline in interest in Updike as only four short stories were published in Slovene, while the nineties brought the translation of his works to an abrupt end as only one short story and one novel appeared. One could argue that the translating activity was in inverse proportion to Updike's success; namely, the more internationally acclaimed and successful the writer was, the fewer works were translated into Slovene.

As a result of this inverse proportion the Slovene readers became acquainted with only a minor part of Updike's oeuvre. Most of the translated works are short stories belonging to the collection *Pigeon Feathers* (1962), where "Flight" ("Ptičji let"), "Wife-Wooing" (translated four times as "Snubljenje", "Snubljenje žene", "Dvorjenje v zakonu", and "Zapeljujem svojo ženo"), "Should Wizard Hit Mummy?" ("Bi čarovnik moral mamico udariti"), "A&P", ("Samopostrežna trgovina") and "Dear Alexandros" ("Dragi Aleksandros") were translated. The collection *The Same Door* (1959) was the source of three other translated short stories, namely the previously mentioned "Friends from Philadelphia", "Ace in the Hole" ("Ace v škripcih"), and "Alligators" ("Aligatorji"). Only "The Stare" ("Pogled") and "Four Sides of the same story" ("Štiri strani zgodbe") were taken from the collection *The Music School* (1966). Likewise, only two stories were translated from the collection *Your Lover Just Called* (1979) – "The Taste of Metal" ("Okus kovine") and "Twin Beds in Rome" ("Dve postelji v Rimu"). Less interesting seemed to be *Trust Me* (1987) and *Problems and Other stories* (1979) as only one short story was translated from each collection respectively – "Trust Me" ("Zaupaj mi") from the former and "Problems" ("Problemi") from the latter.

Updike's first novel translated into Slovene appeared in a newspaper as well. Jože Stabej translated *Rabbit, Run* (1959) as *Teci, Zajček*, which was published in Slovenia's national daily *Delo*. The novel appeared in instalments from 6 October 1965 to 5 January 1966. Two years later, Alenka Moder rendered *The Poorhouse Fair* into *Semenj v hiralnici*. She also translated *The Witches of Eastwick* (1984) into *Čarovnice iz Eastwicka*, which was the last of Updike's novels published in the Slovene

language. In 1972, Mira Mihelič translated Updike's highly praised and at the time slightly scandalous novel *Couples* (1968) into *Zakonski pari* while three years later Dimitrij Rupel translated a likewise slightly scandalous *Rabbit, Redux* (1971) (*Rabbit se vrača*), which was to be the second novel of what was to become the Rabbit tetralogy. The last novel which can be read in Slovene is *Marry Me* (1976), translated by an anonymous author as *Vzemi Me* and published in instalments from 20 September 1986 to 27 January 1987 in *Večer*.

The briefest overview of the translations reveals a lack of uniformity in the choice of the works which were translated and in the style of translation¹. The reasons why Updike's work is not presented uniformly in Slovenia are at least three. First, as already mentioned, the translated short stories appeared randomly in various newspapers and magazines with no reference indicating which collections the stories belong to. Secondly, the works were rendered into Slovene by various translators who each added their personal note to the short story or novel. A collective case in point is found in "Friends from Philadelphia", "Wife-Wooing" and "Should Wizard Hit Mummy?" where each reprint reads differently owing to different translators and hence different approaches. Lastly, there has never been a real critical response to either Updike's work or to the translations of his work into Slovene which could have helped the translators evaluate their efforts/attempts in capturing Updike's superb style and retaining his numerous references and allusions to the American milieu he so meticulously describes.

The altogether sixteen articles on Updike and/or his work which started appearing in the Slovene newspapers and magazines in 1967 hardly deserve the term criticism. Most of them are mere translations or simplified summaries of, or short reports on, the novels translated into Slovene. The underlying common feature of these articles is their content itself, which primarily discloses that the articles were meant for a rather general reading public. In fact, their authors² briefly present the writer's work using very general terminology; sometimes they touch upon Updike's language skills and praise his style, and finally, they offer basic information about the translator, illustrator and publisher. They rarely express their own views on either Updike or his work and if they occasionally do so, their opinions are hardly ever sustained by (consistent) arguments. It seems that the reviewers mainly rely on facts and/or borrowed ideas. Not surprisingly, the first article on Updike which appeared in Slovenia was the translation of Allan Hayman's article "John Updike". The article is well written and highlights both the shortcomings and literary qualities of Updike's work by referring to a number of his short stories and novels. However, what is important is that the clearly critical nature of the article coupled with the fact that it was published in the literary magazine *Problemi* indicated the beginning of an interest, however weak, in Updike from the reader's point of view. In this respect, the only truly critically coloured and professionally written Slovene article on John Updike appeared only in 1991. Jerneja Petrič's "Ponovno John Updike: Harry Angstrom – Rabbit je obsojen, da vse življenje pred nečim beži" ("John Updike Redux: Harry Angstrom–Rabbit is forever doomed to run

¹ Analysing the artistic value of the translated texts is beyond the scope of this article and will not be discussed.

² Ten out of 16 articles were written by anonymous authors.

away in life”) was published in the cultural pages of *Delo*. It is a fairly long article written on the occasion of Updike’s publication of his fourth Rabbit novel *Rabbit at Rest*. Petrič offers a detailed insight into the four Rabbit novels, focusing on the Pulitzer Prize winning *Rabbit at Rest*. What is more, she does not only advance an interpretation of the four stories and its protagonist but she also points to the parallelisms between the fictional Rabbit and real life events in the USA, underscoring the role of America in Updike’s works at the same time. Her review served also as the basis for her essay “Štirje romani o Rabbitu ameriškega pisatelja Johna Updika” (“John Updike’s Four Novels on Rabbit”) published in the *Ameriška proza: od realizma do postmodernizma* (2001), which remains the only study on Updike in Slovenia.

Petrič’s noteworthy contribution aside, the Slovene critics’ lukewarm response³ which almost borders on complete disinterest in Updike is not understandable especially if one takes into account the fact that Updike actually visited Slovenia in October 1978 after attending an international writers’ meeting in Belgrade. Only two articles resulted from his visit. The first one, “Američan kot pisatelj” (“An American as a writer”) is a report on the interview *Delo*’s journalist Bogdan Pogačnik had with the writer. On a global scale, its value is negligible as it discloses nothing dramatically new on either Updike or his work, yet it is the first of this kind in Slovenia and as such it deserves to be mentioned. After a long introduction explaining the background of the writer’s visit to Slovenia Pogačnik somewhat haphazardly summarises Updike’s reflections on his private and public life, his role of a lecturer and writer on his travels, his own literary style and lastly his thoughts on sex in his works as opposed to pornography.

Similar topics were brought up in the interview “Pogovor z Johnom Updikeom” (“Talking with John Updike”) by Dimitrij Rupel and published in the daily *Dnevnik*. There, Updike claims that he is not a widely read author as he is not market driven as many American writers indeed are. Furthermore, he believes that as an American writer he could never hold the eminent position, or enjoy the privileges of, his European counterparts because of the difference in the reading publics of the respective continents. In other words, American readers, Updike remarks, expect the writer to constantly produce sensational works while the Europeans have no such expectations. Updike addresses the same issue in two other interviews he originally gave to the German newspaper *Die Zeit* and magazine *Spiegel* but which were translated and arranged into Slovene by Janez Cundrič for *Večer* in 2002. In those interviews Updike reiterates that American readers are very demanding but not supportive as they do not promote writers’ creativity. Furthermore, he even notices that Americans are growing less and less interested in reading (fiction) and he looks for the reasons of such behaviour in the writers themselves who sometimes fail to win the readers’ support by not working hard enough.

The ‘German’ interviews overlap with Rupel’s and partly Pogačnik’s contributions in another subject. In all of them Updike is asked to define his attitude towards the USA especially in relation to his work. He mentions women’s role in society in

³ Nevertheless, Updike won some recognition in Slovenia as the National Television broadcast a series on Contemporary American writers where five key figures from the American literary world were presented. Updike was among them.

Pogačnik's report, the oil crisis and its reverberations in Rupel's interview, and he speaks about religion, past and contemporary American politics, the middle class, and wars for *Die Zeit* and *Spiegel*. Once again one is reminded that Updike's fiction is very close to reality. Furthermore, in Rupel's interview, Updike confesses that when working on a new story he writes solely with the American reader in mind – hence, it is implied, his numerous references to the US – deliberately leaving the problem of a possible future translation aside. At the same time, he relies on the belief that people are intrinsically the same all over the world and that a well-written book is thus well accepted everywhere.

The writer's belief notwithstanding, in my opinion Updike's specific concern with the USA may sometimes hinder the process of assimilation in a non American reader. That is to say, I believe that a non American reader may fail to understand all the connotations implied by extratextual information owing to different cultural environments. To illustrate this point, one should examine the translations of the first two Rabbit novels. Specific in reference to the American milieu and yet universal in themes, the two translations compared to the originals epitomise the differences between the American and Slovene cultures. Yet, the question that arises at this point, and which I will try to provide an answer to, is the extent to which extratextual information in *Rabbit*, *Run* and *Rabbit Redux* influences the Slovene reader's understanding of the stories and the main character and to what extent he/she manages to assimilate Rabbit and his world.

As frequently pointed out in this article, John Updike is regarded as one of the most accurate social commentators of contemporary America. Indeed, looking closely at the Rabbit stories, which are probably his best-known and most illustrative work, one is directly confronted with a typically American environment. The stories, centring around their main character Harry Angstrom-Rabbit and written at roughly ten year intervals, chronicle American history from the late fifties to the beginning of the new millennium. Yet what is most important is how Rabbit exists as a result of this American background. In fact, reading the stories attentively, one notices that the life of Harry Angstrom, an ex high school basketball hero, coincides with the milestones of American political, cultural and social life.

In the first novel, *Rabbit, Run*, the protagonist seems to be trapped in the world of the moral ideas and dilemmas of the Eisenhower fifties, but he desperately longs to escape. Rabbit's life is very similar to what he witnesses daily on TV in *Rabbit Redux*: the Vietnam war, the moon landing, the counterculture movement, and the riots. Each and every event in his life is a reflection of what is going on in 1960's America. In the third novel, *Rabbit is Rich* (1981), as the title itself suggests, Rabbit has come into a fortune and enjoys the benefits wealth can bring despite the oil shortage and the overwhelming economic crisis of the seventies. The novel is set during what President Jimmy Carter termed America's years of 'malaise' and once more, Rabbit and his family reflect these events. The last novel, *Rabbit at Rest*, is filled with images of death both from 'real' life and the novel itself. Anxiety about international terrorism magnifies a sense of uselessness and loss. Updike shows the USA to be psychologically unprepared to cope with global terrorism as its economy is growing weaker and weaker, and America's privileged position and its strength are diminishing. So are

Rabbit's in his microcosms: he is no longer the chief manager of Springer Motors, he is retired and he is awaiting death.

Clearly, understanding the Rabbit stories requires in-depth knowledge of America's contemporary history, without which it is virtually impossible for a non-American reader to fully comprehend Rabbit. Furthermore, Updike's stories bristle with descriptions of American daily life ranging from various products, food, songs, to TV shows. These inclusions are so frequent that they are an intrinsic part of the stories and impossible to neglect. Moreover, they determine Rabbit's lifestyle. However, these points are sometimes easily lost in translation and undoubtedly translating the Rabbit novels proved to be a difficult task. The translators Jože Stabej and Dimitrij Rupel utilised a variety of techniques to tackle a variety of unknowns, that is, references utterly foreign to the Slovene reader. The result are two translations which try to reproduce the political and historical backgrounds of *Rabbit*, *Run* and *Rabbit Redux*, but which sometimes fail to highlight the small details captured in the unknowns. This is understandable since the Slovenian reading public of the sixties and the seventies was not (entirely) familiar with the consumerism and lifestyles of the American world. Therefore, it was impossible even for the translators themselves to follow faithfully the original text since the Slovenian environment did not know or use such items as Kleenex, Macdonald's hamburgers, Electrolux's appliances, etc. They could not possibly understand the connotations of these unknowns⁴. In order to bridge this cultural/consumer gap Stabej and Rupel tried to provide adequate translations in Slovene as exemplified below:

[H]e instead drives to the *drugstore* in the centre of town [...] and orders a *vanilla ice-cream soda* with a scoop of *maple-walnut ice cream*, and drinks *Coca-Cola glasses* full of miraculous clear water before it comes. (my emphasis, Updike 1961: 172)

Zavije v lokal sredi mesta. [...] naroči si *ledeno kavo* s porcijo *kostanjevega sladoleda*, preden jo dobi, pa popije dva polna *kozarca* čudodelne čiste vode. (my emphasis, Stabej 23/11/1965: 5)

Upstairs in the room with the one-eyed teddy-bear Harry reads the boy a *Little Golden Book* about a little choo-choo who was afraid of tunnels. (my emphasis, 287)

Zgoraj v sobi z enookim medvedom prebere Harry otroku *zgodbico* o majhni lokomotivi, ki se je bala predorov. (my emphasis, 26/12/1965: 6)

"Besides," Janice is going on, edging herself on tiptoes up and down like a child gently chanting to *Banbury Cross*, "the movie isn't just for Nelson, it's for *me*, for working so hard all week." (my emphasis, Updike 1971: 34)

"Poleg tega," nadaljuje Janice in se še kar naprej zvija na prstih kot otrok, ki predvaja svojo *pesmico*, "kino ni samo za Nelsona, ampak tudi zame, ker sem cel teden tako garala." (my emphasis, Rupel 1975: 41)

⁴ There are more than 130 unknowns in *Rabbit*, *Run* and more than 240 in *Rabbit Redux*.

That family has been out to buy the country since those *Brahmins* up in Boston snubbed old Joe. (my emphasis, 81)

Ti ljudje so kupovali zemljo, odkar so tisti *snobovski krogi* v Bostonu zapeljali starega Joeja. (my emphasis, 92)

It should be noticed that even though generally speaking, the translators' solutions were very similar, there are some conspicuous differences in their approach towards the unknowns. The differences stem from different external circumstances in which the translated texts appeared. Firstly, Rupel enjoyed the benefits of a personal experience of the USA as he had lived there between 1971 and 1972, while Stabej could only rely on scarce sources, his own knowledge of the States and on the information given to him by people who had already been in America (Klanjšček 2002, 2003, interviews). Secondly, the socio-cultural background of the 1965's Slovenia was unquestionably different from that 1974. In the seventies, the then 'behind-the-Iron-Curtain' Yugoslavia started to open its door to the influences of the western world. As a consequence, the Slovenes could purchase foreign articles in their shops, they learnt about the western lifestyle through the media and through slowly increasing travel to western countries. Thus, one can assume that the 1974 reading public was already acquainted with many of the unknowns in *Rabbit Radux*, which is confirmed by the fact that unlike Stabej, Rupel leaves many of these items in English. Examples containing words describing American fast food illustrate the above mentioned differences:

Wanting to see Ruth again was some of it but it was clear after he went around to her address in the morning that she wasn't there [...] going in and out of department stores with music piping from the walls and eating a *hot dog* at the five and ten and hesitating outside a movie house [...]. (my emphasis, Updike 1961: 271)

Del tega je bila želja, da bi spet videl Ruth, vendar je šel zjutraj spet tja in ko tudi tokrat ni dobil nobenega odgovora, mu je bilo jasno, da je ni doma [...], vendar pa je še vedno hodil po Brewerju, iz ene veleblagovnice v drugo, pojedel *klobaso*, potem pa se je obotavljal pred kinom, [...]. (my emphasis, Stabej 22/12/1965: 5)

He takes a map from the rack by the door and while eating three *hamburgers* at the counter studies his position. (my emphasis, 29)
S police pri vratih vzame zemljevid in medtem ko pri pultu poje *zrezke*, preštudira svoj položaj. (my emphasis, 14/10/1965: 5)

He stops [...] for a *Lunar Special* (double *cheeseburger* with an American flag stuck into the bun) and a vanilla *milkshake*, that tastes toward the bottom of chemical sludge. (my emphasis, Updike 1971: 113)
[P]oje poseben *hamburger* – *Lunar Special* (dvojni *cheeseburger* z ameriško zastavico na vrhu) in popije vaniljev *milkshake*, ki ima na dnu okus po kemikalijah. (my emphasis, Rupel 1975: 129)

Stabej utilises equivalents known to the Slovenes and instead of 'hot dogs' and 'hamburgers' he speaks of 'sausages' and 'steaks', while Rupel retains the original

words. However, Rupel's retaining of the original words is sometimes questionable especially because there are suitable words in Slovene (which I offer in brackets) that bear the same connotations as their English counterparts:

Don't get heavy on *me*, I told her I just wanted *blue jeans*. (my emphasis, 203)

Ne jezi se *name*, rekel sem ji, da hočem samo *blue jeans*. (my emphasis, 228) /kavbojke/

"Yeah, O.K., great. Maybe I'll get down sometime. If I can get a *babysitter*." (my emphasis, 219)

"Aha, O.K., krasno. Mogoče se kaj oglasim. Če dobim *babysitterja*." (my emphasis, 245) /varuško/

"Whisky sour," he says. Summer is over, the *air-conditioning* in the Phoenix has been turned off. (my emphasis, 235)

"Whisky sour," reče on. Poletje je mimo, *air condition* v Phonixu so izključili. (my emphasis, 264) /hlajenje/ or /klimo/

[O]ne of the partner's sons came back from *business school* somewhere full of beans and crap. (my emphasis, 342)

Eden od družabnikovih sinov se je vrnil iz *business school* poln samih novotarij in podobnega sranja. (my emphasis, 379) /poslovne šole/

In the end, regardless of what approach the translators adopted, the result is uniformly twofold: on the one hand, they managed to partly assimilate Rabbit and his world, and thus make them more familiar to the Slovene reader; but on the other hand, they unavoidably altered Rabbit's personality and lifestyle.

Rabbit's personality is especially distorted in *Teci, Zajček* as the text underwent censorship. Whole passages describing love making, contraceptive methods, the characters' sexual lives, nakedness, birth, and Rabbit's erotic dreams had been left out. Their omission drastically minimises Rabbit's sexuality, which is one of his most distinguished characteristics in the original novel as Rabbit is a man of sensations and instincts. Additionally, Rabbit's character is also slightly altered on the account of foul language which is not so overwhelming and obvious in the translation as it is in the original. Many swear words are simply omitted or replaced by euphemistic expressions. Finally, an attentive reader might get the wrong impression that Rabbit has been involved in some sort of a scholastic scandal on the account of a little mistake that appears in the translation:

His old basketball coach, Marthy Tothero, who *before scandal had ousted him from the high school* had a certain grip on local affairs, lived in this building supposedly and still, they said, manipulated. (my emphasis, Updike 1961: 17)

Njegov košarkarski trener Marthy Tothero, *ki ga je pred škandalom vrgel iz šole*, je imel nekaj vpliva v lokalnih zadevah in baje je živel v tej stavbi, vendar pa je tudi rovaril. (my emphasis, Stabej 10/10/1965: 6)

In the Slovene translation we understand that it was Rabbit and not Tothero, who had to leave the school because of a scandal. It is true the old coach and Rabbit are very similar, however it is important to underscore that Rabbit's image remained immaculate in his high school days, when he was a true sports hero – loved and idolised by everybody. In this respect inadequate translation regarding the American schooling system should also be observed:

With luck he'll become in time a crack athlete in the *high school*; Rabbit knows the way. (my emphasis, 5)

Če bo imel srečo, bo sčasoma postal odličen atlet na *univerzi*; Zajček ve, kako gre to. (my emphasis, 6/10/1965: 5)

Yet in his time Rabbit was famous through the county; in basketball in his *junior year* he set a B-league scoring record that in his *senior year* he broke with a record that was not broken until four years later, that is, four years ago. (my emphasis, 5)

Toda svoj čas je bil Zajček slaven v vsem okraju; kot *mladinec* je v drugi ligi dosegel rekordno število košev, potem pa je kot *član* izboljšal svoj rekord z novim, ki je bil potolčen šele čez štiri leta, to se pravi pred štirimi leti. (my emphasis, 6/10/1965: 5)

A keystone marker in the headlights says 23. A good number. The first *varsity game* he played in he made 23 points. A *sophomore* and a virgin. (my emphasis, 26)

Številka 23 na kašipotu v luči žarometov. Dobra številka. V svoji prvi tekmi v *reprezentanci* je dosegel 23 točk. *Študent v drugem letniku* in nedolžen. (my emphasis, 12/10/1965: 5)

When I came out in my *freshman year* I didn't know my head from my elbow. (my emphasis, 58)

Ko sem bil *bruc*, nisem ločil glave od komolca. (my emphasis, 23/10/1965: 5)

Stabej's inconsistency with the school system terminology induces the Slovene reader to believe that Rabbit has gone to college or university. However, part of Rabbit's problems derive from the very fact that he has no college or university education, which would help him escape from the mediocrity of the American lower middle class once the high school days are over.

Mistakes are found in Rupel's translation as well but they do not directly interfere with the reader's perception of the main character:

[H]e is standing at the top of a stairway of the uncountable other baths he has heard her take or seen her have in the *thirteen years* of their marriage. (my emphasis, Updike 1971: 32)

[Z]daj stoji na vrhu stopnišča, ki ga sestavljajo ta večna kopanja, ki jih je poslušal in gledal v teh *štirinajstih letih* njunega zakona. (my emphasis, Rupel 1974: 38)

In this example Rupel ascribes to Rabbit and Janice fourteen years of marriage instead of thirteen. As a matter of fact, Rabbit proposed to Janice - thus sealing his fate for ever - when she was already in her third month of pregnancy.

With these riots everywhere, and this poor Polish girl, she comes from up near *Williamsport*, abused and drowned when the future President takes his pleasure. (my emphasis, 82)

Te večne demonstracije pa ta uboga poljska deklica, prišla je od nekod iz *Williamsburga*, pa jo takole zlorabijo, utopijo, bodoči predsednik pa si privošči malo zabave. (my emphasis, 94)

The second instance contains a mistake which reduces Updike's credibility in reproducing the American environment with accuracy. The scandal mentioned in the novel was about senator Edward Kennedy's car accident in which Mary Jo Kopechke, a girl of Polish origins from Williamsport, Pennsylvania - not Williamsburg as Rupel erroneously wrote - died. On the one hand, the Slovene reader very likely does not care whether the drowned girl came from Williamsport or Williamsburg, because the event and environment described do not suggest any connotations in them. On the other hand, one could claim that an attentive American reader (who understood Slovene) might be bothered by such misleading information.

One Saturday in *August* Buchanan approaches Rabbit during the coffee break. (my emphasis, 101)

Neko soboto se med malico Rabbitu približa *August Buchanan*. (my emphasis, 115)

The last mistakes influence two aspects of the novel. Firstly, Rabbit's co-worker is given a new identity as Buchanan's first name is not August but Lester. Secondly, Rupel unintentionally ruins Updike's precise 'timetable' of the novel. In fact, it is a peculiarity of the Rabbit novels to be extremely well defined in terms of time: there is always a month, day or even an hour given. Furthermore, O'Connell (1996:16-19) sees a symbolic link between nature and Rabbit's life in these time co-ordinates. She claims that almost each and every event in the Rabbit stories is in harmony with the celestial bodies and with the changing of seasons. She builds her theory especially on the metaphors of solstice and equinox, which coincide with the ups and downs of Rabbit's life. Unfortunately, due to Rupel's lapse of the pen, this is not so obvious in *Rabbit se vrača*.

The discrepancies between the original and the translated texts hinted at in this article would not be so obvious if they were translated from today's perspective and understanding of the USA. The media, tourism, an open market policy, and globalisation make it possible for the Slovenes to 'be' part of the world recorded by Updike in the Rabbit stories. Of course, the aesthetic field (e.g. the time distance and the cultural background) is different, but still, closer to us than ever. In fact, even the translators themselves admitted that if they had the chance to translate the novels again, they would almost certainly produce better translations due to their present knowledge on the USA (Klanjšček 2002, 2003, interviews). It is also my present belief that any likely or unlikely future translations of the Rabbit novels should contain a foreword by

the translator, who ought to highlight Updike's peculiar inclusion of extratextual information which is so specific to the American environment. Alternatively, for more scholarly purposes, the translated text could be enhanced by the addition of notes explaining the unknowns. Additionally, the choice of the unknowns which could be explained in the notes should be made by the translator in collaboration with an American expert in order to bring Rabbit and his world as close as possible to the Slovene reader. Such an approach would trigger some reaction in the critics and reviewers and consequently a renewed interest in John Updike.

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TWO 17-TH CENTURY JESUIT PLAYS IN LJUBLJANA INSPIRED BY ENGLISH LITERATURE

Nada Grošelj

Abstract

Jesuit teachers, whose members came to Ljubljana in the late 16th century, placed great emphasis on the production and staging of the school drama. Despite the domination of religious themes, the range of its subject matter was wide and varied. The article discusses two plays which derived their subject matter from English literature, namely from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Holinshed's *Historie of Britain*. The texts themselves are lost, but in the case of the Holinshed-inspired work (a version of the King Lear story), a detailed synopsis has been preserved. The article examines the synopsis and the extant manuscript reports about the plays, the original English sources, and the treatment of the two works in contemporary scholarly treatises.

Introduction

The article begins by outlining the characteristics of Jesuit school drama, focusing on the genre as written and performed by the Ljubljana Jesuits, who arrived and founded their school in the late 16th century. The discussion concentrates on two plays which derived their subject matter from English literature, namely from Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and Holinshed's *Historie of Britain*. The plays themselves are lost, but in the case of the Holinshed-inspired work, a detailed synopsis has been preserved. The article examines the synopsis and the extant manuscript reports about the plays, the original English sources, and the treatment of the two works in contemporary scholarly treatises.

1. The Characteristics of Jesuit Drama

The Jesuit Order (approved by the Pope in 1540, suppressed in 1773 and reestablished in 1814) played an important role in Slovene secondary and tertiary education. The first Jesuits arrived in Ljubljana in 1597, starting the lowest two *gymnasium* classes in the May of the same year (HACL¹ 7). Apart from the Latin *gymnasium*, they also established higher studies: a full academic three-year course in phi-

¹ *Historia annua Collegii Societatis Jesu Labacensis*.

losophy (officially begun in 1704, but only made complete in 1705), as well as courses in theology. The latter, however, was never organised as a full academic programme, being limited to courses in moral theology and canon law (Dolinar, *Jesuitenkolleg* 52–4; Ciperle 174). The Ljubljana Jesuit College never attained the status of a university and no academic titles appear to have been conferred (Ciperle 174).

An important element in Jesuit teaching was the institution of the school theatre. Declaiming a (usually Latin) text contributed to the students' command of the language and gave them practice in public speaking, while the spectacular performances at the same time promoted the popularity and influence of the Order itself (Škerlj, "Jezuitsko gledališče" 153; Ciperle 170). The importance ascribed to the theatre is evident from the fact that the Ljubljana Jesuits, having started school in May 1597, staged the first performance with their students – *Dialogus de s. [Joanne] Damasceno* – as early as the autumn of the same year (HACL 7). Later, the students performed several times a year: at the conclusion and – even more frequently – at the beginning of the school year (in October or November), on major church festivals and the memorial days of the Order and its saints, for carnival, and, increasingly, at dynastic and patriotic celebrations, e.g. in honour of victories won over the Turks in the second half of the 17th century (Škerlj, "Jezuitsko gledališče" 147). The major productions engaged gymnasium students from all six classes (148) and, for the more demanding roles, even students of philosophy or theology, or those who already had a degree in the Liberal Arts (194). At the same time, a teacher could also stage a small-scale performance with his own form alone (148). Modest performances of this kind would be produced in the classroom, whereas more ambitious projects were organised in the College courtyard; in St James' church, which formed part of the College complex; sometimes even in the College cemetery; and – in summer – in the municipal park Tivoli, in front of the Jesuits' summer villa "Pod turnom". At least since 1607, however, the most important location was an indoor "auditorium", intended both for internal ceremonial occasions and relatively public celebrations. By 1618, a new auditorium had been built, and in 1658 the Order received a new gymnasium building, including a large hall with a sophisticated modern stage allowing five changes of scenery (Škerlj, *Italijansko gledališče* 22–3). The performances produced in the more public places appealed to a wider audience – not only the invited guests of honour, the students and their parents, but also the townspeople and countrymen (Škerlj, "Jezuitsko gledališče" 148).

The plays were written chiefly by teachers of the higher gymnasium classes. These would also direct the performances, coach the actors, and arrange both the technical details of the staging and the publication of theatre programmes, the so-called *perioches* or *synopses* (184–5). Most plays were written in Latin, as stipulated in the Jesuit "Order of Studies" (a detailed set of rules for their schools). Gradually, however, the vernacular – German, in the case of Ljubljana – began to intrude as well, spreading from short passages to whole plays. The oldest record of a Jesuit play in Ljubljana completely performed in German dates back to 1635 (Škerlj, *Italijansko gledališče* 31).

The texts of the plays produced in Ljubljana are lost, with the exception of two works by the famous Baroque Jesuit playwright Nicolaus Avancinus [Avancini], who

spent a year in Ljubljana teaching the highest gymnasium class (*Rhetorica*). Nevertheless, the titles preserved in diaries, annals and the extant synopses afford some insight into the subject matter, while the synopses also reveal the dramatic structure of the works (Škerlj, "Jezuitsko gledališče" 150). A synopsis usually contains the "argument" of the play followed by a scene-by-scene summary, the list of actors, and often the list of the best students (194). The argument presents the story as found in the author's sources, whereas the more detailed summary gives the contents of the actual play. The latter usually begins at a point where the plot is already beginning to thicken, or even nearing the catastrophe (175).

As a genre, Jesuit school drama originated in the Renaissance drama, which had adopted a number of classical features regarding both form and subject matter. The formal influence of classical drama resulted, for example, in a more concentrated action with a limited number of major characters; the frequent observation of the unity of place and time; division into acts and scenes; the use of prologues, epilogues and choruses; and a logical sequencing of the scenes (151, 185, 191). Classical subject matter, on the other hand, was soon supplemented in Jesuit drama with Biblical, legendary, and other religious themes; the use of allegory, drawn from both Christian and pagan mythology, was extensive as well (151–2, 178–9). Despite its emphasis on religious themes, the Jesuit drama performed in Ljubljana (as well as in other countries) reveals not only Biblical stories, legends about saints and martyrs, moralising and didactic plays, hortatory plays, and allegories, but also plots taken from ecclesiastical, secular, and – later – from modern history; patriotic plays; ancient mythology; and comedy (185–9). It must be noted, however, that antiquity, history etc. were used relatively late in the Ljubljana production; moreover, there was very little realistic or humanly appealing subject matter. The Jesuit drama in Slovenia had not evolved directly from the Renaissance genre but from older Jesuit production elsewhere, so that it was dominated by religious and moralising themes from the very beginning (189, 195; *Italijansko gledališče* 25).

Beginning to flourish in the second half of the 16th century, Jesuit drama had a predominantly Baroque character from the start (Škerlj, "Jezuitsko gledališče" 152). This Baroque component escalated over time, resulting in more and more elaborate stagecraft and increasing emphasis on instrumental music, singing, and dancing (149; *Italijansko gledališče* 108). The mass scenes and choruses at the same time fulfilled a pedagogical function, since they ensured the participation of a great number of students (*Italijansko gledališče* 99; "Jezuitsko gledališče" 153). (All these characteristics are evident also in the second of the plays discussed in this paper, the late 17th century version of *King Lear*.) According to Škerlj, the true value of the Ljubljana Jesuit production lay not in the aesthetic value of the texts, but in the fact that the audience came into contact with contemporary European theatre forms, including the formal structure of plays, diverse motifs, and staging ("Jezuitsko gledališče" 195–6).

2.1. A Play Based on the *History* of the Venerable Bede

One of the Ljubljana Jesuit plays, performed on the feast of Corpus Christi in 1603, is reported by manuscript sources to have been inspired by the work of the

Venerable Bede (673–735 A.D.). The full identification, however, has not been established up to now by the treatises dealing with Jesuit drama. Since the manuscripts refer to the play by different titles, it may have sometimes even escaped notice that they describe one and the same work. Dolinar, for example, citing as his sources the *Collectanea*² (288), HACL (40), and ALA³ (133,50), heads the list of school performances for 1603 with the entry: “De geminis fratribus Imma et Junna; ein Theaterstück von Beda Venerabilis, aufgeführt an Fronleichnam [Feast of Corpus Christi]” (*Jesuitenkolleg* 198). At the end of the list, he adds as a separate entry: “Nach HACL wurde an Fronleichnam ‘Anglo in vinculis libero tempore sacrificii pro se facti’ gespielt.” He does not appear to connect the two, for in other instances when a single play is referred to by different titles in the sources, he makes an explicit note of it, as in the case of another performance in the same year (1603): “Tragoedia de Constantini persecutione in S. Images; die zum Schluss des Schuljahres aufgeführte Tragödie heisst in der ‘Historia annua’: ‘Copronymus Iconomachus’” (*ibid.*).

Škerlj, on the other hand, correctly identifies the two titles as referring to the same work. Noting that manuscript sources often cite the titles of plays with minor or even considerable variations (“Jezuitsko gledališče” 157), he proceeds to illustrate this practice with examples from the year 1603, contrasting (among others) the references made to the abovementioned play in the *Collectanea* and HACL. First he quotes the *Collectanea* (what follows is my own translation from the Latin): “On the feast of Corpus Christi, a play was produced whose theme had been taken from the Venerable Bede, about the twin brothers Imma and Junna (?): one brother caused many Masses to be said for the other, who had been taken prisoner, believing him to be dead, and the other was freed from his bonds as often as the rite was performed; finally, he was permitted to go free by the tyrant, who was astounded by the novelty of this thing.”⁴ HACL, on the other hand, refers to the staging of a “dialogue” (a common synonym for “play” in these sources, cf. Škerlj, *ibid.*) “about an Englishman in bonds, set free when Mass was said for him” (40).⁵

Škerlj thus establishes a link between the two titles; another valuable contribution is the quote adduced from the *Collectanea*, since it clearly states that the play was inspired (but not written) by Bede. The relevant place in Bede’s work, however, is not

² *Collectanea Ex Annis Praeteritis Spectantia Ad Gymnasii Labacensis Historiam. Vindicata ab interitu Anno M.DC.LI [1651]*. The document forms an appendix to the *Diarium Praefecturae Scholarum In Archiducali Collegio Societatis Jesu Labaci Inchoatum Anno M.DC.LI*. Bound in a single volume, they are preserved in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia (under No I/31r).

³ *Austria, Litterae annuae* (annual reports for the Province of Austria). Annual reports, based on the HACL chronicle, were sent by the Rector of the College to the Provincial of the Jesuit Order in Vienna. Collected in a report on the entire province, they were forwarded by the latter to the General of the Order in Rome (Dolinar, *Letopis* 10).

⁴ “In festo Corporis Christi productum Drama, cuius thema ex Venerab. Beda desumptum de geminis fratribus Imma et Junna (?), quo[rum] alter pro altero captivo, quem mortuum existimabat multa Missae sacrificia curabat, et alter toties vinclis solvebatur quoties sacrum fiebat, qui tandem a Tyranno rei novitatem obstupe[sc]ente liber abire permissus est” (qtd. on 157 n. 20). The question mark is Škerlj’s; the emendations in square brackets are mine, supplied after viewing the original manuscript.

⁵ “In solemnitate Corporis Christi emblematis platea et carminibus plurimis exornata et ‘De Anglo in vinculis libero tempore sacrificii pro se facti’ dialogus fuit exhibitus.” In the published Slovene translation: “Na praznik Rešnjega Telesa so ulico krasili emblemni in številni napisi v verzih. Prikazan je bil dialog ‘O Angležu v vezeh, osvobojenem v času zanj darovane maše’.”

examined. Relying on the report in the *Collectanea*, Škerlj repeatedly expresses uncertainty about the brothers' names, noting that they are not clearly legible in the manuscript (*Italijansko gledališče* 24; "Jezuitsko gledališče" 157, 186). In regard to the content, he is likewise limited to speculation – thematically, the play would have belonged to the category of piously didactic or moralising plays:

Številne so drame v skupini, ki bi jo lahko imenovali pobožno poučno ali moralizirajočo. Tudi teh je okoli deset. Že prav na začetku svoje ljubljanske dramatike, 1603, so jezuiti uprizorili igro, vzeto iz spisov starega "častitljivega" Bede: "... de *Geminis fratribus Imma et Junna*[""] (lastni imeni nista zanesljivo čitljivi v "Letopisu"⁶), ki je slavila bratovsko ljubezen in vrednost maše, ki celo tirana premaga. (*Italijansko gledališče* 24; cf. also "Jezuitsko gledališče" 186)

Škerlj hypothesises that this would have been a legend extolling the power of the divine service and of brotherly love (ibid.; "Jezuitsko gledališče" 157 n. 20). To illustrate the popularity of the latter subject in Jesuit drama, he gives a quote from Weilen's work on the Vienna theatre – "Muster brüderlicher Liebe geben die Söhne des Königs Scilus (1587), ... oder das von Anton Kaschutnik [Košutnik] verfasste Schauspiel von Naromimus und Neambadorus (1723)" –, speculating that the 1603 Ljubljana play might have been related to the one from 1587, or that either might have served as a source for Košutnik ("Jezuitsko gledališče" 186 n. 68). At least the former of these suggestions, however, is unlikely, since the 1603 play was beyond doubt modelled primarily on Bede.

An examination of Bede's works reveals that Chapter 4,22 of his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* bears the caption: "Ut vincula cujusdam captivi, cum pro eo missae cantarentur, soluta sint" (PL Migne 95,205C–208A), or: "A prisoner's chains fall off when Masses are sung on his behalf". The resemblance to the title of the 1603 play as given in HACL is striking. Moreover, the protagonist of Bede's narrative is a young man named Imma, with a brother called Tunna. The similarity to the names from the *Collectanea* establishes: (1) that this chapter is the origin of the 1603 Jesuit play briefly summarised in the *Collectanea*, and (2) that the play about the twin brothers is identical with the "dialogue" noted in HACL. Chapter 4,22 runs as follows:

A prisoner's chains fall off when Masses are sung on his behalf [A.D. 679]

In the above battle in which King Elfwin was killed,⁷ a remarkable thing occurred, which I should not fail to mention, since it will further the salvation of many. During the battle, a young thegn named Imma belonging to Elfwin's forces was struck down, and lay apparently dead all that day and the following night among the bodies of the slain. At length he recovered consciousness, sat up, and bandaged his wounds as well as

⁶ As evidenced by the above quotations from manuscripts, this reference is to the *Collectanea*, not to HACL, although it is the latter (*Historia annua*) that is usually referred to as "Letopis".

⁷ A battle near the river Trent, fought between King Egfrid of Northumbria and King Ethelred of Mercia. Elfwin was Egfrid's brother.

he could; then when he had rested awhile, he got up and tried to find some friends to help him. While so engaged he was found and captured by men of the enemy forces, and taken before their leader, who was a nobleman of King Ethelred. When asked his identity, he was afraid to reveal that he was a soldier, and answered that he was a poor married peasant who had come with others of his kind to bring provisions to the army. The nobleman ordered him to be given shelter and treatment for his wounds; and when he began to recover, he ordered him to be chained at night to prevent his escape. But this proved impossible, for no sooner had those who chained him left than the fetters fell off.

Now this young man had a brother named Tunna, who was a priest and abbot of a monastery that is still called Tunnacaestir after him. And when he heard that his brother had been killed in battle, he went to see whether he could find his body. Finding another very similar to him, he concluded that it was his; so he took the body back to his monastery, gave it honourable burial, and offered many Masses for the repose of his brother's soul. And it was on account of these Masses that, as I have said, when anyone tried to chain him, he was immediately set free. The nobleman, whose prisoner he was, was astonished, and asked why he could not be bound, and whether he possessed any written charms to protect him from binding like those mentioned in fables. He replied: "I know nothing about such things. But I have a brother who is a priest in my own province, and I am sure that, thinking me killed, he is saying many Masses for me; and were I now in another life, my soul would be freed from its pains by his prayers." After he had been held some time in the nobleman's custody, those who observed the young man closely realized from his appearance, clothing, and speech that he was no common peasant as he said, but of noble birth. The nobleman then sent for him privately, and pressed him to disclose his identity, promising that he would do him no harm if he told him the truth about who he was. On this assurance, the young man revealed that he was a king's thegn. At this the nobleman said: "I realized by all your answers that you were no peasant. You deserve to die, because all my brothers and kinsmen were killed in that battle: but I will not put you to death, because I have given you my promise."

As soon as Imma recovered, the nobleman sold him to a Frisian in London, who took him away, but found that he was unable to fetter him. When one kind of fetter after another had been put on him and none could hold him, his buyer gave him permission to ransom himself if he could. It was at the hour of Terce, the customary time of saying Mass, that his chains were most frequently loosed. Promising either to return or to send his ransom money, Imma went to King Hlothere of Kent, who was nephew to the above Queen Etheldreda,⁸ because he had once been

⁸ The wife of King Egfrid.

one of the queen's thegns. From him he ob[t]ained the money for his ransom, and sent it to his master as he had promised.

When Imma returned to his own country, he visited his brother and gave him a full account of all his troubles and how he had been helped in them; and from him he learned that his chains had been loosed at the times when Mass was being said on his behalf. He also realized how he had received comfort and strength from heaven in many other dangers through the prayers of his brother and his offering of Christ's saving Sacrifice. He related his experiences to many people, who were thereby inspired to greater faith and devotion and gave themselves to prayer, almsgiving, and offering the Holy Sacrifice to God for the deliverance of their friends who had departed this life; for they understood how this saving Sacrifice availed for the eternal redemption of soul and body.

Among those who told me this story were some who had actually heard it from the mouth of the man to whom these things had happened, so that I have no hesitation about including it in this history of the Church as it was related. (241–3)

The extent to which the original story was preserved in the adaptation for drama is, of course, a matter of speculation, since neither text nor synopsis is preserved. The wording in the *Collectanea*, referring to a “tyrant”, suggests that the plot may have been simplified, so that Imma does not undergo two captivities but is released by his original captor. This would create a more tightly-knit story with greater dramatic impact, since the repetitions of the same occurrence would probably become tedious or even laughable. What is certain, however, is that it was this particular passage from Bede that served at least as a point of departure and chief inspiration for the Jesuit play.

2.2. A Version of the King Lear Story

Another, much later play undoubtedly based on an English source bears (in the German synopsis) the title *Tugend-Cron Der Kindlichen Liebe. In Cordilla einer Tochter Layri Königs in Britannien* (“The Virtue-Crown of Filial Love. In Cordilla, a Daughter of Layrus, the King of Britain”). Its Latin title is cited by Dolinar, who notes for the year 1698: “Virtus coronata pia in patrem filiae in Cordylla Regis Britannorum fillia [*sic*]; anlässlich der Prämienverteilung. Vgl. ALA 156,62” (*Jesuitenkolleg* 208). This work is one of less than 30 plays by the Ljubljana Jesuits whose synopses have been preserved (cf. Škerlj, *Italijansko gledališče* 482; Steska 110). Its synopsis, as well as most of the others, is included in Janez Gregor Thalnitscher's [Dolničar's] *Miscellanea* (as No 19 in Vol. 3), accessible in the library of the Ljubljana Seminary.⁹

The synopsis, a twelve-page quarto, has a German cover page, which offers not only the title but also information about the occasion for the performance (the con-

⁹ I owe particular thanks to Dr Marijan Smolik for having the entire text scanned for me.

cluding distribution of school prizes in 1698) and about the printer ("Laybach / in der Mayrischen Buchdruckerey 1698"). What follows is a one-page argument (*Innhalt*) in German, which summarises a version of the whole King Lear/Layrus story, and a six-page scene-by-scene summary of the play itself, also in German. The last four pages contain a Latin list of roles and actors. The latter reveals that roles were given to gymnasium students from all six classes, from the lowest (*Parva*) to the highest (*Rhetorica*); in addition, they were assigned to some students of moral theology and Bachelors, as well as Masters, of the Liberal Arts and Philosophy. The cast comprises both the nobility and commoners, including sons of well-known families, such as the Counts Blaggay [Blagaj] or the Barons Valvasor.

The argument, i.e. the story understood to form the background of the events, runs as follows (the translation is mine):

Cordilla, daughter of King Layrus from Britain, [was left] without her portion of inheritance which was the share of both her sisters, for the reason that an ambiguous utterance of hers ("although not now, yet in the course of time she would give preference over her filial love to another love, namely that for her husband") was misunderstood by Layrus. Yet it was she who brought her beauty and rich natural gifts to a French prince in marriage, to the greater good fortune of Layrus than Cordilla. Later, when this father was robbed of his kingdom by his daughters' sons, who had been induced thereto by their craving for the crown and by the long life of Layrus, he found shield and shelter with Cordilla until everything that had been lost was restored to him. Time goes by, taking Layrus away. Then Cordilla is raised to the British throne, to the greatest vexation of Merganes and Conedagus, her cousins [Vötteren], who overwhelmed Cordilla with war, dragging her from the throne into prison and thence to the flames. When the innocent had already mounted the bier, the villainous judges were driven by the death-shade of Layrus to despairing horror and thus into the depths of the sea. Cordilla, on the other hand, is again proclaimed Queen under the virtue-crown of filial love. Polydor. 1.1.

The play itself, however, begins at the stage where Layrus is already banished from his kingdom, lamenting his misfortune while attended by the faithful Spiridius. In Act 2, Scene 4, he re-enters Britain with Cordilla and is proclaimed King by the faithful, but in Scene 10 he is killed in battle, in a rebellion caused by the false news that the British treasures have been sent away to France (he does not simply "pass on", as the argument seems to suggest). Spiridius, however, puts on Layrus' armour and fights until victory has been attained; the villains of the piece, Merganes and Conedagus, are spared at the word of Cordilla but banished from the kingdom, and Cordilla is crowned Queen by Spiridius. The third and last act brings the renewed hostilities of Merganes and Conedagus and the remainder of Cordilla's story as outlined in the argument.

The plot of the play is interesting from a historical point of view. As noted by Škerlj, the author does not appear to have utilised Shakespeare's *King Lear* (*Italijansko*

gledališče 99–100);¹⁰ the plot which has Cordilla at least temporarily established as Queen, as well as the names of the evil relations, Merganes and Conedagus, would point to the story as related in one of Shakespeare's sources, Raphael Holinshed's *Historie of Britain* (1577, 2nd edition 1587). Shakespeare's changes, which include "most of the character of Kent, all of the Fool, the madness of Lear, the murder of Cordelia" (Houghton 18) and the whole sub-plot featuring Gloucester, Edmund and Edgar, inspired by Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* from 1590 (16), are ignored. Moreover, the Jesuit text adopts the name "Cordilla", which stems from the older tradition ("Cordeilla" in Geoffrey of Monmouth's 1135 *History of the Kings of Britain* and in Holinshed, "Cordella" in an older English play on the same topic), not Shakespeare's form "Cordelia", which is taken from Book 2, Canto 10 of Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (*ibid.*).

The parallels with Holinshed are striking, except that the Jesuit author rewards Cordilla, giving her a happy ending. Even Holinshed's account of Lear's natural death after regaining his kingdom tallies with the argument as given in the Jesuit synopsis, though not with the events actually shown in the play. I quote some relevant extracts from Holinshed's Book 2:

Nevertheless it fortuneth that one of the princes of Gallia (which now is called France) whose name was Aganippus, hearing of the beautie, womanhood, and good conditions of the said Cordeilla, desired to have hir in mariage [...] Aganippus notwithstanding this answer of deniall to receive anie thing by way of dower with Cordeilla, tooke hir to wife, onlie moved thereto (I saie) for respect of hir person and amiable vertues. [...] After that Leir was fallen into age, the two dukes that had married his two eldest daughters, thinking it long yer the government of the land did come to their hands, arose against him in armour, and reft from him the governance of the land [...] In the end, such was the unkindnesse, or (as I maie saie) the unnaturalnesse which he found in his two daughters, [...] that [...] he fled the land, & sailed into Gallia, there to seeke some comfort of his yongest daughter Cordeilla, whom before time he hated. [...] Leir and his daughter Cordeilla with hir husband tooke the sea, and arriving in Britaine, fought with their enimies, and discomfited them in battell, in the which Maglanus and Henninus [the elder sisters' husbands] were slaine: and then was Leir restored to his kingdome, which he ruled after this by the space of two yeeres, and then died, fortie yeeres after he first began to reigne. [...] Cordeilla after hir fathers deceasse ruled the land of Britaine right worthilie during the space of five yeeres, in which meane time hir husband died, and then about the end of those five yeeres, hir two nephewes Margan and Cunedag, sonnes to hir aforesaid sisters, disdaining to be under the government of a woman, levied warre against

¹⁰ Interestingly, Shakespeare does not appear to have been utilised by the Vienna Jesuits either: the year 1726 saw the performance of *Hamlet*, but in the version of Saxo Grammaticus (Škerlj, *Italijansko gledališče* 98 n. 17).

hir, and destroyed a great part of the land, and finallie tooke hir prisoner, and laid hir fast in ward, wherewith she tooke suche griefe, being a woman of a manlie courage, and despairing to recover libertie, there she slue hirselfe, when she had reigned (as before is mentioned) the tearme of five yeeres. (qtd. in Houghton, 240–2)

The two villains of the Jesuit play (named Morgan and Cundah in Spenser) would thus appear to be Cordilla's nephews, not cousins (*Vettern*); a further argument in favour of this correction is that it is Layrus' "daughters' sons" that are said to have robbed him of his kingdom in the first place, and these would be most logically identified with Merganes and Conedagus, mentioned a few lines later in the synopsis. A possible explanation is the one suggested by Škerlj: namely, that the word *Vetter* may refer to any distant relation, not necessarily a cousin (*Italijansko gledališče* 99 n. 20).

The play abounds with Baroque elements as outlined in the "Introduction" of this paper. Structurally, it consists of a Prologue, Act 1 with 10 scenes, Chorus 1, Act 2 with 10 scenes, Chorus 2, Act 3 with 6 scenes, and Epilogue. The Prologue and Epilogue are allegories portraying the triumph of Filial Love; likewise the two Choruses, which allude to the dramatic action. Chorus 1 thus reflects the anticipated reunion of Layrus and Cordilla, showing Pallas (Athene), "a poetic figure of Filial Love", leading, "after a shipwreck, the *Art-Geist* of Layrus clad in the form of Ulysses into the pleasure gardens of Alcinous". Chorus 2, on the other hand, reflects the restoration of Cordilla as the legitimate successor of Layrus to the throne, although Layrus himself is dead: Salmoneus, son of the wind god Aeolus, is making thunder and lightning to spite the honour of the gods, but is felled by Adrastea, goddess of revenge and daughter of Jove, so that "Jove remains Jove". Since the actors playing the allegorical and mythological figures from the Prologue, Epilogue and the two Choruses (e.g. Envy, Perfidy, Ulysses, Salmoneus, Filial Piety, etc.) are listed in the *Chorus Musicorum* section, these parts would have been set to music.

The main plot (i.e. the conflict for the throne) is interwoven with magic and some low comedy provided by the Merganes and Conedagus scenes. There are other stage attractions typical of the period: Škerlj emphasises the use of music even in the dramatic action itself (i.e. not only in the prologue, epilogue, and between acts), since Merganes and Conedagus come in Act 1, Scene 5, to comfort the wounded Thyrsanes with *Nacht-Music* [*sic*], a serenade (*Italijansko gledališče* 99). Moreover, the list of actors reveals several sets of dancers: 18 for the "Dance of the Iniquities", 14 for the "Dance of Fishermen", and a separate group as "Court Dancers". The mass scenes would have been visually impressive as well, since the cast includes several groups of minor characters, such as courtiers, the women of Britain (*Gynaeceum* or *Frauen-Zimmer*), soldiers, satraps (!), etc. The numerous insertions of lighter elements and thrills, of course, dilute the suspense and contribute to the lengthiness of the play. Another weakness – noted by Škerlj – is the repetitive nature of the plot, since Act 3 essentially repeats the theme of Cordilla's loyalty, struggle and final reward (98). All in all, the performance was probably impressive as a spectacle, but lacked dramatic genius.

Conclusion

The impact of English literature on the plays written and produced by the Ljubljana Jesuit teachers was, understandably, rather slight. Nevertheless, some traces do appear, as has been shown in this paper. By way of conclusion, it is worthwhile to mention that the period from 1597 to 1704, investigated by Dolinar, also contains works dealing with events from relatively contemporary British history. These include two plays presenting the story of Mary Stuart (*Pietas Mariae Stuartae* from 1655 and *Maria Stuart Scotiae Regina* from 1662) and a declamation celebrating England's victory over "heresy" (*Anglia de haeresi Victrix, triumphatrix*) from January 23, 1686. The latter must have been inspired by the succession of James II, who favoured Catholics, in February 1685, but it may also have touched on the death-bed conversion of his predecessor, Charles II. No synopsis of these works has been discovered so far.

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2

THE ROMANTIC SUBJECT AS AN ABSOLUTELY AUTONOMOUS INDIVIDUAL

Miljana Cunta

Abstract

This essay deals with the Romantic subject as a philosophical and literary category. Recognizing the diversity and complexity of literary production in the Romantic period, this study does not attempt to treat all the many aspects of this subject, but it instead focuses upon a few: the role of nature, the status of imagination, and the subject's relation to the transcendental reality. In its relation to these issues, the Romantic subject appears as an absolutely autonomous individual, one who finds no satisfaction in claims to transcendental certainty made by any source outside the self, but relies on his immanent powers to achieve the self-awareness that is the only sure access to truth. Special attention is given to the Romantic mystical experience, whereby the subject comes into relation with the transcendental reality. Here what are termed mystical feelings are contrasted with religious feelings proper so as to stress the peculiarities of the Romantic religious experience. In providing a theoretical framework for the religious experience, we have recourse to Rudolf Otto's definition of the »numinous,« which denotes the feeling-response of the subject to the divine aspect of reality. In comparison with the true religious experience, the Romantic type is seen as pseudo-religious, thus confirming the proposed definition of the Romantic subject as a truly autonomous individual. The essay's second part contains an interpretation of selected poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge with a view of extrapolating from them some aspects of the Romantic subject.

1. The Romantic Subject as an Absolutely Autonomous Individual

The Romantic era was a complex and turbulent period with no generally agreed agenda. Its emphases varied considerably with time, place and the lives of individual authors. Literary criticism abounds in theories which try to pin down the movement's defining characteristics. Earlier philosophical, psychological, religious and aesthetic critical approaches have been succeeded in recent years by New historicism (cf. Lui), feminism (cf. Mellor, Delamotte) poststructuralism (cf. McGann 1985, McGann 1993) and many other theories, each following its own criteria and governing principles. In the attempt to define the chief distinguishing feature of Romanticism, critics have often focused upon the particular status and characteristics of the individual as these appear in the literary production of the period, most conspicuously in its poetry. This new understanding of the individual has been associated with a shift in sensibility, an aesthetic of freedom, an emphasis on subjectivity, a commitment to individualism,

and a love of nature, to enumerate a few of its generally recognized characteristics. All of these and many others have been brought together in the inclusive term the Romantic subject. In meaning so many things, this concept has become vague and problematic. As such, it has undergone repeated reconsiderations and reassessments.

The definition of the Romantic subject proposed here will not provide a comprehensive view of this concept nor determine what is most central to it. Instead, it will treat only a few aspects of it, namely the role of nature, the status of imagination, and the subject's relation to the transcendental reality. Special attention will be given to Romantic mystical experience. Here what are termed mystical feelings are contrasted with religious feelings proper so as to stress the peculiarities of the Romantic religious experience. These aspects will be discussed in relation to a possible definition of the Romantic subject as an absolutely autonomous individual.

In Meyer Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, the individual's visionary powers are recognized as defining features of the Romantic subject, who is presented as a legendary poet-prophet who writes a visionary mode of poetry. True to his vocation, the Romantic individual is involved in a long and often unfulfilling quest because he aspires »towards an infinite good envisioned by the poet's imagination« (Abrams 1971: 108). Aidan Day shares Abrams's views of imagination as the visionary capacity to pursue spiritual truths. »Subject, mind, or spirit is given priority over nature and matter, so that the forms of the material world may be read as emblems of a profounder, spiritual reality transcending nature, time and space« (Day 58-59). Extending beyond considerations on British Romanticism, Frederick Garber argues that the concept of the visionary poet who, inspired by nature, follows the path to ultimate truths roots in the typically Romantic quest for personal autonomy which embodies the movement's chief characteristic. »To those who sought for it, an autonomous order of consciousness meant that the mind had created a system which was complete, idiosyncratic and self-subsistent, able to supply all of the major conditions it needed to satisfy itself and to do so endlessly, with no help from the outside« (Garber 1975: 27). The assumption underlying this claim was the fact that the Romantic subject possessed the potential to create an autonomous consciousness. This potential was constituted by a special way of feeling which was commonly termed the poetic imagination. »All the assertions about the value of the autonomous inner life rely on an implied assumption that the imagination is adequate to create forms to the self-sufficient consciousness« (Garber 1975: 28). Similarly, Janko Kos writes that at the centre of the romantic conception of the world there stands an absolutely autonomous individual who seeks to rely exclusively on his or her subjectivity to achieve self-realization (Kos 42).

In advancing his theory, Kos adopts the historical approach, tracing the development of the Romantic subject by giving primary consideration to the subject's attitude towards the transcendental reality. The earliest preliminary of the Romantic conception of the individual was provided by René Descartes, and this was given further philosophical expression by Immanuel Kant in the 18th century. The German classical philosophy and the Enlightenment provided a philosophical articulation of the modernist concept of the autonomous individual. Descartes's revolutionary shift of the paradigm from the objective-external to the subjective-internal opened up the pos-

sibility of a new experience for the human person and his vision of the world. By emphasizing the subjective dimension over the objective one, Descartes called attention to the importance of the innermost self as the essence of the human being. Similarly, by showing that the outside world is independent of the subject's consciousness, Kant emphasised the subjective value of knowledge. Descartes's and Kant's philosophies thus provided the philosophical foundations for the development of the Romantic subject, whose chief characteristic has been identified as the autonomy of consciousness.

It must be stressed, however, that despite the similarities, there are important differences between the modern subject as perceived by Descartes and Kant, and as seen by the Romantics. The latter does not rely on his rational abilities, but rather upon his irrational, emotional qualities. In Romanticism, the modern subject finds in intuitive feeling, sensitivity and beauty the legitimate sources of authority. The freedom to feel confirms the individual in his uniqueness and individuality. Unlike the rational capacities that can be learned and foreseen, emotions are »independent of all that is transsubjective because they originate in the subject, they are the product of the 'self' and are consequently beyond rationality, as they do not apply to external rules and cannot be framed by objective categories and conceptions. The essence of the Romantic subjectivity could be summarized in a new formulation of Descartes's definition: 'I feel, therefore I am' « (Kos 42, translated by M.C.). This very assumption of the aesthetics of feeling provides a preliminary for the development of the concept of the Romantic imagination as the cornerstone of the myth of the absolutely autonomous Romantic subject (cf. Day 49-51, Watson 9-14).

2. The Romantic Imagination

The faculty of imagination, one of the key terms in Romanticism, is defined in the Romantic vocabulary not only as the ability to produce poetry, but beyond that, as a special way of seeing the external world, nature in particular, and relating to it. The definition of imagination is so closely linked to the Romantics' attitude to nature that the two concepts are best discussed in relation to one another.

The majority of the artists and intellectuals at the end of the eighteenth century were famous for their love of nature. They shared a joy in the beauty of the natural world while at the same time rejecting man-made institutions and practices, which they agreed were evil and harmful. The Romantic praise of nature was founded on the belief in the divine origin of creation. In the pantheistic understanding, which was popular among the Romantics, nature was a live, harmonious and self-sufficient system.

In its harmony and integrity, nature was the model for the self-sufficient consciousness. The great majority of the romantics shared a belief in the interchange between the mind and nature (Garber 1977: 193). This philosophy was based on the conviction that the universe and the mind were inherently in accord with one another because they were formed by the same external powers. The mind is able to decipher the language of nature, that is, to respond to sensory impressions from external reality

and to produce illuminating statements about the self. One of the most ardent advocates of this philosophy was William Wordsworth, who believed mind to be capable of a divine interaction with the visible universe, a power he illustrated by the symbol of a holy marriage.

This delight in nature was not new but was manifest well before the eighteenth century. The Romantics' original contribution to the understanding of nature was their way of perceiving nature and interacting with it. The Romantics saw nature as mysterious in its diversity and resistant to any sort of classification and interpretation. Due to its peculiarities, nature hardly fits into any man-made categories. The natural world is larger than life, and human beings cannot hope to apprehend the meaning of its appearances. Because natural phenomena are only vaguely and obscurely related to the individual's inner nature, the communication between the two occurs beneath the threshold of consciousness. As such, it cannot be grasped by common reason or expressed in common language but can only be suggested in imaginative or symbolic terms.

The Romantics pondered the ways that mind and nature meet. Although nature is a work of the divine spirit, which is aesthetic and inspiring in its appearances, it is full of inconsistencies, coincidences, irregularities and ambiguities. When confronted with nature, the subject should activate his imagination so as to gather meaning from the chaos of impressions that flood in upon him. The poet must see nature in his own way, through his own eyes, in accordance with his innermost disposition, expectations, questions, needs and longings. In its turn, nature influences the subject's receptive psyche. Between nature and the mind, there is a dialogue, so that the outcome of their emotional intercourse is more a product than the sum of the two. An example of this interchange is provided by Wordsworth's »Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey«. The speaker articulates the interaction between the subject and object in the act of artistic creation. The poet returns to the same scene in nature physically and again in his thoughts, and sees it each time in a different light, according to his changing disposition and the shifting influences of nature. The two act reciprocally; nature influences the consciousness, and the consciousness interprets nature. »Wordsworth returns to the actual landscape, but each time the appreciation of it is deepened and profoundly altered by the intervening sections which describe its effect upon the poet's mind. So the landscape affects the mind, and the mind affects the landscape« (Watson 51)

The poet's task is not merely to reproduce impressions from external reality but also to interpret and even recreate them. The artist is called to bring harmonious meaning out of the chaos of impressions, ideas, feelings and memories that inhabit his or her mind. The power of the mind which makes such reshaping possible was termed the imagination. By the skillful employment of the creative imagination, the artist can reorganize impressions from the external world, conforming them to the structure of the mind. The product of imagination is more an intuitive and highly individual response than a universally acknowledged and recognized statement.

The theory of imagination is a »celebration of subjectivity« (Day 47) in that it reveals great confidence in the powers of the subject's mind in pursuing spiritual truths and achieving self-awareness. It most conspicuously confirms the Romantic subject in

his absolute autonomy. It is from the subject's potential to create »out of himself«, by drawing upon his native capacities, that the true pleasure of imaginative creation derives. The world invented by such an endlessly creating consciousness is the human being's product and thus his possession.

The absolute autonomy of the Romantic subject can be defined as an ultimate trust in one's immanent abilities as a sufficient source for the achievement of self-awareness. A quotation from a letter by John Keats sums up the idea of the Romantic imagination as a perfectly legitimate means to self-awareness: »I am certain of nothing but the holiness of Heart's affection and the truth of Imagination. What imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth - whether it existed before or not« (Page 91).

3. The Romantic Pseudo-Religious Experience

In view of the preceding, it is not surprising that this creative power of the imagination was viewed as God-like. For William Blake, imagination is equivalent to God when he operates in the human soul (Watson 10); it allows a sensitive soul to gain an intuitive insight into the very bases of existence. The Romantic hero is a poet-visionary who sets out to find eternal truths, motivated by the longing to experience something absolute, eternal and godly. In this quest, nature plays an important part. The aesthetic qualities of the landscape so praised by the Romantics were believed to be full of theological meaning (Abrams 1973: 99), and the correspondence between a fact of nature and the mind was felt to possess a theological dimension. The divine meaning that inheres in nature was believed to be accessible to a sensitive mind. Objects of nature were viewed as »the sign-language of the absolute« (Abrams 1973: 59) and held to be an actualization of the divine meaning. The individual could apprehend the profounder meanings transcending nature only by contemplating its forms.

Imagination, in turn, denotes »that part or capacity of the individual mind that is founded in and has the capacity to apprehend the absolute« (Abrams 59). Romantic poets were convinced that the mystical encounter between nature and the mind was common to all people. Yet only the artists possessed the ability to make this feeling conscious. By means of a symbolic language and through the faculty of imagination, the poets could give an intelligible and creative form to their perceptions. With this view of imagination, it is not surprising that Romanticism came to be associated with the revival of mysticism and a return to religion. Some literary critics defined the search for the sacred as the very essence of Romanticism, having especially in mind its pantheistic view of nature. Employing the abstract-typological method, Fritz Strich singled out as the distinguishing feature of Romanticism its longing for the absolute and eternal (cf. Kos 34). Moreover, Romantic poets such as Blake and Wordsworth have commonly been included in anthologies of English mystical poetry, together with Julian of Norwich, the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*, George Herbert and Henry Vaughan (cf. Day 57, Zaehner 34).

Nevertheless, to call the Romantic experience religious is not only a gross simplification but it also calls into question the above definition of the Romantic subject as an absolutely autonomous individual. The most obvious difference between reli-

gious experience proper and the Romantic search for spiritual truths lies in the latter's rejection of dogmatically established religious practices. However, this is not the most important difference, especially if one adopts a broader understanding of religious experience and not the one defined by traditional confessional regulations. The peculiarity of the Romantic experience is seen in its understanding of the object of the religious experience, which is not a transcendental god beyond experiential and perceptual reality but rather a person's subjective experience. Romantic longing is indeed directed towards something higher and eternal, but the object is no longer an objective authority outside the subject but instead one that has its immanent source of inspiration within the individual's psyche. By means of the Romantic imagination, the subject »creates a higher metaphysical and religious reality of god, cosmos, nature, i.e. transcendence, which allows him to experience the absolute in a religiously-mystical or philosophically-metaphorical form« (Kos 14). A brief explication of the difference between the Romantic and religious experiences will, hopefully, serve to confirm the definition of the Romantic subject as an absolutely autonomous individual, thus questioning the status of the Romantic mystical experience.

In the attempt to define some key characteristics of the religious experience, we have recourse to Rudolf Otto's explication of the religious feelings, which provides a suitable theoretical framework for our purpose. In fact, Otto's categories can easily be compared with the Romantic longing for higher truths because in defining the nature of the transcendental experience, i.e. the human being's encounter with the mystical-divine element within the totality of things, Otto does not have recourse to the methods of theology. Instead, he argues that the religious experience is above all a feeling-response to something supramundane which escapes rational approaches and classifications. Similarly, the Romantic spiritual quest cannot be rationally demarcated; rather, it must be felt and described or somehow represented.

In writing of the religious feeling, Otto coined the term »numinous«. The »numinous« is a category »sui generis«, irreducible to any other. As it is primary datum, it admits of being discussed, but it cannot be defined with any precision. It denotes the »holy« without the moral and rational connotations that are familiarly attached to the term. In this sense, the »holy« is inherent in all religions as their very essence. It is a response to the »numinous object«, which stands as an objective category outside the self.

Such experience is so far removed from the ordinary that everyday language is ill-equipped for specifying it. Otto therefore resorts to indirect means of description. He wants to evoke in the reader the numinous feeling by bringing before him or her all the already familiar emotions which resemble or contrast with it. He speaks of »modes of manifestation,« »the moments«, ideograms of the numinous experience which may engender the feeling-response to the numinous object, but he asserts that in themselves they cannot exhaust its meaning. The core content of the »numinous« is met with in the moments of »tremendum et fascinans«. The moment of »tremendum« is objectified in the feeling of fear and horror. The English »awe«, »awe-filled« and »awesome« come closest to its meaning. This feeling is the primary response of the primeval human and is the starting point for the entire religious-historical development Otto traces. The moment of »tremendum« is deeply interfused with the moment

of »fascinans«, forming with it a strange harmony of contrasts. The »numinous« object, in Otto's view, does not appear to the mind only as an object of horror and dread, but also as something that enters, captivates and transports it. This is the Dionysian element in the »numen«. Parallel ideograms on the rational side of the non-rational element of »fascinans« are love, mercy, pity, comfort, compassion, empathy and self-sacrifice. In whatever symbolic form it is aroused in us, it shows that »above and beyond our rational being lies hidden the ultimate and highest part of our nature, which can find no satisfaction in the mere allaying of the needs of our sensuous, physical, or intellectual impulses and cravings.« (Otto 36) The moment of »majestas« is the moment of appreciating the overpoweringness of the »numinous« object. In the human mind it engenders creature-consciousness, i.e. the feeling of the insignificance of every creature before that which is above all creatures. The ideograms associated with the moment of »majestas« are force, strength and absolute transcendence. The ultimate stage of the experience is self-depreciation, the recognition of the personal »I« as something not perfectly or essentially real - even as a mere nullity - and, on the other hand, the valuation of the transcendental objects supreme and absolute. In extreme situations as experienced by some mystics, this feeling leads to the annihilation of the self on the one hand and the omnipresence of the transcendental on the other.

These various elements differ greatly from one another. The common denominator among the contrasting modes of manifestation of the numinous experience is provided by the element of »mysterium«. If the above-explicated terms denote the qualitative element of the »numinous« experience, »mysterium« stands as its form; it denotes the »wholly other«, that which is beyond the realm of the usual, the intelligible, and the familiar. Unlike a »problem«, which eludes understanding for a time but is perfectly intelligible in principle, the former remains absolutely and unvaryingly beyond human understanding. Despite its »otherness«, it does not cause distress but arouses an irrepressible interest in the mind. The ideogram associated with it is stupor, that is, amazement, astonishment. The element of the mysterious sets the »numinous« object in contrast not only to everything wonted and familiar, but finally to the world itself, making it »supramundane«.

With a view of Rudolf Otto's definition of the »numinous feelings« we can conclude that by contrast with the religious experience, Romantic mystical visions are only pseudo-religious. Despite some surface similarities, they lack the necessary preliminary for a true religious experience, which is a relative subject who is open to a higher, transcendental order of reality. In the last stage, this openness leads to the annihilation of the self. On the other hand, the ultimate purpose of Romantic mystical ventures is the confirmation of the self in its beauty and sensitivity and, consequently, as the only source of autonomy and authority. By means of his inborn capacities, most emphatically by the faculty of creative imagination, the Romantic subject hopes to penetrate beneath appearances to detect the truth of himself and the world. The mind is a direct manifestation of god's wisdom and can learn a possible meaning of existence without having recourse to institutionally confirmed answers and dogmatically established truths. Instead of accepting sets of values, coherent systems of ideas and principles, the Romantic individual undertakes to create such concepts for himself, drawing primarily on his lived experience. In arriving at these personal values and

principles, the Romantic subject takes over the functions that had once been the prerogative of the deity.

The tendency in innovative Romantic thought ... is to diminish and to great extent eliminate the role of God, leaving as the prime agencies man and the world, mind and nature, the ego and the non-ego, the self and the non-self, spirit and the other, or (in the favourite antithesis of post-Kantian philosophers) subject and object (Abrams 1973: 91).

In Romanticism, the vertical dimension gives way to the horizontal one. The Romantic subject rejects any form of transcendental stability outside the self in order to embrace a "system of reference which has only two generative and operative terms: mind and nature" (Abrams 1973: 90). In so doing, it denies any form of supramundane authority and confirms the self as an absolutely autonomous individual.

4. The Romantic Subject in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Poems "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" (1797) and "Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream"(1797)

This chapter contains possible interpretations of two poems by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The purpose of the interpretations is not to survey the existing critical responses to the selected poems, neither to capture the complexity of the lyrical subject in them, but rather to examine it with regard to the above-discussed issues: the subject's relationship to nature, his view of the poetic imagination and his pseudo-religious experience so as to illustrate the literary category of the Romantic subject.

4.1. "This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" – On Reading into Nature

The poem opens with the image of the bower in which the speaker is forced to spend his day while his friends set off for a walk. The arbour is conceived as a prison in contrast to the wide horizons the speaker's friends enjoy on their walk. The narrator 'must remain' (1) in the arbour and this confinement is more than just a physical restriction. While his friends 'wander in gladness' (8), amazed by the beauties of nature, the poet complains that he has 'lost / Beauties and feelings, such as would have been / Most' sweet to my remembrance even when age / Had dimm'd mine eyes to blindness' (3-5). His inability to enjoy natural wonders sets him apart from his friends who are freed from such afflictions. The speaker is not only barred from the large natural horizons, but also from his friend's affections. In his solitude, he succumbs to dooming predictions that he 'never more may meet again' (6) his friends. In his melancholic mood, he ventures into imagining his friends' walk. But the fantastic scenery of the 'roaring dell' (10), lit by sunshine, the slim old trunk thrown across it, the file of weeds that 'nod and drip beneath the dripping edge' (18) only accentuates his loneliness and sharpens his pain. The lime-tree bower of his personality is the harshest barrier to freedom. The next stanza gives a panoramic view of the landscape. The

speaker describes in great detail the walk of the cheerful company. As an omniscient narrator, the poet provides us with a wide range of poetical subjects from the hilly fields and mountains to the sea and its islands. Swiftly, the all-encompassing perspective narrows down to focus on a particular member of the group. The speaker's attention is drawn by one of the members whom the poet refers as the 'gentle-hearted Charles' (29). Apparently, he is enjoying the sights of the landscape most of all. The speaker sees the reason for it in his friend's confinement to the city life where he has 'pined / And hunger'd after Nature, many a year' (29-30). The devilish city, devouring the innocent and pure, possesses all the properties of the Romantic myth. Contrasted with the evil calamities of the city life, nature appears even brighter. A sequence of elevated exclamations pays a touching tribute to nature's wonders. 'Shine I the slant beam of the sinking orb, / Ye purple heath-flowers! Richlier burn, ye clouds! / Live in the yellow light, ye distant groves!' (34-36) Carried away by his imaginary visions, the poet comes to identify himself with Charles. Like his friend, he used to feel a strong affinity with nature. He remembers meditating its astonishing sights until perceiving the presence of the Spirit.

The identification with Charles is so strong that the speaker seems to be enjoying through his friend the 'beauties and feelings' (3) the loss of which he claimed at the beginning of the poem. By imagining in his mind his friend's feelings and drawing on his own solitary experience of the hills, the poet's spirits lift up. A sense of spiritual connection with both his friends and nature dawns sweetly, warding off the feeling of solitude. Defying his physical confinement as well as his psychological and social alienation, the poet feels happiness. 'A delight / Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad / As I myself were there!' (45-47) The slow coming of the twilight contributes to the serene feeling of sharing. Visions of the glorious freedom of the wild Quantocks give way to the meditations upon an apparently insignificant patch of land the speaker can see from his bower. The impressive images of the dell, the water-fall, hilly fields and meadows, the sea and the blue ocean are replaced by the descriptions of the poet's temporary home. It is 'the transparent foliage' (48), 'the shadow of the leaf' (52), 'that walnut-tree' (53) that now draw the poet's attention. Gradually, the bower lightens up in peace and friendliness. What was formerly perceived as a prison, is now felt as home.

The image of the bee superbly summarizes the new mood. In its solitude, the bee does not seem to be deterred by the spooky atmosphere of the late twilight when 'the bat / Wheels silent by, and not a swallow twitters' (58-59). Instead, it endures in singing in the bean-flower. The poet empathically identifies with the solitary bee which leads him to realize that despite his (momentary) isolation he also has a place in nature. Nature is celebrated as a motherly figure which will always welcome 'the wise and pure' (60) and for which 'No sound is dissonant which tells of Life.' (76)

Confident of the righteousness and harmony of the natural order, the poet reconsiders his predicament and resolves that 'sometimes / 'Tis well to be bereft of promis'd good, / That we may lift the soul, and contemplate / With lively joy the joys we cannot share.' (66-69) Trials of life in bereaving us of some good or in not fulfilling our hopes open up room for the divine. Curran suggests that the sense of completion is manifested in both the time sequencing and the topography of the poem. (Curran

110) The action line of the poem stretches from midday to dusk. Topographically, we observe a constant series of transpositions from one place to another; from the bower prison to the panoramic freedom of the wild Quantocks, back to the harbour. With the image of the rook an apex of a triangle is formed linking the sequestered poet and his absent friends.

"This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison" pays a tribute to the meeting between nature and the mind. The two are involved in a fruitful and constructive dialogue. Natural scenes which the poet enjoys, indirectly, in his imaginary visions and, directly, around himself, fill him with gladness. In imaginatively contemplating them, he recognizes the world as a perfectly harmonious place and finds his own role in it. Spiritually illuminated, he experiences a sense of unity with the external reality and overcomes the initial feeling of alienation.

4.2 "Kubla Khan: or, A Vision in a Dream" – On the Poet As A Prophet

The poem opens with the image of a magnificent dome, built at the spring of the sacred river Alph which descends from the height, runs through obscure caverns and flows into the 'sunless sea' (5). The landscape through which the winding river forces its five-mile long way is an enchanted and sacred place with 'gardens bright' (8), 'sinuous rills' (8), 'incense-bearing' (9) trees and ancient forests. However, it is also a savage place, symbolized by the image of a woman crying for her demon-lover. The image of the river's peaceful journey from the first stanza gives way to the image of a majestic fountain that bursts out of the centre of the earth with great energy. The earth breathes in 'fast thick pants' (18) while forcing out of itself huge pieces of hail.

In the following lines we read about the dome's shadow which is falling half-way along the river. Once again, the speaker's attention is drawn by the pleasure-dome. Overwhelmed by its majestic presence, he calls it 'a miracle' (35-36). Its mysteriousness derives from the fact that the building consists of caves of ice which bathe in the sun-light.

The third part of the poem is a recollection of the poet's vision of an Abyssinian maid playing music. The poet associates the girl's music with the vision of the pleasure dome. Inspired by the monarch's architectural exploit and the girl's performance, he dreams about creating himself something equally extraordinary and awe-inspiring.

The poet's wish to create 'that dome in air' (46) clearly alludes to the artistic creation of poetry. The image of the crazy and frightening man with floating hair and sparkling eyes, whom people from all around the world come to glorify in holy dread (50-54), echoes the Romantic myth of the poet-prophet. The speaker envisions himself as the celebrated God-like figure. He is convinced to possess all the potentials to become one if only he could recall the maiden's tune within himself so deeply that the music would possess the whole of him. In such a state he could create something as grandiose as the pleasure-dome.

The image glances back to the description of the pleasure-dome as the mysterious place, merging sunlight with ice. According to Knight, this majestic architectural jewel unveils a new dimension of human existence, transcending the one symbolized

by the river. (Knight 92) The flow of the river from its painful yet glorious birth to its obscure and frightening outflow symbolizes human existence in its totality. The maze suggests uncertainty, movement, wanderings of the everyday life. The pleasure-dome, on the other hand, overlooks temporal horizons. Its joining together opposing elements (ice and sun) suggests that it has overcome any sort of antinomy of fundamental oppositions like that between life and death, creation and destruction, light and darkness, transcending, thus, the conflicting aspects of existence.

The speaker associates the artistic creation with the pleasure-dome, which reveals the status of the poetic creation in *Kubla Khan*. Like the pleasure dome, the poet overlooks the turbulent aspects of existence because he was granted insight into the ultimate truths. He “glimpses that for which no direct words exist: the sparkling dome of some vast intelligence enjoying that union of opposites which to man appears conflict unceasing and mazed wandering pain between mystery and mystery.” (Knight 95) As such, he is worshipped as the messiah, the enlightened one.

The artistic creation is not only a theme within the poem, but *Kubla Khan* as such exemplifies poetic imagination. From its genesis we know that the poem was a product of Coleridge's dreams and opium hallucinations. The dream-like and trance-like qualities of the poem are obvious: the poetic subjects drift into each other in an unexpected way, freely and randomly. The images of the river, the dome, the maid and the poet are fused together with no apparent logical connections. They are enigmatic in their references and encourage different interpretations. Coleridge attributed a great deal of significance to dreams. He believed them to contribute to a better and deeper understanding of reality. The dream imagination, in turn, was the privileged form of poetic imagination. “Thus one dream, or one poem, drawn from the very depth of the unconscious mind, might mysteriously hold sway over the tides of one man's entire life, and be a symbol of its permanent meaning.” (Holmes 85)

Kubla Khan stems from Coleridge's yearning to experience the transcendental, something invisible, whole, eternal. His wish was best articulated in the latter to Thelwall from 14th October 1797: “I should so much wish, like the Indian Vishnu to float about along an infinite ocean cradled in the flower of the Lotus, and wake once in a million years for a few minutes-just to know that I was going to sleep a million years.” (quoted in Mazumder 43) More than just experiencing, Coleridge longed to actually “realize the sublime” (Mazumder 43), to give it a form, to create something grandiose insightful, illuminating. Coleridge would, no doubt, agree with Knight that “poetry, in moments of high optimistic vision, reveals something more closely entwined than that with the natural order. It expresses rather a new and more concrete proportion of life here and now, unveiling a new dimension of existence.” (Knight 93)

However, with *Kubla Khan* Coleridge did not realize his ideal. From the genesis of the poem we know that interrupted by an unexpected visitor, Coleridge could never bring the poem to conclusion. “At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found /.../ that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision /.../ the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast...” (E. H. Coleridge 296) The poem was left unfinished, fragmentary.

The inability of artistic creation is not only the biographical note to the poem, but also the theme within this very poem. Captivated by the maid's song, the poet cries: 'Could I revive within me / Her symphony and song' (42-43). The conditional clause implies an unfulfilled wish. The poet seems to suffer from his inability to body forth his vision.

The subject in *Kubla Khan* is the typically Romantic subject in its unconditional confidence in his prophetic powers. Even though his creative energy is trapped within himself and he suffers from the inability to release it, which, however, does not waver his confidence in its powers. Unlike in the above poems, however, the lyrical subject finds inspiration in his unconscious visions rather than in nature.

The Romantic subject as it arises from the interpretations of the poems is an autonomous individual in many ways. The perennial seeker after a higher truth, he strives to answer the ultimate questions about the self and the universe by contemplating himself against nature. In doing so, he hopes to learn something about himself and the universe and, eventually, discover his place in the world. His optimism and self-confidence rests on his conviction in the harmoniously-ordered natural world which will always welcome the human being. In his trust in the power of consciousness to read into nature, Coleridge echoes Wordsworth's pantheistic views according to which knowledge gathered through the senses leads to a possible meaning of existence, thus paying tribute to the Romantic imagination. From these very premises stems the myth of the visionary poet-prophet, depicted as a God-like figure, eager to recreate through language what he sees in his dream-like visions. The poet's heightened perceptions make him responsive to the mystery of the reality here and now and entitled to express his experience through a work of art.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, with regard to the issues discussed, i.e. the role of nature, the status of imagination, and the subject's relation to the transcendental reality, the Romantic individual appears to be absolutely autonomous. Instead of conforming to some pre-established sets of values, rules and practices he relies on his own immanent powers in achieving self-awareness. Consequently, the so called mystical visions which are often associated with the Romantic subject, cannot be viewed as religious experiences proper. In fact, the preliminary for a religious experience is a relative subject who is open to a transsubjective dimension of reality.

In conclusion it seems to me fitting to refer to the painting "The Wanderer Above The Mist" (1818) by the German Romantic painter Caspar David Friedrich. The painting represents a male figure standing on the peak of a mountain. The man is viewed from behind and stands gazing at the horizon, apparently mesmerized by the beautiful but also frightening landscape extending at his feet. Like this Friedrich's figure, the Romantic "Wanderer" stands facing the mysteries of the natural world, being both part of it and at the same time in a dominating position. Equipped with visionary powers, he rests peacefully and self-confidently on the peak of awareness.

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REVIEWER RESPONSE TO PINTER'S *THE CARETAKER*

Tomaž Onič

Abstract

The Caretaker is one of Harold Pinter's early plays. It was an immediate success, and it drew the attention of many critics, who started judging this contemporary British playwright's works from a new perspective. Therefore, many scholars consider *The Caretaker* an important turning point in the reception of Pinter's works. The play has seen many stagings all over the world, two of them in Slovenia. This article sets out its most prominent productions, analyses and comments on their critical reviews, and compares these to the response to Pinter in Slovene cultural space.

International productions of *The Caretaker*

Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*¹ was first published in 1959 together with four other plays in the second volume of the author's collected works. It was premièred in April 1960 at the Arts Theatre in London and moved to the Duchess Theatre a month after the first production. This early play by Harold Pinter was enthusiastically accepted by the general public and the critics. It was his sixth theatre piece, presented only three years after his first two plays, *The Room* and *The Birthday Party*. The first reviews of the former were favourable, but, surprisingly, this was not the case with *The Birthday Party*, which is today one of his most frequently staged pieces; some even number it among the best achievements of contemporary British theatre. Its first production ran only a week, and it took most of the critics some time to realise that there was more to it than mere »verbal anarchy«, as Milton Shulman (1958) labelled what later became known as typical pinteresque dialogue. *The Cambridge Review* was satisfied with the quality of the production but critical of the text: »Despite the excitement the play generates in performance, the quality of *The Birthday Party* seems de-

¹ *The Caretaker* is a full-length, three-character, three-act play. The action is compressed into an attic room of an old house in the suburbs of London, owned by two brothers, Mick and Aston. The central character is Davies, an old tramp, whom Aston brings home after »finding« him on the street. Later the audience learns that Davies worked as a cleaner at a café where Aston supposedly saved him from a conflict, or maybe even a fight, with his employer. Aston first offers him shelter, then the job of caretaker. Davies is pleasantly surprised at the beginning but becomes ungrateful and selfish when he starts suspecting that Aston is not the actual owner of the apartment. He tries to manipulate the two brothers but eventually fails. As they both turn their backs on him, he realises that he has missed the chance of a lifetime.

batable« (Pinter 2004). Walter Kerr, a respected and influential reviewer in *The New York Times*, denoted *The Birthday Party* as »by and large a bore« (cf. Hollis-Merritt 1990, 231) and expressed doubts that the audience would be »turned on« (ibid.) by this play.

Despite the fact that the first performances of *The Birthday Party* failed to repeat the success of *The Room*, Pinter did not stop writing or staging. Soon the predictions of Harold Hobson, one of the few reviewers who spoke in favour of Pinter's plays from the very beginning, started to prove true:

Deliberately, I am willing to risk whatever reputation I have as a judge of plays by saying that *The Birthday Party* is not a Fourth, not even a Second, but a First; and that Mr. Pinter, on the evidence of his work, possesses the most original, disturbing, and arresting talent in theatrical London (Hobson 1958, 11).

In 1959, Germany saw the world premiere of *The Dumb Waiter*, and in the same year, *The Birthday Party* reappeared in England and abroad. Pinter's successful career was thereby firmly established with the result that *The Caretaker* came into existence in a favourable environment, friendly to its author and to his works.

As the course of events showed, *The Caretaker* was probably one of the most significant turning points in the critics' response to Pinter's writing. After the first production, Alan Pryce-Jones published an encouraging review in *The Observer*: »*The Caretaker* /.../ is quite superbly acted and produced. /.../ I trust anyone who responds to strict professionalism at the service of an excellent play will hurry to the Arts Theatre« (1960, 21). He also spoke in Pinter's defence regarding earlier less favourable reviews of his earlier plays:

Harold Pinter has been accused of a negative approach to the drama; he has been called obscure – not without reason – and tantalising (*vide* my colleague Maurice Richardson's remarks /.../). His latest play [i.e. *The Caretaker*, T.O.] is not obscure in the least; it is excitingly original, and manages not only to be exceptionally funny but also to touch the heart. /.../ I repeat, this play is an event (Pryce-Jones 1960, 21).

Positive judgements started to come from reviewers who had been less approving of Pinter at the beginning. Referring to *The Caretaker*, the *Daily Mail* judged this to be »a play and a production which no one who is concerned with the advance of the British drama can afford to miss« (cf. Jongh 2004). The following quite self-critical opinion by a well known reviewer, Kenneth Tynan, was published in *The Observer*:

With *The Caretaker* which was moved from the Arts Theatre to the Duchess Theatre, Harold Pinter has begun to fulfill the promise that I signally failed to see in *The Birthday Party* (Tynan 1960, 12).

Pinter's comments on the theatrical management of the time show that negative reviews of his early plays might have been, at least partly, the result of theatrical policies. Despite the fact that Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* was staged in London in 1955 (the Paris premiere was in 1953), and that Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* started the

'angry young man' movement in 1957, the theatre space was still to a certain extent sceptical of the new trends. The reviewer in *The Manchester Guardian* even reproached Pinter for not being able to forget Beckett (cf. Hribar 1999, 202). However, Pinter does admit that a few years before the premiere of *The Caretaker*, the theatre situation began to change. According to a conversation with Richard Findlater, published in *The Twentieth Century* in February 1961, this change had a positive impact on the promotion and success of the play:

As far as the state of the theatre is concerned, /.../ I think things will go on more or less as they are for some considerable time. But it seems to me that there has been a certain development in one channel or another in the past three years. *The Caretaker* wouldn't have been put on, and certainly wouldn't have run, before 1957. The old categories of comedy and tragedy and farce are irrelevant, and the fact that managers seem to have realized that is one favourable change (Pinter 1961, xi).

Immediately, *The Caretaker* started to appear on stages all over Europe and the world. At the beginning of 1961, the play was staged in Paris and towards the end of the year in New York. Both productions were successful, so the transformation into film was the natural next step.

Pinter himself wrote the screenplay for the film, even though he was extremely sceptical about the project at first. Kevin Cavander's interview with Pinter and the director Clive Donner (Cavander 1963) about shooting the film and all the preparations shows that they implemented this plan in a rather unusual way: they raised all the required financial means by themselves – only through sponsors and patrons; moreover, all scenes were shot in the attic of an old house in Hackney, significantly without various modern facilities that a well equipped television studio offers; and finally, they produced the film without any guarantee that it would be distributed at all. Despite that, Pinter's opinion on the course of action and the circumstances of the shooting was positive:

I think it did an awful lot for the actors to go up real stairs, open real doors in a house which existed, with a dirty garden and a back wall. /.../ As a complete layman to the film medium I found that looking round that room where one had to crouch to see what was going on (the whole film was shot in a kneeling or crouching posture) – I found there was a smell to it (Cavander 1963, 22).

The production was a success. It was awarded a prestigious film award, the Silver Bear, at the Berlin Film Festival in 1963. Another film version of *The Caretaker* entitled *The Guest*, also directed by Clive Donner, was produced in 1964 in New York.

Many students of Pinter's work agree that the immediate success of *The Caretaker* was also due to the comical elements in the play, and even those reviewers who initially doubted or openly opposed this judgement, eventually changed or moderated their views. Nowadays, *The Caretaker* is considered to be one of Pinter's funniest plays; however, the author himself is cautious about any over-emphasis on its humour:

I did not intend it [*The Caretaker*, T.O.] to be merely a laughable farce. / .../ As far as I'm concerned, *The Caretaker* is funny, up to a point. Beyond that point it ceases to be funny, and it was because of that point that I wrote it (Pinter 1960, 21).

There are several different types and layers of humour in the play (cf. Onič 2003). Pinter himself appreciates intellectually demanding humour, probably because it is more undefined and relative than some other types of humour, for example, situational. Usually, there are various ways of interpreting it, and new interpretations emerge as the audience realises the true meaning of laughter-provoking words or actions. Referring to the laughter in the audience at *The Caretaker's* first run, Eslin (1991, 249) uses the term »the laughter of recognition«. Pinter indirectly expresses his agreement with this idea and confirms the relativity of his humour by showing that he is aware of the thin line between funny and tragic:

I am rarely consciously writing humour, but sometimes I find myself laughing at some particular point which has suddenly struck me as being funny ... more often than not the speech only seems to be funny – the man in question is actually fighting a battle for his life (cf. Quigley 1975, 52).

This characteristic is, according to Jure Gantar, a defining characteristic of absurdist plays, since – as he believes – »the theatre of the absurd confirms the fact that in the appropriate circumstances nothing is safe from laughter« (1993, 58; transl. T.O.)².

Over the course of forty years of constant production on stage, *The Caretaker* has appeared in many variants. Some of them followed the text quite literally, whereas others showed how specific and unconventional perception dimensions can be extracted from the text. Michael Billington (2001, 8) mentions a Romanian production in which the whole play is shown as a religious allegory; the first scene shows Aston as a Christ-like figure washing Davies's legs, accompanied by the sounds of Bach's *Mass in b-minor*. Furthermore, he recalls a production in Nottingham Playhouse in which the director, Steve Shill, pays much attention to the sound, light, and space effects, and less to the characters and relationships. Billington denotes it as a step away from Pinter, but he admits that the performance was unforgettable:

Raindrops keep falling on lead roofs for much of the evening. The famous room, far from being a cramped, dingy attic is surprisingly light and airy with three large windows /.../ By drenching the play in atmosphere, Shill also loses sight of the way language itself is an instrument of power. /.../ I shall remember this production, however, for its windblown white curtains rather than its human values (Billington 1993, 8).

The critics and the general audience have always been interested in what Pinter himself has to say about his writing. Roger Webster, along with many other literary reviewers and scholars of Pinter's works, suggests that the author of *The Caretaker*

² Original quotation: »/.../ absurdistične drame vedno znova izpričujejo, da v pravih okoliščinah nič ni varno pred smehom.«

has always been quite reluctant to give definite answers or comments about his plays but has preferred to stay in the background taking the role of an observer:

[S]ome contemporary writers such as Samuel Beckett or Harold Pinter have deliberately avoided making statements about their works when interviewed, as if they had no more right than anyone else to comment on them, seeming to deny any responsibility for them once they are in public circulation (Webster 1997, 21).

Many of Pinter's statements unambiguously confirm these remarks – as, for example, a statement taken from his speech in Hamburg in 1970, when he received the prize for *Landscape* and *Silence*: »I can sum up none of my plays. I can describe none of them, except to say: That is what happened. That is what they said. That is what they did« (Pinter 1971, 4).

Even now, after a few decades, Pinter has not changed this standpoint. In an interview with Mel Gussow that took place just before the *Harold Pinter Festival* in the summer of 2001 in New York, he confirmed his old belief: »I wouldn't even attempt to define it [the meaning of *Ashes to Ashes*] myself. If I could have defined it, I wouldn't have written it. This really applies to everything I write« (Gussow 2001, 8).

It is, however, possible to find Pinter quoting or commenting on his plays in the media as well as in the critical literature. According to Susan Hollis-Merriitt, Pinter gives statements when the commercial aspect of his occupation requires it (1990:12). The common point of the majority of his statements is that Pinter usually does not attribute deep philosophical meaning to his plays but rather thinks about them as simple reflections of everyday life. The same goes for the ground of their existence. Here is, for example, what he once wrote in a letter to Peter Wood:

The germ of my plays? I'll be as accurate as I can about that. I went into a room and saw one person standing up and one person sitting down, and a few weeks later I wrote *The Room*. I went into another room and saw two people sitting down, and a few years later I wrote *The Birthday Party*. I looked through a door into a third room and saw two people standing up, and I wrote *The Caretaker* (Pinter 1981, 5-6).

This sentence, in which Pinter speaks about his inspiration for *The Caretaker*, refers to the time when he lived in a two-room apartment in London with his wife and son. The owner of the house had a mentally retarded brother, whom Pinter once saw through an open door; beside him was standing a tramp with a huge bag. »From that frozen moment came a dynamic play about power, territory, the tramp's manipulation of the two brothers and his eventual expulsion from this squalid Eden« (Billington 2001, 8).

The Caretaker on the Slovene stage

The Caretaker appeared on our stages relatively late; the Slovene premiere took place on 5th June 1970, which is ten years after the world premiere in London. The

production was staged by Slovensko ljudsko gledališče in Celje, and the translation was provided by Janko Moder. This was not the first production of Pinter in our cultural space; three years earlier, Mala drama of Slovensko narodno gledališče staged *Homecoming*, but Pinter was still not well known at the time. For this reason, the theatre program of the Celje production (Ž/mavc/ 1970, n. pag.) contained a complete translation of Schechner's essay, published in 1966, which is an extensive analysis of this particular play as well as of Pinter's style in general; moreover, it provided numerous excerpts from his plays illustrating the points Schechner makes.

The Celje production was reviewed in the newspapers *Večer* (Smasek 1970) and *Delo* (Javornik 1970), the latter focusing more on the visiting performance in Mestno gledališče ljubljansko. Both reviews were quite extensive; they both give credit to the director, the actors, and the performance in general. What is more, they both contain a lot of information about the author, his style, his preferred themes, and – of course – about *The Caretaker*. Javornik does not doubt Pinter's mastery of dialogue and dramatic tension; however, the following quotation proves that he has not fully accepted all the dimensions of Pinter's style:

Šedlbauer [the director of production, T.O.] could, without causing any harm, have shortened that typical but tiring repetition of certain phrases, but, on the other hand, he has created a very lively and dynamic mise-en-scène production (Javornik 1970, 10; transl. T.O.)³.

After this production of *The Caretaker*, there was only one more in Slovene. That was the opening play of the 1990/91 season in Prešernovo gledališče in Kranj. The premiere was on 27th September 1990, which was more than twenty years after the first one. Again, Janko Moder provided the translation (1990a). The theatre program accompanying the performance (Bremec 1990) was thinner than the Celje one from 1970 but still bearing sufficient information about the play and the playwright. Vurnik, who wrote the review of the production, was quite severe towards the play in most of its aspects, but interestingly enough he found disturbing the very same elements as Javornik did twenty years before. Paradoxically, these are the elements of Pinter's style that his admirers and scholars of his opus most appreciate:

Possibly, some improvement could apply only to the rhythm of the performance. The dim introduction could be dropped, as well as the delays, because both imply some kind of mystery that doesn't exist at all (Vurnik 1990, 7; transl. T.O.)⁴.

At the time this review was written, Pinter's plays had been present in the Slovene cultural space for over two decades (and over three on the world scene). Considering this and the fact that in the late eighties sources on Pinter were abundant, it is surprising that Vurnik hazarded such a groundless and, in fact, mistaken opinion. He overlooked many important qualities of the text that were – despite the inconsistent trans-

³ Original quotation: »Šedlbauer bi sicer brez škode lahko nekoliko krajšal značilno, a utrjujejoče ponavljanje posameznih fraz, vendar je izoblikoval izredno živo, dinamično, mizanscensko uprizoritev.«

⁴ Original quotation: »Nemara bi kazalo poskrbeti le za boljše izoblikovan ritem predstave, opustiti temačen uvod in zastoje, ker napovedujejo neko skrivnostnost, ki je pravzaprav nikjer ni.«

lation by Janko Moder – noticeable in the performances (cf. Pinter 1990b⁵). His superficial knowledge about the author, his works, and, most of all, the general reviewer's response to them is also reflected in the following statement:

If the play did not have so many witty and humorous elements in the dialogue, specially in the first part, which is entertaining for the audience, it would belong in a similar literary lumber room as it represents itself (Vurnik 1990, 7; transl. T.O.)⁶.

Pinter has remained current in Slovene theatres ever since the early performances⁷; the latest production of one of his plays before Slovene audiences was *The Birthday Party*, staged at Prešernovo gledališče Kranj in the 2002/03 season (cf. Veselko 2002). From her research into Pinter's translations into Slovene, Darja Hribar concludes that Pinter is »one of the most often translated contemporary British playwrights. Six out of fourteen translations /.../ were put on stage in Slovenia« (1999, 193). Pinter's plays are – as she later adds – very popular with theatre professionals, particularly directors and actors. For the actor Polde Bibič, for example, who played Davies in the 1990 production of *The Caretaker* in Kranj, »Pinter is, by all means, the author that one takes pleasure in« (Mencinger 1990, 17; transl. T.O.)⁸. Žarko Petan was the first director to produce Pinter on a Slovene stage⁹. He told Darja Hribar in an interview that »the way Pinter writes his stories is exceptional; the actors like to play him. He knows how to write for them« (Hribar 1999, 234; transl. T.O.)¹⁰. According to her analysis, the main reason for such popularity of Pinter is the fact that his texts allow scope for great creativity (Hribar 1999, 196), but since Pinter puts most of his dramatic power into language, this is only possible with a good translation. Some recent research papers on translation of Pinter's texts confirm that Slovene translation practice lacks consistency and translation strategy. Moreover, some translations that circulate among Slovene theatre groups are often not authentic but were severely adjusted for the specific purposes of certain productions, without any note informing the user of this fact, let alone any authorisation from the translator. Research activity on Pinter in Slovene cultural space and the development of Slovene translatology in general will, undoubtedly, contribute to a better quality of translated texts, and consequently to better performances and greater enjoyment of the Slovene theatre audience.

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⁵ This conclusion is based on a working video of one of the performances. A generalised statement is possible under the presumption that individual performances do not differ among themselves to such an extent as to refute the relevance of the above commentary.

⁶ Original quotation: »Če igra ne bi imela mnogih duhovitosti in humornih sestavin v dialogu zlasti v prvem delu, kar občinstvo zabava, bi sodila v podobno literarno ropotarnico, kakršno ponazarja sama.«

⁷ For a complete overview of Pinter's plays on Slovene stages and a list of un-staged Slovene translations of his texts, see Mirko 1999 and Hribar (1999, 231-233).

⁸ Original quotation: »Pinter je vsekakor avtor, s katerim ima človek veselje.«

⁹ *Vrnitev* (*The Homecoming*), Slovene National Theatre in Ljubljana, premiere: October 24th 1967.

¹⁰ Original quotation: »Pinter piše zgodbe izjemno; igralci ga radi igrajo. Zna pisati zanje.«

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RECONFIGURING THE WEST IN NEIL JORDAN'S SHORT STORY "LOVE"

Stipe Grgas

Abstract

In introducing his article, the author draws attention to the enormous importance space, especially the west of Ireland, has in the Irish culture and in the legitimization of Irish identity. The central part of the article is devoted to an analysis of Neil Jordan's "A Love" in which the author describes the way Jordan uses the West as the privileged place of Irish self-representation. A close reading of the text shows the writer's strategies which subvert the conventional image of the West of Ireland and the author voices the opinion that Jordan's text refers to the end of one conceptualization of Irish identity. Offering the concept of heterotopia (Foucault) in his conclusion the author opens up the possibility of reading the representation of space in Jordan's story as his inscription of those places which were elided from the utopian Irish national saga.

Observers writing from positions both within and outside Irish culture have pointed out the particular importance of geographical space and its different manifestations to the construction of Irish identity. On the present occasion I will only mention Gerry Smyth's study *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination* where we can find a number of case studies which convincingly illustrate "the existence and influence of a 'special relationship' between community and environment permeating Irish life"¹. Quite simply, space, or perhaps it would be more precise to say certain configurations of space and their evaluative hierarchization are crucial to Irish self-understanding and how the Irish people identify themselves as belonging to a distinct culture.

The cultural geography of Ireland provides an illuminating example of how a particular region has accrued connotations and a particular import in the constructions of Irish identity. Describing this, Seamus Deane designates it as the "apotheosis of the west"². If we keep in mind Ireland's colonial legacy and its geographical position vis-à-vis England the choice of the west as the site of authenticity can be seen as the outcome of the struggle of conquest and resistance. The west provided Irish nationalism with an antipodal vision, whether as a Gaelic speaking community or a rural economy, that substantiated its claims to independence from English rule.

¹ Gerry Smyth, *Space and the Irish Cultural Imagination*. New York: Palgrave, 2001. 19.

² Seamus Deane, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, 52-53.

As is to be expected, such a powerful cultural motif has been employed and still finds itself on the agenda of works of literature. As a matter of fact, one can say that the way a particular writer relates to and works with the images of the west not only positions the writing within Irish literature but reveals the way he/she negotiates the self-representations of Irishness. In editing a collection of contemporary Irish short stories³, I was struck by the extent that younger writers are no longer weighed down by considerations of espousing a distinct identity. Considering the importance of the west for the construction of Irish identity I felt it would be of interest to show how a contemporary writer deals with this issue.

As the first author in the collection I chose Neil Jordan and his short story "A Love" which will be the main subject of my discussion.⁴ The choice of Jordan was dictated both because he is probably one of the rare contemporary names known to the Croatian public primarily as a cult director, because of the intrinsic aesthetic worth of his writing but also because I believe that his work signifies a break and in a sense harbingers the contemporary.

Before going to the story itself I offer two samples of, what one can call, Jordan's narrative topography which prove that the use to which he puts spatial coordinates in "A Love" is not an isolated instance. In the story "Skin" Jordan makes references to "Irish suburbia", a space emerging at a later date of Irish history and one which does not figure in the privileged representations of Ireland. In the fragment where the word appears it is interesting to note that the woman entrapped in the "vacuity of suburban dwelling" "held the memory of a half-peasant background fresh and intact" (CF, 53). For the purposes of my analysis it is indicative that the delineation of the present setting is overshadowed by the pull of an archaic rurality, more "innocent" and authentic. A similar dualism can be found in Jordan's novel *The Past* (1980) when we read of a character's buying a school in Connemara "to show the Bray slum youth the west of Ireland" (CF, 219). A closer reading of these two works would show that what Jordan does with this dualism and the implicit privileging of the rural or, more explicitly, the west of Ireland is to show how its actuality is not in accord with the projected images or how forces of modernity intrude on its sanctimonious terrain, staging changes and disruptions.

In the short story "A Love" (CF, 71-85) Jordan uses his typical technique of cuts, mosaics of short sections, giving us spurts of narrative that run on for a page or two or are reduced to a few lines. It can be said that the discontinuous composition of the narrative reduplicates the cinematic mode which conveys temporal continuity through 'stopped time', through the succession of still frames or frozen images. If a significance is to be assigned to this compositional strategy than the cinematic cutting technique can be seen as a ploy which displaces the privileged position of orality within Irish culture or, more particularly, of the west which is frequently identified with oral lore. In such a manner he disavows the story of nation and foregrounds a submerged story with its own unrepresented, fragmented space.

The nineteen fragments making up the story can be structured in various ways but for the purposes of this analysis I group them around the settings where the present

³ Stipe Grgas, *Otok gipsanih svetaca: antologija irske kratke priče*, Zagreb: Naklada MD, 2004.

⁴ Neil Jordan, *Night in Tunisia*. 1976. New York: Vintage, 1995.

time of the narrative is taking place. Thusly we can say that the fragments of the story can be grouped around three spatial assemblages: the initial section taking place in Dublin (1-8), the car journey (9-13) and the arrival at the western destination (13-9). Described in these terms the story is obviously a tale of a journey but as my reading will establish this journey cannot be counted amongst the pilgrimages which sought in the west a retrieval of endangered knowledge and wisdom.

Although the focus of my reading is topical, formal considerations indigenous to the short story cannot be ignored because it is on this level that Jordan shows utmost care and craftsmanship. Furthermore, these features show how the spatial problematic is highlighted by the structure of the story. In her study of the short story Susan Lohafer gives the following description of the experience of reading this genre:

Word by word, clause by clause, the prose of the story is experienced, I said, both as a route to closure – of the sentence, of the story – and as an obstacle to closure ...the whole experience is impelled and conditioned by the imminence of the end, the backwash of closure.⁵

In her study she introduces the notion of “preclosure” which she uses to indicate those points within the story where the narrative could possibly end and where the reader can concoct putative wholes.

One of the reasons that I mention this notion is because the introductory paragraph of Jordan’s story can be said to constitute such a whole, foreshadowing much that is to come, setting down the temporalities within which the story will take place but also indicating the space from which the spatial trajectory of the story begins. I quote the passage in full:

There were no cars in Dublin when I met you again, the streets had been cleared for the funeral of the President who had died. I remembered you talking about him and I thought of how we would have two different memories of him. He was your father’s generation, the best and the worst you said. I remembered your father’s civil war pistol, black and very real, a cowboy gun. It was that that first attracted me, a boy beyond the fascination of pistols but capable of being seduced by a real gun owned by a real lady with real bullets – I shattered two panes in your glasshouse and the bullet stuck in the fence beyond the glass-house shaking it so it seemed to be about to fall into the sea and float with the tide to Bray Head. then you took the gun from me saying no-one should play with guns, men or boys and put the hand that held it in your blouse, under your breast. And I looked at you, an Irish woman whose blouse folded over and was black and elegant in the middle of the day, whose blouse hid a gun besides everything else. But except that you smiled at me with a smile that meant more than all those I would just have been a kid bringing a message from his father to a loose woman. As it was you walked over the broken glass away from me and I stepped after you over the

⁵ Susan Lohafer, *Reading for Storyness: Preclosure Theory, Empirical Poetics, and Culture in the Short Story*, Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins UP, 2003, 16.

broken pieces to where the view of the sea was and you began to teach me love.(71)

The finalized time of narrating, its pastness is underscored both by the references to an event in the past and to the passing away of an order embodied in De Valera and his presidency. Something has ended even before the story gets under way. For the broader implications of Jordan's story which I hope will be brought out in the following reading it is indicative that the sense of terminality is produced through the conflation of two temporalities: the time of the as yet anonymous fictional characters – the "I" and the "you" – and the public time signaled by the definite article and the capitalized "President". As we proceed, the temporal structure is additionally complicated by the insertion of two flashbacks where the two temporalities/domains are again put in a tension-filled relationship. In the analepsis the public domain is created through the reference to the aged participants of the historical saga and the synecdoche of the "civil war pistol". As will later be seen, the shooting of the bullets adumbrates a pivotal scene in the relationship of the narrator and his father. The placing of the gun under the woman's breast gestures to a nexus of themes including sexuality, violence, nation. The conjunction beginning the penultimate sentence indicates a swerve in the narrative where the earlier metaphorical seduction by a gun is literalized in the revelation that the woman began to teach him love. The growth of that relationship in the past and how it challenged and undermined public authority and spaces is one of the referents of the title of the story. On the other hand, the present of the story might be described as an attempt to relive the intensity of the past experience "again". The way that the present of the narrative repeats the subversions of public spaces but with a telling difference is one of the crucial points of my analysis.

In the fifth fragment which, through a memory which has "come right", describes the lovemaking between the older woman and the younger narrator on the background of rivalry with the father Jordan writes how that act is a "quiet desecration of the holiday town, of the church at the top of the hill...the country, the place, the thing you tried to hit at through me you taught me to hit through you"(74). The choice of the powerful word "desecration" opens Jordan's description of a sexual adventure to additional connotations which are signaled in the subsequent buildup of the sentence. It is interesting that the act of love is performed in a room above the quarters where the father lies awake. Thusly, the usurpation of the authorized order is projected in spatial terms of what is above and what is "underneath".

The place where these ruminations on the past are taking place is Dublin. As far as the spatialities of the story are concerned it need be noted that the second analepses and the initiation into love takes place, as described above, in Bray a locality south of the city. The repetition of the phrase "no cars in Dublin" at the beginning of each paragraph of the first fragment, besides contributing to the poetic quality of the text, underscores that the normal cityscape has been evacuated for the staging of the state funeral. However, it need be noted that the evoked sense of an absence of vehicles on the Dublin streets presupposes the existence of a bustling motorized city. This absence-as-presence signifies an inversion of what normally is. In addition, it is indicative that the reunion of two lovers takes place in a café with a "chromo expresso machine"

where they are the only guests, their groping for the former intimacy repeatedly encroached upon by the spectacle approaching down the public thoroughfares. When the narrator – identified at a point as Neil –, retracing the stirrings of desire for the woman, thinks of her as a “photograph”, “a still from a film”, the person “who played Ava Gardner to my James Dean” we can safely say that the spaces of Ireland evoked in Jordan’s story have been infiltrated by a spatiality that undermines its self-legitimizing representations. References to icons of American popular culture evidence the breakdown of rigid, exclusivist definitions of identity. One has to keep this in mind in order to understand the funeral backdrop of the story. The passing away of the statesman whose life’s work was to create a country after an image of a rural, quaint community symbolizes the demise of this projection, the closing down of an old order. To again call upon Susan Lohafer one could say that this is one of the points in the story which can be identified as an instance of “preclosure” or a point where the story could end. However, if the image of Ireland propagated by de Valera was in large part constructed on an imaginary of the west of Ireland it is revealing that the two lovers end their sojourn in Dublin by deciding to drive in that direction.

During the conversation in the café the woman suggests that they go to Clare, to the town of Lisdoonvarna in the west of Ireland. Marked by a change of venue, the second group of fragments take place on the road as we follow the couple through Monasterevin, Portlaoise, Limerick until they stop in a place called Lahinch. Of course the journey by car in itself marks a difference from the bicycle pilgrimages of an earlier generation which headed to the unspoiled countryside to gather the wisdom and the language of the folk. A fleeting image of a girl hitchhiker standing by a petrol-pump can in that sense be read as an intrusion on this imagined landscape. As in the previous movement of the story Jordan here intertwines the two domains of the public and the private. In addition to the fact that the journey can be read as an attempt to retrieve a former moment of bliss by an ailing woman and her paramour the journey resonates with a deeper cultural significance. In this latter sense it can be read as a rite of initiation. In an exchange on the westward journey the woman asks Neil whether he had been to the West and his negative reply prompts the statement: “You’ll never understand this country till you have” (78). Her rejoinder can be understood in a variety of ways but all of them ultimately derive from the assumed significance of the West to an understanding of Irish identity.

The most straightforward explanation of the statement is apparently the one which rehearses the sanctioned narrative of the Irish nation. However, if we keep in mind the back story of De Valera’s funeral and the way that it forecloses a project of nation founded on the values of the rural west this interpretation of the utterance does not satisfy. Returning to the text we read that the statement was said in a voice “consciously older, something valedictory in it” (78). Not only is there something of a farewell in that utterance but its pronouncement inaugurates another flashback of Bray and the narrator’s rivalry with his father which ends with the narrator as youth pleading for the woman to tell him “again about love and irreligion, about other countries where women are young at the age of thirty-nine and boys are men at fifteen” (79). The explicit reference to “irreligion” and “other countries” signalize a desire to break free of the suffocating fetters of a patriarchal and puritanical order. Read within this context the

West would not be a site of empowerment such as it is represented in the sanctioned stories but rather the source and culprit for all things which stifle life and beauty in Ireland. I offer a third possibility which is perhaps nearest to what we actually read in the story. Asked why she wants to take the journey to the West after first announcing her intention the woman answers: "I am past my prime. They are places for people past their prime"(76). To the extent that the story can be read as an allegory of generations the identification of the West as place for the dying generation removes it from the sphere of relevance of the young. On another level the sentence can be read as indicating that Ireland itself is past her prime, that the space from which it drew its vigor has been enfeebled and spent.

The third and closing movement of the story occurs within the thirteenth fragment of the text when, instead of stopping at the city of Limerick, they continue driving until they reach the seaside town, actually the village of Lahinch. Of course, the decision to leave the city behind is not just the penultimate station on the pilgrimage of discovering the west but inaugurates the closing cadences of the story. The act of love described in the following two passages does not only show the impossibility of retrieving its past fervor because of the process of ageing but is, likewise punctured by a memory of the earlier father-son rivalry which in the analepsis culminates ("something was going to end"(83)) in the farcical attempt on the father's life. The fading away of the memory coincides with the narrator's ejaculation ("come") inside the woman "in the room in Clare" and the post-coital emptiness is underscored by the woman's pronouncement "It's finished" and the narrator's knowledge that "it had ended". In the continuation of that sentence the narrator recoils from that insight and projects a tomorrow that will perhaps open up new possibilities. Next day the pair drive to the final destination, Lisdoonvarna" "where the bachelors and the spinsters come, where you take the waters"(84). The reader not only notes the repetition of the word "come" occurring as it does in such close vicinity but the difference between the earlier signification of consummated pleasure and the later prosaic information concerning a generational proclivity for settlement within a particular locality.

The last four brief fragments depict the western destination in a way which is relevant to my reading. For instance, in the first one we read that Lisdoonvarna is an inland town which instead of the sea has "sulphur waters". The things we associate with water are replaced here by connotations of exhaustion and decrepitude. In the second fragment, the motif of the sea continues with the following description: "Every building seemed to imply a beach, but there was none. It was as if the sea had once been here, but retreated back to Miltown Malbay, leaving a fossil" (84). As far as my reading is concerned the significance of that last metaphor is twofold. First of all, it aptly captures the waning of an erotic magnetism which underlines the story as a whole and primarily refers to the woman who, in her infirmity, resorts to the remedying waters of the spas. In addition, read in the broader cultural context, which I believe underpins and contributes to the profundity of the story, the word "fossil" refers to the west itself. For example, when we come upon a description of a building that is said to look "like a Swiss hotel" one senses a certain aversion towards things inauthentic and bereft of life that permeates the concluding fragments of the story. The place of arrival,

the place where the two lovers had striven to retrieve an old passion and from where their culture had drawn the images and stories for the construction of its identity is void of vitality, fit only for a kind of after-life where the “peculiar yearning” the narrator feels and which was once called “love” finds no outlet except its textual representation

Before my conclusions let me note that I am aware of the possibility that someone might object that I am investing a seemingly simple story with unwarranted significance. I am also aware that Irish readers have naturalized the spatial coordinates which I foreground in my reading to the extent that they are not registered in a conscious manner. A reader who approaches the text from another culture is more attentive and can perhaps more easily pick out the topographical coordinates into which the story is set. What I would underline is that the story acquires a deeper resonance if we read keeping in mind the way the author deploys in his text the cultural mappings of space.

The evidence that I have culled from my reading of Jordan’s short story delineated the spatial context in which a seemingly simple love story, a tale of both growing up and of growing old, is narrated. My initial reading experience of the tale, aesthetically satisfactory as a literary work of art in itself, was enhanced by the insight that the narrative provides a mapping of space which is extremely important to understanding Irish culture. The embedment of the private story within this cultural matrix not only opens the basic narrative to supplemental readings but enables us to position Jordan within broader cultural issues and debate. On the evidence of the text before us it can hardly be said that Jordan rehearses and promulgates the vision or the cultural geography which was indispensable to the political agenda of Irish nationalism. However, it is equally true that he does not opt for a radical negative stance which would wholly nullify these as a given framework of reference. As a transitional text Jordan’s story is both continuous and discontinuous with a powerful imaginary landscape, implicating the trajectory of private lives within the public domain, setting up tensions which are not resolved but linger on in a sort of questioning ambiguity. The overall movement of the narrative contests the romanticized version of the post-colonial state formation and its ordering and hierarchization of spaces not in the name of some authenticating past nor in the name of a utopian future but rather through the need to empower the intensity and value of the present experience. His affirmation of individual relationships in a sense rewrites the privileged story of Ireland and disrupts conventional knowledge. In that sense his story is an exemplary literary artefact whose nature it is to mount a challenge against sanctioned narratives and one-dimensional mappings of human experience.

Let me bring these remarks to an end by putting my findings within a broader theoretical framework. In order to do this and to show the way Jordan positions himself to Irishness I offer the possibility of reading the dislocations or, perhaps it would be more precise to say, interventions evident in his texts as heterotopias in Michel Foucault’s sense of the word. In the lecture “Of Other Spaces” Foucault works with an opposition between utopias – sites that are bereft of any real place – and heterotopias which are conceived as places that do exist, that can be viewed within this oppositional relationship as “counter-sites”. In his discussion Foucault goes on to mention a number of different heterotopias such as, restricting myself to those which we can find in

Jordan, boarding schools, honeymoon hotels, theatres, traveling fairgrounds.⁶ If we approach Jordan's writing on the lookout for such "counter-sites" and bear in mind the function which Foucault saw them as performing one could contend that the topography of Neil Jordan's fictional worlds deploys those sites which were elided by the utopian project of Irish nationalism. This is certainly the case in those instances when Jordan focuses upon the domain of private, intimate life whose depiction casts a shadow on the sanitized public spectacle. The same can be said for the references to places outside the confining Irish polity which are not described as sources of threat and potential danger but rather as targets and destinations of desire which is being stifled by a narrow-minded, rural provincialism. In Jordan's story the west as an utopian non-place but also as one of the mainstays in the imaginary of Irish nation-building is replaced by a place that exists in the present of the narrative and that shows little resemblance to the envisioned projections. It is only appropriate that the narrated present includes the death of the statesman whose idea of Ireland cherished that vision, truncating a particular utopian program and inaugurating an alternative history.

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⁶ I translated Foucault's article into Croatian using the English version published in *Diacritics* (translated by Jay Miskowicz). *Glasje*, 6/1996, 8-14.

LINGUISTIC VARIATION AND CHANGE: MIDDLE ENGLISH INFINITIVE

Frančiška Trobevšek Drobnač

Abstract

In Middle English the old inflected infinitive lost its supine function and gradually replaced the uninflected infinitive in all positions, except in the complementation of modal and a limited number of other verbs. According to most linguists, the choice between the *to* infinitive and the bare infinitive was either lexically or structurally conditioned. The theory of linguistic change as the assertion of weaker or stronger linguistic variants postulates the affinity of stronger variants for more complex, i. e. functionally marked grammatical environment. The author tests the validity of the theory against the assertion of the English *to* infinitive at the expense of the bare infinitive after the Norman Conquest. The results confirm the initial hypothesis that the degree of formal markedness of the infinitive concurred with the degree of the functional markedness of grammatical parameters.

Introduction

1.1 In most grammar books of present-day English (PDE) the infinitive is defined as "the verb's basic form, which can be used alone (*bare, simple* or *zero infinitive*), or with the particle *to* (*to-infinitive*)" (Crystal 1994: 162). The use of the bare infinitive is restricted to the position after modal auxiliary verbs (*I may be late*), after the auxiliary *do* (*I did answer your letter*), and to the complementation of a small number of verbs such as *have, let, make, see* and *hear* (McArthur 1996: 471). The infinitive is used either on its own or as the predicator of a non-finite clause. Both constructions alternate with nominal phrases, participial non-finite clauses, and finite nominal, relative or adverbial clauses. With some verbs the choice of the infinitive (or infinitive clause) instead of a corresponding nominal, relative or adverbial clause is optional.

*To meet you was a great pleasure. That I met you was a great pleasure.
I hope to see you again. I hope that I can see you again.
The problem to address first is unemployment. The problem that must be
addressed first is unemployment.
Press four digits to set the alarm. Press four digits so that you set the
alarm.*

1.2 In the course of the history of the English language, the following pairs of structures were, at some point of time, syntactic variants:

- the bare infinitive and the *to* infinitive,
- the *to* infinitive and the *for to* infinitive,
- the infinitive (clause) and a subordinate finite *that* clause.

The present day distribution of the bare infinitive, the *to* infinitive, and *that* clauses must have been reached quite some time before the year 1500. The table below collates all the occurrences of infinitival forms in the first three chapters of the Gospel according to St Mark in *The New International Version of The Holy Bible* (NIV, 1982), and corresponding constructions in *King James Bible* (KJB, 1611), Wyclif's Bible translation (Wyclif, 1378), and Skeat's edition (1871) of Old English Gospels (Corpus MS, 10th century). In the Old English sample the inflected infinitive is used either as a supine (*com to for-spilanne*), a post-modifier in a nominal phrase (*anweald to hælanne*), or as a post-modifier in an adjectival phrase (*alyfede to etanne*). The distribution of the bare infinitive and of the *to* infinitive in Wyclif's text is the same as in the two Modern English Bible translations. The bare infinitive occurs only after modal verbs. While some subordinate finite clauses in the Old English sample are replaced with infinitive clauses in Wyclif, no such contrast exists between Wyclif's sample and the two Modern English samples. There are no *for to* infinitives in Wyclif's text.

NIV, 1982	KJB, 1611	Wyclif, 1378	Corpus MS, 10 th century
1/2 will send will prepare	I send shall prepare	y sende schall make	ic asende se ge-gearwaþ
1/7 will come worthy to stoop & untie	cometh worthy to stoop & unloose	schal come worthi to knele & vnlace	cymb þæt ic ... bugende uncnytte fullaþ
1/8 will baptise	shall baptize	schal baptise	-
1/9 -	came to pass	was don	þæt yit beoþ
1/17 will make you fishers	will make you to become	schal make you to be	lærde
1/21 began to teach	taught	tauyte	
1/24 do want	have to do	-	com to for-spilanne
have come to destroy	art come to destroy	hast come to distrie	hi hyrsumiaþ
1/27 they obey	do obey	they obeyen	heo þenode
1/31 began to wait	she ministered	sche servede	he hi sprecaþ ne let
1/34 would not let ... speak	suppered not to speak	suffride hem not to speke	-
1/36 went to look	-	-	-
1/38 let ... go	let ... go	-	þæt ic bodige
can preach	may preach	that I preche	miht gecleasian
1/40 can make	canst make	maist clense	ne secge
1/44 don't tell	say nothing	seye to no man	ongan bodian &
1/45 began to talk	began to publish	bigan to preche &	widmærsian
		publisce	mihte gan
could enter	could enter	myyte go	ne mihton inbringan
2/4 could not get	could not come	myyten not bringe	eþre to secgenne
2/9 easier to say	easier to say	liyer to seyye	þæt ye witon
2/10 may know	may know	wite	anweald to forgyfanne
authority to forgive	power to forgive	power to forgyyue	he lærde
2/13 began to teach	he taught	he tauyte	he ytt
2/16 does eat	he eateth	he eet	com þæt ic clipode
	came to call		

NIV, 1982	KJV, 1611	Wyclif, 1378	Corpus MS, 10 th century
2/17 have come to call	can fast	cam to clepe	sceolan fæstan
2/19 can fast	will come	moun faste	cumaþ
2/20 will come	shall be taken	schulen come	biþ acyrred
will be taken	shall fast	schal be takun	hi fæstaþ
will fast	it taketh away	schulen faste	he afyrþ
2/21 will pull away	doth burst	he takith awei	tobrycþ
2/22 will burst	will be marred	schal breste	biþ agoten
will be ruined	began to pluck	schulen perishe	ongunnon pluccigean
2/23 began to pick	is lawful to eat	bigunnen to...plucke	alyfede næron to etanne
2/26 is lawful to eat	that they might accuse	was leeuful to ete	gymdon þæt hi gewregdon
3/2 reason to accuse	-	aspieden to accuse	he alyfþ to donne
watched to see	lawful to do	-	þeahtedon
3/4 lawful to do	took counsel	leeuful to do	þæt hi þenodon
3/6 began to plot	should wait	maden a counsel	þæp hi æthrinon
3/9 told to keep	pressed for to touch	schulde serue	forbead þæt hi ne
3/10 were pushing to touch	that they should not make	felden to touche	gesweutelodon
3/12 orders not to tell		thei schulden not make	anweald to hælanne
	power to heal		hlaf to etanne
3/15 authority to drive out	could eat	power to heele	mæg adrifan
3/20 able to eat	can cast	myyten ete	mæg standan
3/23 can drive	cannot stand	may caste	clipedon
3/24 cannot stand		may stonde	
3/31 sent s.o. to call		clepiden him	

Table 1: Collated readings of infinitive clauses and corresponding constructions in different Bible translations

There have been many attempts to account for the varying distribution of the above listed syntactic variants in the past. Some of the them are described below.

Bare infinitive vs (for) to infinitive: origin and use

The precursors of the PDE bare infinitive and of the PDE *to* infinitive were the Old English *uninflected infinitive* and the Old English *inflected infinitive* respectively.

2.1 The Old English uninflected infinitive consisted of the present stem of the verb and the suffix *-(i)an*: *beran* 'to bear', *lufian* 'to love', *hieran* 'to hear', *writan* 'to write'. The suffix *-an* evolved from the Indo-European affix **-ono-* of the verbal noun (*nomen actionis*), and the nominative/accusative case ending **-m* (cf. Latin *-um* of neuter nouns, e.g. *templum*). The same suffix survived as the infinitival ending *-an* in Old High German and Gothic. In some verbs the ending *-an* had been reduced to *-n*: *beon* 'to be', *seon* 'to see', *don* 'to do', *gan* 'to go'.

Example: IE **b^her-ono-m* > Germ. **ber-ana-m* > OE *beran* 'bear' (Kisbye 1971: 1).

Due to the general weakening of unaccented vowels to *e* [ə] in Late Old English, the Early Middle English marker of the bare infinitive was *-en* [ən], but the suffix was very rare in verbs of French origin. In Northumbrian, the final *n* of the infinitive disap-

peared already in Old English, in Midland dialects by the year 1300, in the south it survived until the fifteenth century (Wright 1928:72). The loss of the word final *n* preceded by an unaccented vowel affected other grammatical forms besides the infinitive (the present plural indicative and subjunctive, the plural of weak nouns and adjectives), but not necessarily at the same time. In Wyclif, for instance, the final *n* consonant is lost in disyllabic infinitives, but still preserved in plural present indicative forms and in past participles of strong verbs. After the loss of *n*, the subsequently word final *e* [ə] ceased being pronounced, first in Scottish and northern dialects (by the middle of the thirteenth century), later in the Midland dialects (by the middle of the fourteenth century) and latest of all in the southern dialects, especially in Kent. The exact dates are difficult to determine, since *e* was usually retained in writing. In Chaucer's poetry, word final *e* was generally pronounced in disyllabic words with a long stem-syllable at the end of the line, and mostly silent in other positions. It is nevertheless safe to assume that by the end of the fourteenth century word final *e* [ə] had been lost in all forms and in all dialects (Wright, *ibid*). As a result, the form of the PDE bare infinitive is identical with the base form of the verb:

OE *beran* > ME *ber(e)n* > NE (to) *bear* ['beə]

The Old English *inflected infinitive* consisted of the particle *to*, the present stem, and the suffix *-enne/anne* (e.g. *to beranne*). It evolved from a prepositional phrase: the particle *to* was originally a directional preposition/adverb meaning 'towards', the suffix *-enne* was the dative ending of the verbal noun, which was in West Germanic declined like ordinary nouns of the *ja-declension*. The variant suffix *-anne* appeared in Old English, probably through analogy with the suffix *-an* of the uninflected infinitive (Kisbye 1971: 7). Due to the loss of word final *e*, and the shortening of long consonants in Middle English, the suffix *-enne/-anne* coalesced with the suffix *-an* of the uninflected infinitive at an early stage, especially in northern dialects. In Northumbrian poetry the preposition *to* was followed by the uninflected infinitive from the earliest days.

The first few examples of the *for to* infinitive appeared already in Old English. The marker initially served as an indicator of purpose, replacing the old inflected infinitive in the supine function. It soon followed the course of its predecessor, however, and became an ordinary infinitival marker. Around the year 1300 the use of the *for to* infinitive reached its peak, then it declined and survived only in some northern regional dialects (Hughes & Trudgill 1966: 116).

2.2 The precursors of the bare infinitive and of the *to* infinitive did not start out as syntactic variants. The uninflected infinitive appears in prose and verse of the earliest times (Closs Traugott 1992: 242-46). It was used, alone or as the predicator of an infinitive clause, in many syntactic functions:

- subject of the main clause:

... *lufian his nehstan swa hine sylfne ... is mare eallum onscǣgðnyssum* (Corpus MS: St Mark) 'to love one's neighbour as oneself is the greatest of all commandments'

- object of transitive verbs:

... *he wilnaþ micle worldlare habban* (Alfred: Cura Pastoralis) 'he wanted to have great education'

- object controlled predicator with verbs of commandment or perception:
... & ealne þone here he het mid þæm scipum þonan wendan (Alfred: Orosius)
'and he commanded the whole army to leave with ships'
... þa behead se biscop þeosne to him lædan (Bede: Historia Ecclesiastica)
'then the bishop commanded to lead this one to him'
... þa geseah he sumne fiscere gan (Apollonius of Tyre) 'then he saw a fisherman go'
- complement of modal verbs:
... ne cannst þu huntian butan mid nettum (Ælfric: Colloquy) 'you cannot hunt except with nets'
- adverbial adjunct:
... nu ge moton gangen... Hroþgar geseon (Beowulf) 'now you can go see Hroþar'

By contrast, the Old English inflected infinitive was of relatively limited occurrence in verse, and quite rare in prose. Initially a prepositional phrase, it was used as a supine, expressing purpose, obligation or volition (Closs Traugott, *ibid*). It was consistently used after deontic verbs *agan* 'to possess and have as a duty' and *habban* 'to have', and frequently as the infinitive complement of adjectives, especially of adjectival predicates such as *gearu* 'ready', *geornfull* 'eager' and *eape* 'easy'. It was very rare in nominal functions, except as the subject of an impersonal verb:

- ...he cymþ eft to þam micclum dome, to demenne eallum mancynne (Ælfric: Homilies) 'he will come again to the great doom, to judge all mankind'
- ...& þa syndon swyfe fægere... on to seonne (Alfred: Orosius) 'and those are very beautiful to see'
- ...þæt þu swiþge geornfull wære hit to gehieranne (Alfred: Boethius) 'that you were very eager to hear it'
- ...him is leofre... to feohtanne (Alfred: Cura Pastoralis) 'it is more desirable to him to fight'.

2.3 Already in Old English, but particularly in Middle English, the inflected infinitive lost its supine function and *to* became "a meaningless infinitive sign" (Kisbye 1971:2). Whether it was this lexical weakening of the preposition that propelled the "perceptible increase of the use of *to* infinitives down throughout the OE period" (Kisbye, *ibid.*), or the weakening was in fact the consequence of its proliferation, is difficult to ascertain. Fisher (1992: 317) believes that it was the general reduction and loss of inflections which rendered the infinitival endings *-an* and *-enne/anne* inadequate to distinguish the infinitive from the supine. The introduction of the *for to* infinitive in Early Middle English lends credence to such interpretation, since the marker initially served as an indicator of purpose. The *for to* infinitive did not stand in contrast to the *to* infinitive for long. Since the thirteenth century on, the choice between the *to* and the *for to* infinitive was "largely dictated by metrical conditions" (Karttunen & Mustanoja 1958:179). Chaucer used both markers, with some verbs, like *beginnen*, *desiren*, *hopen*, *lernen*, even all three infinitival constructions (Fisher 1992: 316). The markers *to* and *for to* are sometimes found side by side after the same matrix verb:

*...thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
and palmers for to seeken straunge strondes...* (Chaucer: Prologue to Canterbury Tales)

Roughly at the same time when the *to* infinitive started to replace the bare infinitive in most syntactic functions, the ratio of infinitive clauses to subordinate finite *that* clauses changed significantly in favour of the former, as is verified by the statistics of the prose texts in the Helsinki Corpus (Los 1997: 26). Many finite verbal complements (*that* clauses) which are found in the Old English translation of the Gospel according to St Mark (Skeat, *ibid*), are rendered as *to* infinitives in Wyclif's translation:

- ... *ne eom ic wyrþe þæt ic his sceona þwanga bugende uncnytte*
... *y am not worthi to knele down, and vnlace his schoone* (Mk 1/7)
- ... *ic do inc þæt gyt beoþ sawla onfonde*
... *y schal make you to be maad fischeris of men* (Mk 1/17)
- ... *ne com ic na þæt ic clypode riht-wise*
... *Y cam not to clepe iust men* (Mk 2/17)
- ... *hi gymdon ... þæt hi hine gewregdon*
... *thi aspieden hym to accuse him* (Mk 3/3)
- ... *hi ut eodon þæt hi ge-sawon*
... *thei wenten ut to se* (Mk 5/14)

Bare infinitive vs (for) to infinitive: some current doctrines and open questions

According to most linguists, the choice between the *to* infinitive and the *for to* infinitive soon became haphazard and motivated by metrical reasons, but the selection of the bare infinitive vs (*for*) *to* infinitive was either lexically or structurally conditioned.

3.1 Callaway (1913) investigated the correlation between the semantic type of the matrix verb and the type of complementation in Old English. He divided all verbs into three groups: those that occur only with the bare infinitive, those that occur only with the *to* infinitive, and those that occur with either of the two forms. He discovered that all semantic groups of verbs, with the exception of modal verbs and verbs of perception, appear on all three lists, and assumed that the variation must be accounted for on syntactic grounds. Comparing the nominal and the infinitival complementation of verbs, Callaway concluded that verbs taking accusative objects are more likely to be followed by bare infinitives, and that verbs taking objects in the dative or genitive case are more likely to occur with *to* infinitives. Verbs that can be followed by either infinitive are verbs that can be followed by objects in different cases (Callaway, 1913:63).

Kaartinen & Mustanoja (1958) concluded, on the basis of statistical studies of Late Middle English prose, that two parameters affected the selection of a particular infinitive: the "intimacy" of the relationship between the matrix verb and the infinitive, and the physical distance between them. Quirk & Svartvik (1970) deduced the

same from the statistical studies of Chaucer. The degree of “intimacy”, as understood by these and other authors (Sanders 1915, Ohlander 1941), is proportional to the degree of grammaticalisation of the matrix verb. It is highest when the matrix verb is void of referential meaning, as in the case of modal and other auxiliaries. The same structurally based approach is advocated by Warner (1982:116ff), who ascribes the propensity of modal verbs to bind with bare infinitives to their auxiliary status. According to Plank (1984:339), the same tendency is at work when contracted verbal forms *wanna*, *gonna*, *bounta*, *gotta* govern bare infinitives.

Fisher argues for functional reasons behind the selection of bare vs (*for*) *to* infinitives in Middle English. The latter were preferred when the activity was perceived as taking place sometime in the future (Fisher 1992: 321). It is by this future orientation, reminiscent of the original supine value, that to this day the *to* infinitive stands in contrast to the present participle in the complementation of verb such as *remember*, *stop*, *try* etc. (Biber & al. 1999: 693-739).

Los (1998: 1-36) believes that the *to* infinitive expanded as an alternative to subjunctive *that* clauses, especially those expressing intention, purpose or volition, and not as a substitute for the bare infinitive. The ratio of *to* infinitives to *that* clauses in the prose texts of the Helsinki Corpus stayed the same throughout the Old English period, but changed dramatically from 23% to 74% in the transitional period from Old English to Middle English. According to Los, this change is far more drastic than the change of the ratio of *to* infinitives to bare infinitives. The probability that the decrease in *that* clauses is unrelated to the increase of *to* infinitives is extremely low (Los 1998: 28).

3.2 Notwithstanding some differences of opinion as to the lexical or structural grounds for the distribution of infinitive forms in Middle English, linguists agree that the *to* infinitive started replacing the bare infinitive because of the phonetic instability of the (unaccented) suffix *-en* (see above). The questions that have not been thoroughly addressed, but are by no means less intriguing, are:

(a) What is the common denominator of the environments (lexical, structural) which favoured the substitution of the *to* infinitive for the bare infinitive, since the substitution was not absolute?

(b) What was it that not only triggered off but enhanced the weakening of the Old English inflection *-an* to the extent that it could no longer perform its function of marking the infinitive?

Infinitive forms and their affinity for complex grammatical environment

4.1 The substitution of the *to* infinitive for the bare infinitive in Middle English can be viewed as a linguistic change bringing into prominence the stronger of two linguistic variants. The theory of linguistic change as the assertion of stronger or weaker linguistic variants was first introduced in the framework of *natural phonology* (Stampe 1979, Donegan 1985), and *natural morphology* (Mayerthaler 1981). In syntax, it was

applied by Rydén (1979) and a group of linguists at the University of Ljubljana (Orešnik 1990: 5-12). On synchronic level, the theory postulates that of two linguistic variants one is formally “stronger” and the other one “weaker”. The stronger variant is more elaborate and transparent to decode, the weaker is less elaborate, more economical and more obscure to decode. The stronger of available variants is consequently favoured whenever communication is rendered difficult by extra-linguistic or linguistic circumstances, including the grammatical complexity (markedness) of the message (Orešnik *ibid*, Orešnik 1999). On diachronic level, the theory postulates that *post status nascendi* stronger variants correlate not only with complex extra-linguistic (pragmatic) circumstances of communication, but also with relatively complex grammatical environment. The situation is reversed in the case of weaker variants: they are favoured in relatively simple pragmatic and grammatical environment. In later stages of their proliferation, stronger variants are less likely to expand to simple grammatical environment, and weaker variants are less likely to expand to complex grammatical environment.

4.2 From the point of view of the theory described above, the loss of the infinitival suffix *-en* was the assertion of the weaker of two variants, the stronger being the bare infinitive with the suffix *-en*. By contrast, the substitution of the *to* infinitive for the bare infinitive was the assertion of the stronger of two variants at the expense of the weaker variant - the bare infinitive. The infinitival suffix *-en* would be expected to persist longest in relatively complex grammatical environment, and the bare infinitive would be expected to resist its substitution in less complex grammatical environment.

The validity of the theory can be empirically tested. In the pilot study carried out by the author of this paper, the ratios of infinitives with specific infinitival markers were computed for different syntactic functions. The infinitives analysed were those occurring in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (*The Wife of Bath’s Prologue* and *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*). Chaucer’s text was chosen because of the general consensus that in his time different forms of infinitives featured as syntactic variants. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 2.

infinitive markers	[- to, - en]	[- to, + en]	[+ to, - en]	[+ to, + en]	[+for to, - en]	[+ for to, + en]
entire text:	65.3	10.1	14.8	3.8	5.0	1.0
function: S	-	-	100	-	-	-
function: SC	19.8	-	60.0	-	20.2	-
function: MC	88.4	11.6	-	-	-	-
function: VC	9.1	17.9	54.5	-	18.5	-
function: NC	-	-	69.8	9.8	10.3	10.1
function: AdjC	-	-	71.6	28.4	-	-
function: A	-	-	30.3	29.7	50.0	-

Table 2: Ratios of infinitives with specific markers (in %) in different syntactic functions. Chaucer : *Canterbury Tales* (*The Wife of Bath’s Prologue* & *The Wife of Bath’s Tale*)

The infinitives featuring in the text display the following degrees of formal markedness:

- [- to, - en]: bare infinitives, the suffix *-en* lost;
- [- to, + en]: bare infinitives, the suffix *-en* preserved;
- [+ to, - en]: *to* infinitives, the suffix *-en* lost;
- [+ to, + en]: *to* infinitives, the suffix *-en* preserved;
- [+ for to, - en]: *for to* infinitives, the suffix *-en* lost;
- [+ for to, + en]: *for to* infinitives, the suffix *-en* preserved.

They perform the following syntactic functions:

- S - the subject;
- SC - the subject complement;
- MC - the complement of a modal verb;
- VC - the complement (object) of a transitive verb;
- NC - the complement (modifier) of a noun;
- AdjC - the complement (modifier) of an adjective;
- A - the adverbial adjunct.

Of all the infinitives in the text, 75.4% are bare infinitives, 65.3% with no suffix *-en*, and 10.1% with the suffix *-en*. The ratio of bare infinitives is highest in the position after modal verbs (MC - 100%), most of them featuring without the suffix (88.4%). The frequency of bare infinitives is lower in the function of the verbal complement (27%), more than two thirds of them still displaying the suffix *-en*. About twenty percent of all infinitives used as subject complements (SC - 19.8%) are bare infinitives with no suffix *-en*. There are no instances of bare infinitives in other positions (functions).

There are 18.6 % of *to* infinitives in the entire text, most of them marked only with the particle *to* and not with the suffix *-en*. They are used as noun complements (79.6%, 12.3% of them with both markers), as adjective complements (100%, 28.4% of them with both markers), and as adverbial adjuncts (50% of all infinitives, half of them with both markers).

The ratio of *for to* infinitives in the text is low (6%), which makes the results statistically less reliable. Their ratio is highest in the function of adverbial adjunct (50%).

4.3 The results of the pilot study yield substantial credence to the theory that formally more elaborate (more marked) infinitives concur with more complex grammatical environment. The conspicuous absence of *to* infinitives after modal verbs, as well as the absence of bare infinitives in nominal functions (subject, noun complement, adjective complement, adjunct) suggest that the complementation of modal verbs is grammatically less complex environment than the complementation of full lexical verbs, nouns and adjectives, and adjuncts in particular. The studies performed by the authors cited under 3.1 confirm the affinity of the (*for*) *to* infinitive for specific grammatical environment:

- verbs taking more objects (ditransitive verbs) rather than monotransitive verbs;
- full lexical verbs rather than modal verbs;

- dislocation from the matrix verb (adverbial adjunct function) rather than position immediately after the matrix verb (verbal complementation);
- future reference in relation to matrix verb rather than simultaneous reference;
- matrix verbs requiring subjunctive subordinate clauses rather than matrix verbs requiring indicative subordinate clauses.

The same values of grammatical parameters hinder the loss of the suffix *-en*. In bare infinitives, for example, it is absent after modal verbs, but preserved in almost 50% of occurrences after non-modal verbs. In *to* infinitives the probability of the suffix is highest (almost 50%) in the function of adverbial adjunct.

4.4 The affinity of stronger, i.e. more elaborate/more formally marked, linguistic variants for more complex environment can be explained in terms of fundamental Gricean pragmatics. The speaker does not explicitly encode what needs no encoding (Grice's *Maxim of Quantity No 2*, 1975), and always follows ... "the principle of the least effort, which makes him restrict his output of energy, both mental and physical, to the minimum compatible with achieving his ends" (Martinet 1962: 139). From that point of view, the absence of any formal marking of the infinitive after modal verbs is due to the fact that no such marking is required to identify the infinitive as a verb. The expected (default) complement of a modal verb is, from the hearer's point of view, another verb, since modal verbs are devoid of referential meaning. Although the auxiliary *to be* is equally grammaticalized, the infinitive used as the subject complement must be adequately marked. Unlike modal verbs, the copula is most frequently followed by non-verbal structures, e.g. nominal or adjectival phrase.

Concluding remarks

The Gricean *economy principle*, which seems physiologically conditioned, is not without functional constraints. It is always kept in balance by the second overwhelming principle of communication: the *efficiency principle* (Sperber & Wilson's 1986). The speaker will choose that linguistic variant which seems optimal from the viewpoint of his/her assessment of the addressee's ability to correctly and promptly decode the intended message. From this point of view, the choice of a stronger variant means yielding to the efficiency principle, and the choice of a weaker variant means yielding to the economy principle. The loss of word final *-en* in Middle English did not affect all verbal (and other) forms indiscriminately. The suffix *-en* was retained in the past participles of strong verbs, and to this day it remains a very productive derivational morpheme (*widen, shorten, straighten* etc.). The traditionally postulated sequence of events in the case of the weakening of the old infinitival ending, which is *phonetic weakening* \Rightarrow *functional inadequacy*, should perhaps be reversed: *functional inadequacy* \Rightarrow *unrestrained phonetic weakening*. The infinitival suffix *-en* was dispensable because a less equivocal marker, the particle *to* was available. The choice of the *to* marker over the *-en* marker works in favour of the efficiency principle, enhancing transparency and facilitating the identification of the form.

Most changes that affected Late Old English and Early Middle English can be viewed as the choice of the stronger of available linguistic variants: the substitution of prepositional phrases for case endings, the emergence of expanded tenses, the expansion of periphrastic comparison, but also the elimination of ambiguous multi-functionality in morphology and syntax, the balancing of syllable length etc. The propensity to yield to the efficiency principle rather than to the economy principle was so dominant throughout the Middle English period that it must have been imposed by some "outer circumstances" (Mey 2001: 181). Social stratification, multilingualism and dialect variation in England after the Scandinavian invasion and the Norman conquest constituted a sociolinguistic environment not very different from the one encountered centuries later in overseas colonies, where pidgins and creoles evolved (Fenell 2001: 133). The conditions of communication were complex enough to initiate the assertion of stronger linguistic variants. They first appeared in complex grammatical environment and gradually spread elsewhere, except to where their purpose was no longer served.

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LA PERFEZIONE CAVALLERESCA E CORTIGIANA IN *GYRONE IL CORTESE* DI LUIGI ALAMANNI

Irena Prosenc Šegula

Abstract

Il poema *Gyrone il Cortese* di Luigi Alamanni risente tanto dell'influsso delle discussioni teoriche letterarie tardorinascimentali quanto del modello castiglionesco del perfetto cortigiano. L'autore si prefigge di scrivere un poema «regolare» ponendo al centro del suo poema Girone, un eroe perfetto che è un modello morale, cristiano, cavalleresco, e nel contempo un abile conoscitore di norme sociali. Pertanto, l'eroe di Alamanni oscilla tra l'essere un perfetto cavaliere e l'essere un perfetto cortigiano. Nel poema, l'amore ha una funzione duplice – nobilitante e al contempo degradante – tipica dei poemi cavallereschi rinascimentali italiani. In mancanza di una sintesi delle due tendenze contrastanti, la concezione dell'amore risulta incoerente, riflettendo una profonda incoerenza del concetto alamanniano dell'eroe, che esita tra i valori del cavaliere medievale, quelli del cortigiano rinascimentale e quelli dell'etica cristiana.

Il poema *Gyrone il Cortese* di Luigi Alamanni, pubblicato nel 1548, è un'opera rappresentativa del suo tempo almeno sotto due aspetti. In primo luogo, reca l'impronta delle discussioni teoriche che permeavano la letteratura rinascimentale; in secondo luogo, risente del modello del perfetto cortigiano concepito da Baldassarre Castiglione nel *Libro del cortegiano*.

Sotto la spinta delle discussioni teoriche, Alamanni si propone di unire la tradizionale materia cavalleresca alla forma classica per così creare un poema epico che raggiunga la perfezione dei poemi eroici classici. Inevitabilmente, un tale proposito pone il problema della fusione dell'unità classica di un'opera letteraria con la varietà del poema cavalleresco. Alamanni cerca di risolvere questo problema partendo dal presupposto che il racconto di molteplici azioni di un solo eroe sia sufficiente a garantire l'unità dell'opera.¹ Di conseguenza, Alamanni pone al centro del suo poema Girone, il perfetto eroe che è il protagonista della maggior parte delle vicende. Gli episodi che non fanno parte della sequenza cronologica vengono inseriti nel poema come parte della narrazione di altri personaggi. Naturalmente, questi espedienti non creano l'unità che Alamanni si è proposto.

¹ Questo, però, contrasta vistosamente con il precetto aristotelico secondo il quale «il racconto della vicenda non è unitario quando riguarda una sola persona, come credono alcuni: difatti possono concorrere insieme molti e interminabili accadimenti, senza che dai singoli si ricavi unità. Così anche le azioni di un singolo sono molte, ma non ne risulta per niente un'azione unitaria.» (Aristotele: *Dell'arte poetica*. Roma: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla – Milano: Mondadori, 1974, 29).

Per elevare la sua opera a livello del poema classico, Alamanni ne esclude quasi completamente il meraviglioso² e l'ironia. Pertanto, gli eroi cavallereschi nel *Gyrone* non sono mai messi in ridicolo, a differenza di quelli nell'*Orlando innamorato* e nell'*Orlando furioso*. L'unico bersaglio di canzonature sono personaggi vili e *discortesi*, cioè gli antieroi, il che, nelle intenzioni dell'Alamanni, avrebbe uno scopo edificante.

Alamanni si prefigge per obiettivo del suo poema di *prodesse et delectare*, il che concorda con la tendenza dominante della teoria letteraria tardorinascimentale. Se l'obiettivo di un'opera letteraria è quello di edificare o educare in modo piacevole, il suo protagonista deve essere un modello morale per i lettori. Di conseguenza, i personaggi del *Gyrone*, soprattutto il suo protagonista, personificano la perfezione cavalleresca. Alamanni esplicita la sua visione moraleggiante del poema cavalleresco nella prefazione al *Gyrone*, nonché in numerose dichiarazioni del protagonista all'interno del poema stesso. In questo luogo ci pare opportuno citare il passo nel quale Alamanni espone la funzione didattica del suo poema:

in esso essendo descritto Gyrone il Cortese per la perfection della cavalleria (...) potranno i giovini Cavalieri apprendere anco di formar l'animo al valor vero, et adattar' il corpo à i militari essercizi et lodevoli in maniere assai: Considerato primieramente che nulla ci sia di malvagio essemplio mention fatta: se non per mostrar quanto si debbano schifare, et come emendarsi: Dalle opre egregie di lui apertamente si mostra, con quanta tolleranza di digiuni, di freddo, di Sole, di vigilie, et di fatiche si haggian l'arme ad essercitarse, et con quanto ardire et fortezza nell'honorate imprese sprezzar la vita: et con quanto bel fregio al valor si accompagni la relligione, et la fidanza in Dio: da lui solo et le vittorie, et le lodi guadagniate et non da sestesso riconoscendo: Esser verso ciascun colmo di lealtà, di pietà, et di charità, et piu verso gli afflitti, ò, da malvagia fortuna, ò, da gli ingiusti: che verso altri: Il perdonar l'ingiurie à gli humili volentieri, di ciò piu rallegrandosi che d'altra vendetta assai: non cercar sopra gli adversari vantaggio fuor del dovere, esser con ognihuom cortese anchor del sangue proprio, haver' i falsi honori in dispregio, non biasmar' alcuno ne lodar se stesso: mostrar' il dritto cammin di virtù à chi smarrito l'havesse riprendendo pianamente et senza ingiuria: havendo il medesimo nella lingua sempre che nel cuore: negli amori et fra le Donne esser' honesto, piacevole et festoso, desiderando piu di honorarle et aiutarle che cercar cosa la qual con breve dolce servi l'amaro lungamente: la fiera et l'altrui spaventar servando à miglior uso nelle necessitadi et nella guerra.³

Secondo Alamanni, lo scopo del suo poema è dunque quello di mostrare «la perfection della cavalleria» del protagonista Gyrone, così offrendo un modello di

² L'unico tipo di meraviglioso che è ammesso nel poema è il meraviglioso «cavalleresco» (Hauvette, Henri: «Gyrone il Cortese.» In: *Id.: Un exilé florentin à la cour de France au XVI.me siècle: Luigi Alamanni (1495-1556), sa vie et son œuvre*. Parigi: Hachette, 1903, 327).

³ *Gyrone il Cortese di Luigi Alamanni al christianissimo, et invittissimo re Arrigo Secondo*. Stampato in Parigi da Rinaldo Calderio, & Claudio suo figliolo, 1548, XII-XIII.

comportamento ai contemporanei. Girone è un modello di virtù cavalleresche quali la «tolleranza di digiuni, di freddo», la «lealtà», il «valor», la modestia («non biasmar' alcuno ne lodar se stesso») e la cortesia che comprende varie norme del codice cavalleresco (come, ad esempio, il «non cercar sopra gli avversari vantaggio fuor del dovere»). Alle virtù cavalleresche si uniscono, però, le virtù cristiane quali «la religione, et la fidanza in Dio», la «pietà», la «charità» e «il perdonar l'ingiurie à gli humili». L'obiettivo di Alamanni è dunque di creare una figura che impersoni sia gli ideali cavallereschi che quelli cristiani. Il suo progetto, comunque, rimane irrealizzato dal momento che la motivazione religiosa di Girone e degli altri personaggi nel poema stesso è alquanto debole.

La concezione dell'eroe perfetto esposta da Alamanni comprende anche un principio che può essere definito semplicemente come una norma di buone maniere. Secondo Alamanni, l'eroe perfetto deve «negli amori et fra le Donne esser' honesto, piacevole et festoso, (...) la fierrezza et l'altrui spaventar servando à miglior uso nelle necessitadi et nella guerra». L'eroe perfetto deve dunque comportarsi in modo confacente alla situazione, ossia conoscere perfettamente le norme sociali. Abbiamo qui una forte reminiscenza del precetto castiglionesco secondo il quale il perfetto cortigiano deve sapere quando gli si addice il valore militaresco e quando invece la cortesia e la discrezione:

Sia adunque quello che noi cerchiamo, dove si veggon gli inimici, fierissimo, acerbo e sempre tra i primi; in ogni altro loco, umano, modesto e ritenuto, fuggendo sopra tutto la ostentazione e lo impudente laudar se stesso, per lo quale l'uomo sempre si còncita odio e stomaco da chi ode.⁴

Questi principi prendono spunto da un fenomeno rinascimentale che è una novità storica. Difatti, nell'Italia cinquecentesca le donne (naturalmente soltanto quelle appartenenti alle più alte classi sociali) diventano il sinonimo della società colta.⁵ Questo cambiamento è rispecchiato anche nel *Cortegiano* che tratta e «difende» diffusamente la posizione delle donne nella società. Per Castiglione le donne sono essenziali all'esistenza del perfetto cortigiano dal momento che nobilitano la società che «senza esse saria rustica e priva d'ogni dolcezza e più aspera che quella dell'alpestre fiere». Nel suo dialogo immaginario nel quale viene formato l'ideale del perfetto cortigiano, le donne contribuiscono in modo fondamentale alla sua definizione. Difatti, nella spensierata società di corte le donne sono fonte di numerose attività sociali come la danza, la musica e la poesia che offrono al cortigiano la possibilità di esprimere la sua eleganza.⁷ Secondo Castiglione, le donne sono essenziali non solo all'esistenza del cortigiano bensì all'esistenza dell'intera società di corte:

come corte alcuna, per grande che ella sia, non po aver ornamento o splendore in sé, né allegria senza donne, né cortegiano alcun essere aggraziato, piacevole o ardito, né far mai opera leggiadra di cavalleria, se non mosso dalla pratica e dall'amore e piacer di donne, così ancora il

⁴ Castiglione, Baldassarre: *Il libro del Cortegiano*. Milano: Mursia, 1972-1984, I, XVII, 52.

⁵ Cfr. Burckhardt, Jacob: *La civiltà del Rinascimento in Italia*. Firenze: Sansoni, 1968, 361.

⁶ Castiglione, Baldassarre: *op. cit.*, III, LI, 258.

ragionar del cortegiano è sempre imperfettissimo, se le donne, interponendovisi, non danno lor parte di quella grazia, con la quale fanno perfetta ed adornano la cortegiania.⁸

I precetti castiglioneschi si accordano perfettamente con il comportamento di Girone. Infatti, in presenza di donne, Girone dà prova di virtù che sono proprie del perfetto cortigiano:

Tutte saluta con gentil sermone,
Et come in guerra Marte esser solea
Là si fece un figliuol di Cytherea:
Che sa quanto conviensi à gentil core
Tra delicate Donne esser' humano,
Parlar discreto, ragionar d'amore,
In sembiante gioioso, amico, et piano,
L'alta severità, l'ira, e 'l furore
Riservar' ove armata ha poi la mano,
Altrove andar come il bisogno sproni
Dolce ai dolci, aspro à gli aspri, buono à i buoni⁹

Inoltre, il comportamento di Girone non è perfetto solo nella colta società femminile bensì anche al cospetto di principi, il che rispecchia i precetti castiglioneschi sul comportamento del perfetto cortigiano verso il suo principe:¹⁰

Quando si truova à i principi in presenza
Non fù piu costumata mai Donzella,
Poco ragiona, et da grata udienda,
Loda ciascun, di se mai non favella,
Nulla offende egli, et porta à sofferenza
La gente igniara, et di virtù rubella¹¹

Girone dunque non possiede soltanto le qualità del perfetto cavaliere (visto che è forte, valoroso e senza paura, che non cerca avventure per interesse materiale bensì per onore personale, che aiuta i deboli e le donne, che combatte secondo le regole del codice cavalleresco, eccelle nei combattimenti contro avversari più numerosi, adempie le promesse fatte, è leale e cortese). Difatti, Girone si distingue anche per virtù che sono proprie del perfetto cortigiano rinascimentale, in modo da diventare un modello di comportamento della società di corte.

Nella sua prefazione, Alamanni precisa che l'eroe perfetto non deve servire soltanto da esempio morale, bensì «mostrar' il dritto cammin di virtù à chi smarrito l'havesse riprendendo pianamente et senza ingiuria». Nella formazione del suo eroe,

⁷ *Ibid.* III, LII, 259.

⁸ *Ibid.* III, III, 210.

⁹ *Gyrone il Cortese* I, 95–96. Cfr. anche: «la vera cortesia / Che con mille virtudi io metto al paro, / Non vuol che Chavalier perfetto sia / Se infra le Donne è di dolcezza avaro» (*Ibid.* I, 140); «Quanto fù dolce in pace, in arme fero / Era» (*Ibid.* X, 133).

¹⁰ Cfr. Castiglione, Baldassarre: *op. cit.*, II, XVII–XX.

¹¹ *Gyrone il Cortese* XIII, 31.

l'autore si attiene scrupolosamente a questo precetto.¹² Per Girone, l'etica e la morale si riducono ad un atteggiamento moralistico, dal momento che non perde nessuna occasione di ammaestrare e ammonire gli altri, atteggiandosi spesso a predicatore:

(...) mentre Cortesia regniò con voi
Tutto honor, tutto ben v'era incontrato,
Ma come abbandonaste quella, e' i suoi
Vostra sorte miglior vi havea lassato¹³

Et vi supplico sol, ch'un dì vi piaccia
Di provar quanto è dolce il bene oprare,
Come contento, anzi beato faccia
Chi vuol del cibo suo l'alma adescare,
Et fa veder che stolto è chi procaccia
Dannaggio altrui per se mai non posare¹⁴

I discorsi di Girone sono impersonali poiché lui stesso è impersonale. Difatti, il protagonista del *Gyrone* non è interessante in quanto individuo, bensì in quanto funge da modello esemplare. Di conseguenza, i suoi discorsi sono spesso formulati come rigide norme di buone maniere:

Et piu sempre ch'altrui nuoce à se stesso
Chi dir mal si diletta à torto, e spesso¹⁵

Ogni virtuoso huom di pregio et vanto
Dritto cammina al glorioso chiostro,
Ne si dee vendicar l'altrui peccato
Con peccato maggior di quel ch'è stato¹⁶

La natura didattica di *Gyrone il Cortese* si manifesta anche nell'entusiasmo dei suoi protagonisti per i racconti delle imprese di altri cavalieri (soprattutto quelli vissuti nel passato).¹⁷ Sembra spesso che le avventure e le azioni di Girone non siano importanti di per sé e che possano essere riassunte nella semplice osservazione che Girone è un esempio del perfetto cavaliere. Lo spazio nell'ottava che dovrebbe contenere la descrizione di singole azioni è riempito con frasi stereotipate e intercambiabili che si ripetono monotonamente. Ne è un esempio la seguente descrizione di un duello che è tipica di Alamanni e presenta un forte contrasto con le vivaci e spettacolari descrizioni di duelli e battaglie nell'*Orlando innamorato* e nell'*Orlando furioso*:

¹² Cfr. Hauvette, Henri: *op. cit.*, 321; Foffano, Francesco: *Il poema cavalleresco*. Milano: Vallardi, 1904, 151.

¹³ *Gyrone il Cortese* X, 110.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* XXIII, 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* II, 53.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* IX, 52.

¹⁷ Per ben quindici giorni, Girone racconta le imprese di cavalieri eroici al giovane Febo che «non vorria mai dall'un' all'altro Sole / Ch'ei si tacesse pur' una sol volta» (*Ibid.* XVII, 55). Cfr. anche: «Quando Gyrone gli antichi esaltar' ode / In se medesimo sene allegra, et gode» (*Ibid.* IV, 65). Sono caratteristiche anche le intense reazioni emotive dei cavalieri allorché sentono menzionare un eroe che ammirano (*Ibid.* XVI, 126-128; XIX, 10).

Et sopra il scudo gli da incontro tale
 Che tutto come carta l'ha diviso,
 Et sopra il capo v'è il colpo mortale
 Sì che di veder fiamme gli era avviso,
 Cadde stordito: che non sente il male
 Et di sangue ha rigato intorno il viso¹⁸

Nelle intenzioni di Alamanni, un elemento importante del concetto dell'eroe perfetto dovrebbero essere le virtù cristiane, che però all'interno del poema hanno un legame molto debole con i valori cavallereschi impersonati da Girone. La religiosità di Girone è del tutto verbale e si limita a prediche che consistono di frasi fatte e non esprimono un autentico sentimento religioso.¹⁹ La funzione dei valori cristiani si manifesta in modo estremo nel totale cambiamento del contenuto della conversione. Difatti, Girone non converte altri cavalieri alla fede cristiana bensì agli ideali cavallereschi.²⁰ La conversione tradizionale dal paganesimo al cristianesimo cambia radicalmente: il ruolo del paganesimo è assunto dalla *discortesìa* o *villania*, mentre quello del cristianesimo è assunto dalla *cortesìa*. Questo dimostra l'assoluta marginalità dei valori cristiani in *Gyrone il Cortese*, nonostante l'importanza attribuita loro nella prefazione:

Che fusse cortesìa non sapea prima
 Tutto il tempo allevato in vili imprese
 Hor la terrò d'ogni altra cosa in cima
 Essendo quella c'hoggi mi difese
 Dunque à voi sta ch'io l'haggia in somma stima
 Et ch'io d'empio et villan torni cortese:
 Che se scampato son di questo inferno
 Mi farò nobilissimo in eterno²¹

La concezione dell'eroe cavalleresco è legata al concetto dell'amore cavalleresco. Nel *Gyrone*, il concetto dell'amore non è coerente dal momento che ha una funzione duplice, come del resto avviene anche in altri poemi cavallereschi rinascimentali (*Orlando innamorato*, *Orlando furioso*, *Rinaldo*). Inoltre, la funzione dell'amore nel *Gyrone* è alquanto più limitata in confronto agli altri poemi cavallereschi. Da una parte, l'amore è una forza che nobilita l'eroe, stimolandolo a compiere azioni valorose: «Amore è quel che all'honorate imprese / Accinge l'huomo». ²² Dall'amore scaturisce la cortesìa: «Amor fa divenir' ottimi i rei, / Gli avari, e' i vili, generosi, et larghi». ²³ Dall'altra parte, però, l'amore è una passione cieca che prevale sulla razionalità e degrada l'eroe. ²⁴ Questo secondo tipo di amore è l'oggetto di critiche moralistiche. La duplice concezione dell'amore è evidente soprattutto nella relazione tra l'amore e la

¹⁸ *Ibid.* XV, 67.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* XVI, 109–110.

²⁰ *Ibid.* IX, 48–49, 67–85; XI, 35–40; XXII, 18–19; 23–27, 58–63.

²¹ *Ibid.* IX, 49.

²² *Ibid.* V, 79.

²³ *Ibid.* XVII, 93. Cfr. anche *Ibid.* V, 13; XII, 36–37; XVII, 91–94.

²⁴ *Ibid.* V, 39, 115; X, 138, 142; XVII, 88–89.

cortesìa. Per un verso, l'amore spinge alla cortesìa che è il più alto ideale cavalleresco; per un altro, in quanto «desir», è il contrario delle virtù quali l'«honor», la «gratia» e la «pietade»:

Ma l'alto cor d'ogni viltà nemico
C'hà con chiara bontà virtude impressa
Caccia amore et desir per altre strade,
Et sol riceve honor, gratia, et pietade²⁵

La duplice funzione dell'amore in *Gyrone il Cortese* deriva dall'indecisione tra due concezioni contrastanti: il concetto platonico dell'amore (soprattutto nell'interpretazione bembiana)²⁶ e l'ascetico rifiuto medievale della sensualità («desir rei»²⁷) legato ad una visione negativa della donna come scaltra peccatrice che spinge l'uomo alla dannazione. Questa discordanza deriva anche dal fatto che *Gyrone il Cortese* non ha un contenuto originale bensì riassume la materia di alcune fonti medievali: per la maggior parte segue il romanzo cortese medievale *Guiron le Courtois*, mentre nella conclusione prende lo spunto dai romanzi *Méliadus* e *Tristan*. La concezione incoerente dell'amore rende problematica l'inclusione delle emozioni nel concetto dell'eroe perfetto. Difatti, Girone non sa esattamente che cosa fare con le sue emozioni. Quando è preso d'amore per la moglie del suo amico (è caratteristico che l'istigatrice di questo sentimento illecito sia la donna), le sue emozioni sono fonte di confusione e vergogna: «de i nuovi pensier si maraviglia»;²⁸ «Di vergogna, di duol, d'ira s'accese / Contro à se stesso»;²⁹ «in se stesso / Maraviglia assai n'hebbe, et piu vergognia».³⁰ Attraverso le emozioni, l'eroe perfetto si aliena dalla sua natura ideale. L'alienazione finisce quando Girone legge la scritta sulla sua spada che lo esorta alle virtù cavalleresche quali la lealtà e l'onore, così diventando consapevole della sua alienazione:

Io non son piu quel già fedel Gyrone
Che solo in dritto e 'n cortesìa s'affanna
Io son' un scelerato: ch'ho ingannato
Il miglior Cavalier che vada armato.³¹

Girone reagisce in modo estremo all'alienazione dalla propria visione di sé e cerca di suicidarsi, il che gli è impedito dalla dama che è stata la causa della sua alienazione (V, 108–124). Questo è anche l'estremo effetto negativo dell'amore. Per Alamanni, da una parte l'amore è incompatibile con la concezione dell'eroe come un perfetto cavaliere,³² mentre dall'altra parte è essenziale alla concezione dell'eroe come un perfetto cortigiano. Dato che l'autore non opera una sintesi delle due tendenze

²⁵ *Ibid.* VIII, 64.

²⁶ Cfr. Battaglia, Roberto: «Note sul dissolversi della forma rinascimentale. Dall'Ariosto al Tasso.» – *Cultura neolatina*, II (1942), 176.

²⁷ *Gyrone il Cortese* X, 139.

²⁸ *Ibid.* III, 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.* III, 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.* III, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.* V, 115.

³² Cfr.: «Perch'io lettor ti prego et ti consiglio / Che s'haver vuoi pregiata, et lunga vita, / Fuggi lontan l'amoroso periglio / Che con inganni a i propri danni invita» (*Ibid.* XII, 130).

contrastanti, la sua concezione dell'amore finisce con l'essere incoerente e riflette una ancor più profonda incoerenza del suo concetto dell'eroe, che esita tra i valori del cavaliere medievale, quelli del cortigiano rinascimentale e quelli dell'etica cristiana.

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VITA SUL FRONTE
Convergenze e divergenze letterarie di due diari di guerra:
Carlo Salsa e Andrej Čebokli

David Bandelli

Abstract

Il presente contributo tratta due testi della letteratura italiana e slovena, nati durante la prima guerra mondiale, entrambi direttamente provenienti dalle linee del fronte, ma da parti belliche opposte. Paragona le loro convergenze e divergenze e cerca di mostrare la loro comune provenienza dal Zeitgeist europeo del tempo. Cerca inoltre di dimostrare come entrambi i lavori, pur di diversa forma, possano entrambi far parte della cosiddetta letteratura memoiristica o diaristica.

1. Introduzione

Il periodo del primo conflitto bellico mondiale (datato secondo fonti classiche 1914 – 1918, secondo fonti nazionali italiane invece 1915 – 1918) è, per la creatività letteraria, una proficua era di nuove pagine, basti pensare a tutte le scritture di matrice futurista, che la guerra ispirava (da parte italiana) e ai lamenti inumani che gli scrittori europei, di fede espressionista, mandavano dalle trincee vicino alle zone di guerra più crudele ed accese. Da tutto ciò possiamo comprendere una doppia ricezione della guerra come evento sociale: chi da una parte la idolatrava e la viveva come uno spettacolo, chi, invece, ne rimaneva vittima nel corpo e nell'anima e la odiava con tutte le proprie forze.

Le pagine letterarie scritte in questo periodo sono dunque innumerevoli e tutte interessanti. Ricordiamo da parte italiana alcune come *Kobilek* di Soffici, *Nostro purgatorio* di Baldini, *1915* di Stuparich, *Con me e con gli alpini*, di Jahier, *Scarpe al sole* di Monelli, *Giornale di guerra e di prigionia*, di Gadda, *Cure di primavera*, di Betocchi, *Vita militare*, di Palazzeschi, *Notti sul Carso*, di Greppi, *Lontanissimo*, di Mormino o quelli più celebri *Im Westen nichts Neues*, di Remarque e *A Farewell to Arms*, di Hemingway. Nella letteratura slovena non abbiamo molti testi di questo genere, ma parecchi sono invece gli scritti puramente memoiristici, quali diari e simili. Così conosciamo i diari dei soldati Franc Rueh, Albin Mlakar, Franc Župančič, Andrej Čebokli e Ciril Prestor, tutti peraltro pubblicati, e altri che sono ancora manoscritti e sono esposti al museo della Grande guerra a Kobarid (Caporetto).

Da questa babele di testi ne abbiamo scelto due meno noti. Sono diari di guerra, diversi per forma, simili per contenuto; diversi di provenienza, simili per ideologia; diversi persino di scelta bellica, in quanto provenienti ciascuno dai due schieramenti nemici, opposti nelle battaglie sul fronte dell'Isonzo. Decisi a mostrare l'inutilità della prima guerra mondiale – ed attraverso questa – l'inutilità di ciascuna guerra, abbiamo scelto queste due opere per capire quanto il loro valore letterario non dipenda dalla scelta politica dei loro scrittori, ma dall'umanità che questi due libelli esprimono. Ci accingiamo, dunque, a presentare il libro *Trincee* di Carlo Salsa, sottotitolato "confidenze di un fante", diario di guerra di un tenente della fanteria italiana e il *Dnevnik* (Diario) di Andrej Čebokli, Sloveno di nascita, appartenente all'esercito austroungarico con il grado di *leutnant* (tenente). Proporranno da principio alcuni brevi appunti biografici dei due autori, poi cercheremo di presentare le loro similitudini letterarie, biografiche e contenutistiche, infine compareremo le loro divergenze. Forse la pagina più interessante di questo studio, sarà l'analisi imagologica del rapporto tra i popoli dai quali provengono Salsa e Čebokli. Nei loro testi sussistono, infatti, dei cenni sull'immagine che gli Italiani danno a Čebokli e sull'impressione che gli Sloveni danno a Salsa.

Il presente contributo sostiene l'idea che il valore letterario di queste due opere non sia nel loro avvicinamento a correnti letterarie attuali nell'epoca ma soprattutto nella veridicità, nell'autenticità e nell'umanità che i due scrittori esprimono, vedendo e vivendo da vicino – pur da opposte parti – la morte e la distruzione umana. Sebbene i due testi siano formalmente diversi, possiamo annoverarli ambedue nella letteratura memoaristica in quanto il lavoro di Salsa è uno schizzo autobiografico di ciò che l'autore ha vissuto sul fronte dell'Isonzo e viene descritto attraverso avvenimenti tratti dalla propria vita da soldato, ma senza una referenza temporale chiara e distinta. Il *Dnevnik* (Diario) di Čebokli è, invece, temporalmente definito in quanto comprende l'accaduto nella vita dell'autore dall'anno 1917 al 1919. Entrambi possono comunque essere chiamati »diari«, seppure *Trincee* di Salsa ha una forma più romanzesca, mentre il diario di Čebokli è stato pubblicato senza interventi redazionali contenutistici o formali, a parte qualche irrilevante correzione grammaticale, nella redazione del 1999 a cura di Rozina Švent.

Il contenuto dei due testi è per noi di primaria importanza rispetto al fatto, che i due lavori provengano dalle allora attuali sfere e correnti letterarie in entrambe le letterature nazionali.

Čebokli viene considerato uno dei primi esponenti dell'espressionismo poetico sloveno, seppur »di maniera« (Tavčar 12). Vedremo più tardi come il suo espressionismo nel *Diario* non sia di indole letteraria, ma piuttosto una vera e propria *forma mentis*. La letteratura slovena è simile per evoluzione alla letteratura dei paesi germanici, che nell'epoca del avvento di Čebokli erano in pieno espressionismo. Per Salsa la cosa è un po' diversa in quanto in Italia vige l'epoca futurista, con gli esponenti della quale l'autore è stato comunque in contatto (Soffici, Papini). Ma al futurismo Salsa non ha aderito, né formalmente, né ideologicamente.

2. Carlo Salsa e Andrej Čebokli – accenni biografici

Carlo Salsa nasce nel 1893. Inizia a scrivere giovanissimo: sue novelle e poesie appaiono già sulla rivista letteraria *L'oceano* nel 1908 e sulla *Gazzetta del Popolo* nel 1910. Chiamato alle armi nel 1914, all'inizio della prima guerra mondiale, viene inviato direttamente al fronte: ha la buona sorte di uscire indenne da quindici mesi di Carso. Tenente di fanteria, schierato sempre in prima linea rimane ferito e cade prigioniero negli ultimi mesi di combattimento. Terminata la guerra diventa vicedirettore della Società Italiana Autori ed Editori (SIAE) e nel 1929 fonda – con Leonida Repaci e Alberto Colantuoni – il Premio Viareggio. Il suo *Trincee* vede la luce nel 1924 e diventa uno dei classici della letteratura sulla prima guerra mondiale. Muore a Milano nel 1962.

Andrej Čebokli nasce a Kred presso Kobarid (Caporetto, luogo triste per la storia bellica italiana) nel 1893, da famiglia povera e numerosa. Dapprima studia nel seminario minore di Gorizia, dal quale esce deluso, poi privatamente. Nel 1914, conclusi gli studi ginnasiali, decide di iscriversi all'università di Graz, ma lo scoppio della prima guerra mondiale gli impedisce il proseguimento degli studi accademici. Inizia pure lui a scrivere giovanissimo e pubblica i propri lavori (poesie e novelle) nelle riviste *Ljubljanski zvon*, *Dom in svet*, *Mladika*. Il suo *Dnevnik* (Diario) viene pubblicato postumo appena nel 1999 insieme all'*opera omnia*, sinora unica redazione dei testi di Čebokli. Entrato nell'esercito austroungarico, come volontario, comincia un lungo peregrinare per i fronti europei (Isonzo, Gallizia, Bucovina). Sopravvive, ma il suo fisico viene prostrato da varie malattie. Dopo la guerra (1919) si iscrive all'università di Lubiana, come studente di romanistica e slavistica e viene nominato supplente di lettere italiane e slovene al liceo femminile della città. Nel 1923 torna per breve tempo a Kred, dove muore a causa di tubercolosi e reumatismi, postumi dei suoi anni di guerra.

3. Convergenze

Vari aspetti biografici legano i due autori, non a caso scelti anche per la data di nascita che gli accomuna (1893): entrambi furono assidui lettori innamorati della parola scritta ed entrambi incominciarono giovanissimi il loro *iter* di scrittori, impregnando di storie e passioni le pagine delle più note e rinomate riviste letterarie del tempo. *L'oceano* e il *Dom in svet* (letteralmente – Patria e mondo) sono paragonabili tra di loro come le riviste d'eccellenza dell'epoca. Vissero la guerra, ne portarono le infelici conseguenze ed entrambi – appunto non marginale – non sono annoverati tra i grandi nomi delle rispettive letterature nazionali.

Molte ancora sono le convergenze che li legano, soprattutto, per quanto riguarda l'aspetto del contenuto letterario delle loro due opere in oggetto di trattazione: *Trincee* e *Dnevnik*. Prima fra tutte, l'idea dell'antierismo della Grande guerra. I soldati partiti al fronte – forse animati da un leggero entusiasmo, rincalzato per altro dalle idee avanguardiste del futurismo e dell'espressionismo, che vedevano nella guerra una sorta di catarsi sociale – partivano con in cuore un moto di eroismo, convinti di essere,

forse, gli eroi della nuova era. La delusione però non tardò ad arrivare ed entrambi gli scrittori (ma che qui sarebbe più corretto chiamare “soldati”) ci offrono un saggio di tutto quello che accade:

“Una volta, i partenti per la guerra, che fornivano uno spettacolo d’eccezione, erano eroi. Oggi, lo spettacolo d’eccezione s’è ridotto ad una replica consueta e quindi volgare. E gli eroi non sono più che unità della rubrica: materiale umano. Eppure oggi si va in guerra come allora: si muore più di allora, con minor apparato e maggiore umiltà.” (Salsa 24)

Prima: due o tre baruffavano per i propri grandi interessi, per il proprio onore, per l’esistenza, e si uccidevano l’un l’altro. Ma non venivano compianti nè osannati. Ora: ciascuno può morire in trincea, crepare nel fango gambe all’aria, fatto a pezzi da un’esplosione – viene recuperato, composto con massimo compianto, onorato e glorificato. A tutti viene innalzato un immortale monumento di marmo rosso e bianco, e della pietra più bella.

Ma non tutti questi sono eroi. Forse nessuno. Per paura o costrizione sono eroi, per paura della propria morte.

Non crederò mai che abbiano combattuto con coraggio e animosità. La maggior parte non ha combattuto per se, ma per altri – per crepare. Sono partiti per la guerra sotto dura costrizione, hanno combattuto eroicamente, e hanno vinto. Ma eroi non saranno mai! Con la loro vittoria si sono fregiati altri, nascondendosi dietro grossi muri (...) (Čebokli 81 – 82).

(Dell’opera di Čebokli non esiste ancora la traduzione italiana. Le parti citate in questo testo sono dunque traslate dallo sloveno dall’autore del presente saggio).

La guerra che ci viene raccontata, dunque, non è quella che viene rispecchiata dal mondo letterario dell’epoca. Non è dannunziana o marinettiana, non è neppure simile a quella annunciata da Podbevšek nel *Človek z bombami*. Anton Podbevšek (1898 – 1981), poeta sloveno, autore della silloge *Človek z bombami* (L’uomo con le bombe), fu esponente dell’avanguardia di radice futurista slovena, volontario di guerra della quale fu all’inizio entusiasta, ma finì col disprezzarla. La guerra di Salsa e Čebokli è, per così dire, usando le parole di Luigi Santucci (7) “la guerra per eccellenza – il fango i reticolati, la sterminata strage, il verminoso carnaio – quella che prima d’essere un rischio e un orrore fu, come tutti sappiamo, macerazione di disagi e di attese, stillicidio di disperazione; e per contro quella che alimentò – durante e dopo – un oleografismo patetico e turbolento, e tutto il malgusto eroicizzante che ispirò nelle piazzette d’Italia i monumenti ai caduti.”

Non viene descritta la guerra come fatto ideologico, anche se le digressioni sui motivi e le conseguenze del conflitto si sprecano, ma viene raccontata e – quel che si dimostra più interessante – dipinta nella propria cruda realtà, vissuta dai soldati, non “giocata” dagli strateghi. La guerra che ti entra nel midollo e ti segue per tutta la vita: Čebokli *docet*, morto a causa di malattie contratte sul fronte.

Ma la guerra non è sempre dura con i soldati. Entrambi ne rimangono in un certo qual modo affascinati, colpiti. Lo spettacolo, unico e terribile, delle bombe, delle granate che svettano in cielo, rievoca loro pensieri quasi di muta ammirazione. Come non pensare qui ad un grande della letteratura francese, Guillaume Apollinaire, che ha descritto migliaia di bombardamenti con parole che richiamano bellezza e suadenza. Così ci descrive Salsa un bombardamento sul Carso:

Uno shrapnel: giunge iroso, mordente: si spacca in una frustata secca, scrosciando una grandine di pallette per ogni dove.

Le granate di piccolo calibro s'inseguono radendo la scarpata come vespe stizzose. Un medio calibro perfora l'aria con un sufolo quasi dolce che subito s'inasprisce ed esplode: sembra il fischio di un monello insolente interrotto da un ceffone. Qualche grosso calibro capitombola nel vuoto, ansimando, come un ubriaco; accelera il suo ritmo progressivamente, lungamente, stramazza in uno schianto enorme.

E tutto il Carso, là sopra, sembra elevare verso il cielo indifferente una lamentazione infinita (Salsa 40 – 41).

Ed ecco arrivare prontamente anche il controbattito di Čebokli, da parte opposta:

Notte che canta: un ininterrotto, vuoto e sordo tuonare che fa tremare la terra; e l'ululare delle granate e il fischio degli shrapnels e lo scoppiettare dei fucili sul monte in una lunga-ininterrotta catena. Grandioso concerto! Meravigliose disarmonie – armonie – dissonanze.

E spesso – troppe volte dimentico questa bellezza e questo terrore. La testa mi cade sul petto come volessi nasconderla, quando una granata di grosso calibro cade con furore indavolato sulla riva sinistra dell'Isonzo, proprio di fronte a me. Oppure termina la sua strana canzone nelle onde azzurre del fiume e solo smuove le acque limpide delle nostre valli.

Quanto a lungo sosterrò questa terribile bellezza?!

E questo atto della tragedia finì soltanto verso l'alba. (Čebokli 41)

Simile è tra di loro anche una ben strana comparazione. Il vibrare dei proiettili di guerra viene da entrambi, in alcune frasi, descritto come un bollettino meteorologico, quasi ad esorcizzare la paura di questi avvenimenti innaturali, quali sono i bombardamenti, immettendoli in un ritmo naturale, in un normale cambiamento di "clima":

La notte fu assai tempestosa. Fulmini e tuoni, da far paura. Spari fino all'alba. (Čebokli 49)

E stamane è cominciato il diluvio.

Le quote dietro di noi, si son messe a ruggire come serragli: per tutto il Carso si elevò questo clamore sgomentevole, che si ripercuote cupamente come in un'enorme cavità della terra. (Salsa 216)

È il poeta in loro che parla, non più l'uomo, colui che ricerca nella guerra anche un briciolo di umanità a costo di "umanizzare" il suono delle granate, chiamato ora "tempesta" o "diluvio".

In questa civiltà di "soli uomini", se possiamo permetterci di denominare in questo modo le soldatesche, si formano delle tipiche norme comportamentali che si delineano sia in Salsa che in Čebokli. È arcinoto lo speciale attaccamento che i soldati (di ogni reggimento, nazionalità ed epoca) hanno verso il mondo femminile. In tempo di guerra le donne sono forse state la categoria che più ha conosciuto la sofferenza, dovendosi arrangiare come meglio sapevano in uno stato di totale solitudine. Questo le ha forse spinte a comportamenti che i nostri due scrittori non condividono:

Scommetto che nessuno di quelli lì ha uno straccio di ragazza che lo attende in licenza. E poi non sanno che le ragazze hanno altre faccende per il capo con tanti bravi giovanotti che a casa stanno facendosi una posizione e che non arrischiano di tornare dalla guerra con un occhio di porcellana o una gamba di legno. (Salsa 120)

Čebokli è molto più diretto:

Le donne sul fronte sono moralmente decadute. È terribile. La donna non conosce più l'uomo che sta sul campo di guerra, la madre non conosce più i figli. Nel cuore della ragazza non c'è più fedeltà. (Čebokli 46)

Pur criticando la pesante situazione delle donne, protese tra il dovere e la sopravvivenza, ambedue vivono nel tempo di guerra avventure amorose, che sfociano in un romanticismo, essendo anche alle volte tristemente reali. Čebokli si avvicina ad una donna austriaca, Ducy; incontra Zora, amore passato, ma evidentemente ancora vivo nel suo subconscio ("Quando la sera tornavamo in città, sentivo in lei una benevolenza nei miei confronti, che però non m'imponessa nulla. Ero glaciale.") (Čebokli 69) e ha una storia intensa con Kati, finita male:

12.XI.

Ho salutato Kati per l'ultima volta – la mia ragazza. Stavo male e se avessi potuto, le avrei detto: "Non sposarti!" Ma mi faceva pena e me ne sono andato in silenzio.

Cercavamo l'occasione per raccontarci qualcosa di segreto. Non l'abbiamo trovata. (Čebokli 166 – 167)

Kati andò poi sposa ad un altro; Andrej lo viene a sapere attraverso una cartolina e scrive nel suo diario:

Hai veramente già trovato la pace?!

Come sei felice! – Sii! (Čebokli 167)

Salsa racconta con meno passione, ma con altrettanto vigore, le sue avventure (due per l'esattezza) finite entrambe infelicamente. Della prima serba un ricordo amaro, quando nel treno che accompagnava la ragazza (Maria) a Milano si susseguì il seguente dialogo:

Non potei accompagnarla fino a Milano: a metà del tragitto doveti scendere per tornare all'accantonamento col treno che saliva.

“Ora”, mi disse con voce velata, “ora non vorrei che voi mi lasciaste così ...”

La luna le faceva cadere una goccia di luce sulle labbra socchiuse.

Io non compresi: non capivo nulla. Ero un papero sceso dalle trincee con qualche romanticheria superstite, rappresa allo spirito con la tenacia di quel fango agli orli delle mie scarpacce chiodate.

“Non mi è possibile ... domattina ... i miei soldati ... il colonnello ...”

Non capii: la sua giovinezza acerba ed intatta allontanava ogni desiderio di preda.

“A domani!”.

“Addio piccola: a domani”.

Non la vidi più, per tanto tempo. (Salsa 210 – 211)

Ma anche a lui è dato di vederla tra le braccia di un altro e scrive:

Percorrendo, su una vettura, una via centrale, la vidi inaspettatamente, agganciata ad un ufficiale degli alpini: era smunta, abbattuta, come se avesse ricevuto delle percosse.

Salutai, non so perché. (Salsa 212)

La seconda è più intensa, si tratta di una storia breve, con una ragazza cecoslovacca, il che lo paragona a Čebokli, anche lui invaghitosi infelicamente di una donna straniera. La guerra è anche questo: scambio di culture, opinioni, lingue. In questi scambi, sovente, si incontrano anime vaganti alla ricerca di una misera porzione di pace in una civiltà trafitta dall'orrore. La ricerca di pace da parte dei nostri due scrittori va intesa anche come ricerca dell'amore, naturale elemento che lega l'uomo alla donna. Dopotutto erano ragazzi poco più che ventenni.

Oltre all'amore, ricercato con forza dai due, troviamo la morte, elemento di spicco nella guerra, quasi a voler completare l'antico binomio *eros – thanatos*. Ma la morte nelle guerre è il più delle volte assurda, grottesca, inutile, come vogliono narrarci Salsa e Čebokli:

“Morire! Morire non conta: si sa che una volta o l'altra la pelle bisognerà rimettercela, no? Ma quello che avvilisce, che demoralizza, che abbatte è di veder morire così, inutilmente, senza scopo. Oh, non si muore per la patria, così; si muore per l'imbecillità di certi ordini e la vigliaccheria di certi comandanti (Salsa 62 – 63).

Ammazziamo e uccidiamo – e poi abbiamo la coscienza sporca di aver fatto il proprio dovere (Čebokli 131)

A volte si soffermano su morti assurde, repentine, inaspettate:

16.VIII

Disgrazia dei nostri uomini al passo di Sumarem – Tartaren. Camminando tra le trincee sono finiti su una mina nascosta. Otto morti, il nono ferito gravemente.

Che morte inaspettata! (Čebokli 113)

O su morti stupide, e forse eroiche per questo:

Mandai lui. Capì che ci doveva rimettere la pelle, ma che bisognava arrischiare: s'era fatto pallido. Balzò fuori dalla cunetta che ci defilava appena, curvo: non poté fare più di due passi.

Restò lì che non reggeva il cuore a sentirlo: urlava, ci chiamava per nome, invocava che lo si andasse a salvare offrendo tutto quello che possedeva. Ma chi poteva decidersi a fare quei due salti fino a lui, cogli Austriaci che, sapendo il gioco, non aspettavano di meglio? Ci voleva proprio quello scomunicato di Sangiorgi. Gli tirarono non so quante fucilate, ma quello duro. Rientrò strisciando come un serpente, rimorchiandosi quell'altro che non voleva capire di star zitto. L'avevano preso in pieno: buttava sangue dalla bocca ad ogni parola. Mi disse: "Signor tenente, se riuscirà ad andare in licenza, vada a dare questo bacio per me alla mia mamma".

Mi restò tra le braccia con gli occhi ancora vivi che mi ripetevano quell'ultima preghiera. (Salsa 202)

E ancora si intravede nei racconti, un sottile sarcasmo, una ricerca dei brandelli di umanità, quando entrambi descrivono la corporeità dei cadaveri che incontrano. Ognuno secondo il proprio stile, Salsa raccontando, Čebokli commentando poeticamente:

Anche tutta la zona che ci separa è granellata di morti: morti di questa estate che levano una risataccia bianca di denti, morti recenti, che fondono i loro volti nerastri come maschere di catrame: mucchi di stracci, seminati da un bivacco di zingari.

Qualcuno spicca nella sua interezza con attitudini tragiche e grottesche: eccone uno che tende verso una buca la sua bomba intatta: e un altro, bocconi, che mostra, nude, le natiche crivellate di fori, come setacci. (Salsa 68)

Lojze Smrké era di pattuglia, ieri. É tornato stamattina.

La sera mi diceva come ha dovuto camminare su cadaveri, puteolenti già dal 9 agosto, giorno della battaglia in cui il reggimento ha perso metà dei suoi uomini. Pensava che nell'erba ci fosse uno zaino, per trovare sigarette e qualche bevanda, ma strinse delle costole putrefatte, come se camminasse tra le tombe. Al chiaro di luna cercò il cuore, per vedere come è fatto, ma non lo trovò. Le cornacchie l'avranno mangiato.

Questo corpo non ha avuto pace. L'anima? (Čebokli 127)

Interessante è pure l'attaccamento ai simboli che questi due narratori dimostrano. La medaglia al valore fu usata dagli ufficiali per motivare i soldati. Entrambi ne descrivono non tanto il suo valore materiale, quanto piuttosto il suo valore morale:

Oggi ho saputo di essere stato scelto per la medaglia d'argento al valore. Mi è venuto in mente: la riceverò? Quando? Ho sentito e visto, che ormai non c'è più giustizia in questo senso. Di questo titolo si fregiano i nobili signori, tutti i subalterni invece, fino al soldato semplice, se la devono guadagnare con la morte. Loro non hanno mai visto come le granate e le mitragliatrici straziano i soldati. (Čebokli 60)

Vedendo passare un sottotenente decorato di tre medaglie di bronzo mi ha fatto una confidenza.

“Quell'ufficiale mi fa senso”.

“Perché?” ho abboccato io.

“Perché”, ha risposto mordicchiando le parole con i denti aguzzi di sorcio, “perché non ha mai avuto gli estremi per guadagnarsi una medaglia d'argento”. (Salsa 201)

Oppure, con un sottile velo di ironia:

“E quel pezzo grosso comandante di batteria antiaerea vicino ad Udine? Medaglia d'argento perché col fuoco dei suoi cannoni, quasi colpiva un aereo nemico”.

“Quello sarà decorato anche di medaglia d'oro, per il coraggio dimostrato nel portare quella d'argento”. (Salsa 163 – 164)

Come affermato poc'anzi, i due diari che stiamo conoscendo, non sono tipici prodotti delle correnti letterarie d'epoca; dobbiamo però assolutamente soffermarci su un particolare che li fa somigliare a più di qualche opera europea, che, tradizionalmente, viene indicata come espressionista.

L'espressionismo (1910 – 1930) è una corrente letteraria che in Italia non ha avuto successo, causa l'avvento delle avanguardie futuriste ed una latente, ma diffusa germanofobia; ha messo però prolifiche radici nella letteratura slovena. Uno dei principi dell'espressionismo è l'antimilitarismo, sfociato da un iniziale entusiasmo per la guerra, vista come mezzo di affermazione di una nuova civiltà. Ovviamente potremmo divagare e parlare anche degli altri principi dell'espressionismo, che è comunque considerato una delle avanguardie storiche europee, ma ciò non è compito di questo saggio, quindi ci soffermeremo soltanto sulle principali strutture della corrente, che riguardavano la tensione apocalittica della società, in quanto molti autori vicini all'espressionismo ambivano ad una nuova era, ad una nuova umanità (*Neue Menschlichkeit*). L'uomo era al centro dell'universo (*Der Mensch in der Mitte* – Ludwig Rubiner), viceversa al futurismo marinettiano, dove al centro dell'universo c'era la macchina. Gli autori espressionisti cercavano di dare una dimensione umana alla società, diffidando della tecnica (v. Georg Kaiser: *Gas, Gas II*). Perciò l'espressionismo, vedendo che disastro umanitario fosse la guerra, cominciò un'intensa e ferrea propaganda letteraria contro di essa. Purtroppo gli espressionisti andarono incontro ad una grande delusione, vedendo

che i soldati al fronte non erano guerrieri di una nuova era, ma soltanto carne da cannone.

Questi concetti vengono chiaramente espressi da Salsa e Čebokli:

2.I

Mi hanno chiamato perché dia loro la mia vita, perché uccida per loro centinaia di altre persone.

Ho fatto ciò. Sono stato un umile servo, e sarò loro servo – fino alla pazzia (Čebokli 81).

Qui Čebokli non si rivolge a qualche persona definita, ma nel suo delirio afferma di essere servo di quelle forze soprannaturali che delineano la nostra società. Questa tipica *forma mentis* espressionista viene usata soprattutto dai poeti germanici (vedi Georg Heym: *Der Gott der Stadt in Umbra vitae*), perciò Čebokli viene annoverato tra gli espressionisti sloveni.

D'altra parte, invece, Carlo Salsa, che di espressionista ha ben poco, a causa dell'insuccesso di questa corrente in Italia, è capace di essere addirittura letterale con le dottrine sopracitate, quando in *Trincee* scrive:

Appena giunto all'ospedale un tenente medico mi dice, fingendo di scherzare:

“Noi siamo necessari alla patria. Voi siete *carne da cannone*”. (Salsa 192 – corsivo di D.B.)

Allo stesso modo Čebokli riesce a dare delle vere e proprie sentenze sulla guerra: 17.V.

La guerra è madre del capitalismo e del proletariato (Čebokli 92)

20.VII.

La guerra è la più terribile realtà della storia, ella è allo stesso tempo il più irraguardoso realista. (Čebokli 107)

Ma quello che più sembra dimostrare la tendenza all'espressionismo dei due scrittori è il seguente commento di Salsa:

Abbiamo smarrito il ricordo dell'altra vita, nel peregrinare senza tregua, da trincea a trincea. Quanto tempo è passato? Non sappiamo più: i giorni non si distinguono più. Tutto il mondo è circoscritto a questa proda sospesa sulla morte, su cui passiamo e ripassiamo da tempo inconsapevole.

Di tutti questi mesi, non rimane nel mio cervello se non uno spettacolo di demolizione su uno sfondo di biacca.

L'inverno ci comprime il cuore come una pressione di ghiacci: tutta questa neve flaccida che imbrattiamo di peste, tutta una popolazione nomade che attende di essere smistata da un colpo di fucile o da un trabocco di tosse ...

Attendiamo freddamente, tristemente, come una liberazione, da quei poveri uomini che siamo. (Salsa 199)

La desumanizzazione, alla quale i fanti nelle trincee vengono sottoposti, va contro la fede dell'espressionismo che fu effettivamente portavoce di tutti coloro che la guerra l'hanno vissuta in prima persona e sono tornati per raccontare il suo orrore. Non possiamo parlare di espressionismo vero e puro, per quanto riguarda Carlo Salsa. Čebokli, invece, viene già storicamente definito come espressionista, soltanto per essere stato "investito" da questa corrente letteraria. Possiamo però affermare che i due sono riusciti a trasformare in letteratura il pensiero dominante e il *Zeitgeist* dell'epoca.

4. Divergenze

Se finora siamo riusciti a percepire le convergenze dei due testi di Salsa e Čebokli, *Trincee* e *Dnevnik*, verremo ora a soffermarci sulle divergenze che – con un'attenta lettura – appaiono minori, ma non meno importanti. La differenza più evidente è sicuramente l'aspetto formale. Se in Čebokli viene delineato un diario, nel quale troviamo riferimenti temporali molto chiari, Salsa nemmeno chiama "diario" il suo lavoro. L'opera di Čebokli è divisa in brevi avvenimenti giornalieri, rigorosamente datati, scritti direttamente sul fronte. L'originale manoscritto del diario di Čebokli si trova nella biblioteca universitaria nazionale slovena (narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica – NUK) ed è formato da due taccuini delle rispettive dimensioni di 10 x 16 cm e 11 x 17 cm.

Gli appunti sono talmente scarni che spesso troviamo la seguente dicitura:

5.I. al 9.I.

Quotidianità. (Čebokli 83)

Oppure:

17.VII

Sul campo nulla di particolare.

(...)

20.VII

Nulla di importante. Come ieri. (Čebokli 45)

Čebokli scrive con puntigliosa quotidianità: non passa giorno che non annoti almeno una seppur minima impressione. Salsa è diverso. La forma del suo libro che – come accennato – non prende il nome di "diario", ma lo sottotitola "confidenze di un fante", è più romanzesca, anche per il ritmo narrativo più veloce, sciolto; non ci sono momenti vuoti, come in quello di Čebokli. Le parti dell'opera portano il nome dei luoghi dove si svolge l'azione: *Chiopris*, *Sagrado*, *San Michele – 1915*, *Merzli – Vodil*, tanto per citarne alcuni. Sembra dunque che Salsa abbia radunato i *disiecta membra* dei propri appunti di guerra e abbia dato loro una forma romanzesca. Questo è ciò che possiamo capire dall'introduzione che Salsa pone all'inizio di *Trincee*: "Scrissi questo libro ..." (Salsa 15); non parla di scrivere il proprio diario, come Čebokli che lo fa sul campo, ma "scrive un libro". Ai ricordi dà una forma, a differenza di Čebokli che non lo fa perché non ne ha avuto il tempo materiale; poi non ha mai sperato, né pianificato

di far pubblicare una cosa tanto intima come il proprio diario che – e questo va detto ora – non è solamente diario di guerra, ma è soprattutto diario personale, scritto durante la guerra, quindi contenente pagine che di guerra trattano. Ma non ha il chiaro scopo – come Salsa – di sensibilizzare i lettori con gli orrori del conflitto e la triste vita dei fanti. Il diario di Èebokli questo fine l'ha comunque raggiunto essendo un documento dell'epoca, come tale veritiero, mostrando le atrocità della Grande guerra.

Le divergenze si notano anche in ambito contenutistico. Abbiamo osservato come i nostri due autori siano appartenenti alle due fazioni schierate una contro l'altra: è naturale, quindi, che nei loro lavori ci siano opinioni ed avventure che ci narrano del loro rapporto "nemicale". Ma anche qui troviamo una bella differenza. Se gli Austriaci sembrano a Salsa dei poveretti, che condividono la sorte ria di combattenti, gli Italiani appaiono a Čebokli dei veri e propri nemici evidenziando un atteggiamento abbastanza disprezzante verso di loro.

Ci sembrano significativi i seguenti passi dalle due opere. Salsa ci parla del giorno di Pasqua e di quello che succede al soldato Molon:

Attese che il tenente si fosse rimesso a scrivere a quella sua ragazza che lo metteva sempre di pessimo umore, e si accinse ad attuare una sua idea. Preso da un irrimediabile bisogno di simpatia, aveva stabilito di issarsi sui sacchetti per trasmettere, a mezzo di segnalazioni internazionali, gli auguri di circostanza a quei signori dell'ultimo piano.

Si arrampicò sulla scarpata. Ma, mentre stava lì, appollaiato su un sacchetto come un gufo sulla stampella a fare le ombre cinesi, si vide un elmetto affiorare dalla trincea austriaca: e inalberarsi sotto quello, con una certa circospezione, una figura stralunata che, a tutta prima, sembrò un fantoccio spinto su da un invisibile burattinaio.

Ma no: era un kamarad, quello.

Il fantoccio, dopo un istante di perplessità, si mise a gesticolare come un mulino a vento. E gridò:

"Molon! Ohè! Molon!"

Caspita, si conoscevano: erano amici. Avevano lavorato insieme in una fabbrica boema e si ritrovavano a Pasqua, uno di fronte all'altro, nemici.

(Salsa 158)

Proseguendo il racconto narra come, su esempio dei due fanti, tutti i soldati uscirono allo scoperto, senz'armi:

Il contagio si comunicò a tutti: in breve tutti, Italiani e Austriaci, furono fuori, disarmati, come due comitive di escursionisti che s'incontrano a caso, a fraternizzare. Poter mettere la ghirba fuori dalla trincea, gratuitamente, non era cosa che potesse capitare tutti i giorni, e, già che era Pasqua, bisognava chiudere un occhio: quegli scomunicati di lassù, d'altra parte, apparivano vestiti dei nostri stessi panni logori, e anche nella loro povera carne afflitta si effigiavano lo stesso nostro patimento e lo stesso nostro destino. (ibidem)

Anche questi pochi momenti felici però, vengono guastati dalla furia bellica:

Ma le vedette dell'artiglieria avvistarono quell'insolito trambusto tra linea e linea. Una tempesta di granate si abbatté improvvisa, ululando, come un castigo.

Il terrore scompigliò quel branco d'uomini: la turba urlante si precipitò alla rinfusa verso le opposte linee

Due soli, separati per un momento da rigurgito dei fuggiaschi, si indugiarono.

"Molon! Qua un altro baso!"

Il vento di un'esplosione li fece crollare così, abbracciati, come due tronchi abbattuti da una raffica d'uragano. (ibidem)

Čebokli, invece, ha un solo incontro ravvicinato con gli Italiani, quando cattura un disertore:

Alle 11 di sera ho incontrato sul ponte oltre il rivo il primo prigioniero di guerra italiano – un disertore. L'ho fermato da lontano. Felice e contento sventolava un fazzoletto bianco: "Buona sera. Io sono, prigioniero Italiano!" (In italiano nel testo – ndA.)

L'ho accompagnato alla brigata. L'abbiamo interrogato fino all'1 di notte. Senza indugi ha raccontato tutto. Tradito tutti.

Un pensiero mi addolorava: la patria non gli faceva pena?! Il padre e il fratello!? La madre e la sorella?! Anche i nostri tradiscono così? Il terrore l'ha già consumato? O è questa la consolazione per un peccato commesso in passato? Poveretto, povero lui!! (Čebokli 43)

Possiamo vedere come ambedue trasportano il proprio vissuto sulla pelle del nemico. Anche se Čebokli (vedremo più avanti) ha degli Italiani un'opinione che è sull'orlo della xenofobia, nel brano soprastante dimostra una nota di compassione per il disertore, ipotizzando uguali sorti tra i soldati del proprio fronte. Salsa – invece – definisce chiaramente l'opinione sui nemici che sono soltanto compagni di sventura.

4.1. L'immagine del nemico

Come accennato, la pagina forse più interessante dell'analisi di questi due lavori riguarda l'immagine che i due scrittori hanno dei due rispettivi popoli (e qui non si parla più di eserciti contrapposti, ma di popoli e/o nazioni).

Purtroppo di Salsa e della sua immagine sugli Sloveni esiste soltanto una frase, sebbene gli Sloveni fossero quasi in maggioranza nei paesi carsici. Non si capisce come mai non abbia avuto più contatti con il popolo effettivamente più vicino agli Italiani. Questo può spiegarsi in quanto la maggioranza degli Sloveni era arruolata nel esercito austroungarico. Quindi Salsa e i soldati Italiani più che con gli Sloveni, hanno avuto contatti ... con le "slovene":

Dietro il banco un megera sdentata somministra bevande e imprecazioni ai soldati: è una slovena diffidente e rapace, che sembra mescere il suo odio taciturno, come un veleno, nei bicchieri sbrecciati. (Salsa 27)

Dei contatti, meno odiosi, delle “slovene” con gli Italiani, ci parla anche Čebokli:

La virtù delle nostre donne, prima così grande, è talmente decaduta, da indurle a vendersi agli Italiani. (Čebokli 154)

Ma quest’ultima, assieme al precedente brano, è solo la più mite delle sentenze che Čebokli affibbia agli Italiani.

Se di Salsa non abbiamo altro che le due frasi citate, i brani in cui Čebokli parla degli Italiani sono abbastanza frequenti. Citiamo il più significativo:

Guardo e ascolto i giorni che verranno, quando la patria sarà solida e libera dagli Italiani, che ci vogliono distruggere e soggiogare, umiliandoci e Italianizzandoci. Essi che tanto parlano di cultura, civiltà, diritti delle nazioni e libertà dei piccoli popoli! Cosa vogliono da noi? Pensano che la mia lingua, le mie abitudini e la mia educazione siano già loro? Non sanno di essere proprio loro i nostri più grandi nemici? Non lo sanno ancora? (Čebokli 142)

Čebokli usa per gli Italiani l’appellativo sloveno »Lahi« – intraducibile. Lo scrittore lo intende in un senso dispregiativo, ma il termine stesso non è di per se tale. Simile è il termine »Slavo«, usato da certi esponenti di estrema destra per indicare in senso offensivo gli appartenenti alla comunità slovena in Italia.

Più che l’odio per il popolo italiano riusciamo ad intravedere, nell’opera di Čebokli, l’odio verso gli obbiettivi espansionistici italiani e la loro politica. Come tale, però, il portatore principale di queste idee era il popolo stesso: perciò Čebokli, forse inconsciamente, trasporta il suo odio verso tutta la nazione e tutto il popolo e non soltanto per certe idee politiche e per i loro promotori. Questo possiamo capirlo, attraverso la sua scelta di studiare italianistica di cui fu anche docente di lettere. Nel diario ci dà un assaggio del suo rapporto con la lingua italiana:

Ho cominciato a ripetere l’italiano. In un mese e mezzo conto di terminare il libro di Sauer. (Čebokli 85)

Da tutto ciò possiamo dedurre la doppia valenza del rapporto di Čebokli con gli Italiani, dei quali odiava le idee imperialiste, la situazione politica, ma ne amava la lingua e la cultura, tanto da studiarle e insegnarle. Sappiamo che quello che successe poco dopo la Grande guerra in Italia con l’ascesa del fascismo, non era certo a favore degli Sloveni. Per questo si può intravedere in Čebokli un’arguta profetizzazione. Diversa è l’opinione che Salsa ci offre di sé. Possiamo riconoscere in lui un uomo equilibrato che giudica solo ciò che vede. In seguito a ciò non troviamo molti passi che in Salsa parlino del rapporto con gli Sloveni, perchè semplicemente non esisteva. Bisogna però tener conto di una realtà: il lavoro di Čebokli è stato pubblicato così come è nato, Salsa, invece, ha usufruito di un prezioso alleato, il tempo, nel quale è riuscito con un intenso *limae labor* a preparare un lavoro completo, così come traspare *Trincee*.

5. Conclusione

Riflettendo su *Trincee* e *Dnevnik*, comparandoli e capendone l'indole, riusciamo a trarre delle certezze che derivano anche da tutto ciò che è stato detto finora.

Il nostro contributo agli studi è partito dall'idea che i due lavori sono importanti annunziatori dello *Zeitgeist* europeo che li accomuna nonostante le differenze. Perciò la loro appartenenza alle correnti letterarie dell'epoca (vale a dire alle avanguardie storiche, più precisamente al futurismo nella letteratura italiana e all'espressionismo nella letteratura slovena) è di secondaria importanza.

Questo è quanto abbiamo cercato di dimostrare attraverso la nostra ricerca.

All'inizio abbiamo dipinto le convergenze letterarie e contenutistiche delle due opere, trovando similitudini nell'idea di antieroisimo dei soldati in guerra, partiti come eroi, ma trovatisi ad essere effettivamente solo "carne da cannone". Ci siamo poi soffermati inizialmente sulla descrizione poetica dei bombardamenti, simile in tutti e due gli autori, infine sul loro rapporto con il mondo femminile sia in senso negativo, quando entrambi non condividono il comportamento delle donne lontane dai loro uomini – guerrieri, sia in senso positivo, presentando le avventure amorose, vissute dai due autori durante la guerra, rivelatesi fallimentari.

Dall'amore alla morte. Gli autori si soffermano sovente su episodi di morti inutili, repentine, stupide e perciò tragiche che confermano la teoria della guerra senza senso. In entrambi abbiamo rilevato un attaccamento speciale ai simboli, attraverso il loro rapporto con le medaglie al valor militare. Seguendo questo ragionamento siamo giunti alla conclusione che in Salsa e Čebokli si nota un espressionismo latente, sebbene tutti e due non rientrano nei canoni della corrente. Più che altro possiamo notare in loro una *forma mentis* espressionista, legata alle idee di una guerra inutile e di una delusione nei confronti dell'entusiasmo dimostrato all'inizio del conflitto. Čebokli viene comunque annoverato – secondo la storia letteraria slovena – tra gli esponenti del primo espressionismo, mentre Salsa resta una voce fuori dal coro per quanto riguarda la sua posizione storico – letteraria.

Delle divergenze ci siamo soffermati sulla forma, la costruzione e il concetto delle due opere. *Trincee* si tratta di un libro, formato da ricordi, riordinati ed elaborati; *Dnevnik* è invece un diario, scritto di getto, giorno dopo giorno, sul campo di battaglia. E tale è rimasto, data la morte prematura dell'autore. Se *Trincee* da un'impressione di opera completa, *Dnevnik* rimane in questo senso aperto e incompiuto.

Interessante è anche l'immagine che i due autori hanno della fazione nemica: per Salsa è soltanto uno specchio nel quale si riflette la medesima situazione in cui tutti sono compagni di sventura; Čebokli, invece, di opinione differente, guarda agli Italiani come nemici veri e propri. Da qui ha origine anche il rapporto letterario che Salsa e Čebokli hanno con i rispettivi popoli. Per Čebokli gli Italiani sono accerrimi nemici: questa xenofobia viene sostenuta dal fatto che è una proiezione del suo odio verso il sistema politico e le ambizioni espansionistiche dell'Italia. La tesi di un odio viscerale decade in quanto Čebokli è per studio un italianista, oltre ad essere uno slovenista. Per Salsa il rapporto con gli Sloveni è puramente descrittivo, come tutta la sua opera che mostra un carattere equilibrato e ponderato.

Ma a quale domanda vogliamo rispondere dopo l'analisi compiuta?

Forse le opere prese in considerazione non sono delle punte di diamante nella letteratura, ma con la loro realtà descrittiva cercano di dare una costruttiva e chiara lezione a tutti i posteri–lettori sull’ “inutile strage” perpetrata soltanto per opporre idee diverse. Sappiamo bene che per le idee non si muore inutilmente. Le morti viste e descritte (realmente!) da Salsa e Čebokli sono invece fini a se stesse e quindi inutili.

La lezione dei due autori riguarda soprattutto il valore funzionale della letteratura che nasce dalle idee, si forma per servire al ricordo ed è subconsciamente destinata ad una pubblica lettura che varcherebbe la soglia della mera *privacy*. Quindi lo stampo memoaristico di *Trincee* e la quotidianità di *Dnevnik* sono, forse, i migliori esempi di quale sia il modo più “letterario” efficace per trasmettere valori intatti che dissuadano dall’oblio umano a causa del quale conosciamo il terribile adagio “la storia si ripete”

...

Entrambi gli autori ci servono una lezione che riguarda i posteri e la storia. Si lamentano sul destino che attende il soldato dopo la guerra, il quale deve guardare i turisti mentre sviliscono tutto ciò per il quale i soldati hanno (seppur senza alcun senso e invano) combattuto e attraverso aneddoti ci raccontano come l’uomo sia stato effettivamente raggrato dalla guerra dei potenti.

Entrambi i testi sono legati dall’idea mitteleuropea della guerra come inutile strage, anche se provengono da *milieu* diversi tra loro (Salsa da quello Italiano, Čebokli da quello Sloveno, o meglio, Austroungarico). Ancora una volta ci dimostrano come la letteratura memoaristica sia importante come trasmettitore di valori e come mezzo per far valere la visione personale dell’autore sulla realtà storica. Questo tipo di letteratura è un ottimo barometro della visione personale sull’universalità in un periodo di cambiamenti sociali epocali, quale fu il periodo bellico. Dalla particolarità del singolo individuo (nel nostro caso – dell’autore) gli autori sono passati a descrivere l’universalità della società e sono riusciti entrambi a fluire questo particolare nei propri scritti. Così hanno dimostrato come in Europa aleggiavano le medesime idee nonostante le (apparenti) diversità che spronavano i conflitti.

Il fatto che entrambi hanno scelto la forma del diario o comunque della memoaristica va da attribuire al massiccio numero di codesta letteratura nei ranghi militari. L’unica consolazione nell’ansia e tristezza della guerra fu – infatti – per il soldato l’affidare i propri pensieri, su un fare assurdo e insensato, ad un quaderno. Così questi testi sono rimasti intatti fino ad oggi e ci dimostrano quale fu l’unico mezzo di salvezza dei soldati: affidarsi soltanto a se stessi per evitare ai posteri conflitti del genere. Questo è anche il fine (mai – purtroppo – raggiunto) di *Trincee* e *Dnevnik*.

Gorizia, Italia

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SUMMARIES IN SLOVENE – POVZETKI V SLOVENŠČINI

UDK 655.58(73):821.111(73=96).09

Mark Madigan

RICHARD WRIGHT; TONI MORRISON IN »UNITED STATES BOOK CLUB« (KNJIŽNI KLUB ZDRUŽENIH DRŽAV AMERIKE)

Avtor se v eseju osredotoči na vprašanje o komercialnih knjižnih klubih v Združenih državah Amerike. Ob tem predstavi najstarejši komercialni knjižni klub Book-of-the-Month-Club (BOMC) ter Oprah's Book Club (OBC). Le-ta nosi ime po svoji ustanoviteljici, televizijski osebnosti, Oprah Winfrey. Pisec razprave tudi ugotavlja pomen in vlogo teh klubov za dela dveh afriško-ameriških avtorjev, Richarda Wrighta in Toni Morrison.

UDK 821.111(73=163.6).09 Adamič L. :655.58(73)

Jerneja Petrič

LOUIS ADAMIČ IN KNJIŽNI KLUB "BOOK-OF-THE-MONTH"

Izbor Adamičeve knjige *The Native's Return* za knjigo meseca februarja 1934 s strani prestižnega knjižnega kluba Book-of-the-Month je v Sloveniji povzročil veliko presenečenje. Vendar pa podroben pregled Adamičeve korespondence pokaže dogodek v povsem novi luči. Adamič se je namreč sistematično pripravljaval na prodor v sam vrh književnih uspešnic. Že v dvajsetih letih je pričel navezovati stike s številnimi Američani in tako je počasi vzpostavil stik z ljudmi, kakršna sta bila Harry Sherman, predsednik Book-of-the-Month kluba in pa Henry Seidel Canby, znani ameriški urednik in eden od sodnikov omenjenega kluba. Nobenega dvoma ni, da so mu ta poznanstva olajšala pot do tako zaželenega cilja. S tega vidika je še posebej zanimiva korespondenca med Adamičem in njegovim dalmatinskim prijateljem Ivom Franom Lupis Vukićem, ki mu je Adamič pogosto in natančno pisal o dogajanjih, ki so predmet pričujoče študije.

Sonja Merljak Zdovc

LITERARNO NOVINARSTVO: PRESEČIŠČE LITERATURE IN NOVINARSTVA

Literarno novinarstvo je slog pisanja v časopisih in revijah, ki so ga ameriški pisci razvili že v devetnajstem stoletju kot odgovor na faktografsko in suhoparno objektivno novinarstvo in reportaže. Namesto da bi literarni novinarji odgovarjali na tradicionalna novinarska vprašanja kdo, kaj, kdaj in kje, opisujejo trenutke v času. Obenem se izogibajo previdljivemu slogu in klišejem, ki sicer zaznamujejo objektivno novinarstvo in reportaže, in uporabljajo tehnike realističnega pisanja za portretiranje vsakdanjika. Članek predstavlja žanr, ki sodi tako v literaturo kot v novinarstvo; združuje najboljše obojega, da bi bralcu prikazal najbolj slikovito in natančno podobo družbe. Članek obenem poskuša predstaviti literarno novinarstvo v Sloveniji.

UDK 821.111(73).09 Dickinson E.(497.4)

Polona Godina

IZBOR KRITIŠKIH ODMEVOV NA DELO EMILY DICKINSON V ZDA IN SLOVENIJI

Emily Dickinson, nedvomno ena največjih ameriških pesnic, ki je v času svojega življenja objavila le peščico svojih pesmi, je že od odkritja njenega bogatega pesniškega opusa konec 19. stoletja predmet živahnih kritičnih razprav, ki so se večinoma razvile v tri smeri: psihološko-biografsko, strogo analitično in feministično. V Sloveniji pa smo Dickinsonovo začeli odkrivati razmeroma pozno, pravzaprav šele v osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja. V pričujočem članku skuša avtorica, poleg kratkega vpogleda v ameriško kritiko, s pomočjo okvirne primerjave s sorodnim fenomenom slovenske pesnice, Svetlane Makarovič, podati tudi možne razloge za relativno majhno zanimanje za to pesnico v Sloveniji.

UDK 821.111(73).09 Capote T.(487.4)

Nataša Intihar Klančar

SLOVENSKI ODMEVI NA PISANJE TRUMANA CAPOTEJA

Članek obravnava odmeve slovenske kritične javnosti na pisanje ameriškega avtorja Trumana Capoteja. Zajema tako njegova zgodnja dela, pri katerih je v ospredje

zanimanja kritikov postavljen pisatelj izdela slog, kot tudi njegovo poznejše ustvarjanje, kjer je največ zanimanja in odobravanja požel njegov novi način pisanja, t. i. "non-fiction." Zanimariti ne gre niti vpliva Capotejeve javno deklarirane istospolne usmerjenosti na pisanje (in na vsebino) člankov o njem oz. o njegovem pisanju, ki so jih objavili slovenski literarni kritiki in knjižni ocenjevalci.

UDK 821.111(73).09 Updike J.(497.4)

Tamara Klanjšček

ODZIVI NA DELO JOHNA UPDIKA NA SLOVENSKEM

Ameriški pisatelj John Updike, čigar dela so bralci toplo sprejeli po vsem svetu, slovi kot eden najboljših književnikov našega časa. Kljub temu pa je v slovenskem prostoru premalo poznan, saj je glede na širok avtorjev opus Updikovih prevodov v slovenščini malo, še manj pa je kritiških odmevov. Updikovo nenehno sklicevanje na ameriško okolje je morebiti eden izmed razlogov, zakaj so ga slovenski prevajalci in kritiki zanemarili, saj je večina zunajbesedilnih informacij, ki jih v svojih romanih in kratkih zgodbah uporablja, za slovenskega bralca tujih. Članek tako predstavi pregled prevodov in kritiških odmevov na Slovenskem, v zaključnem delu pa analizira vpliv zunajbesedilnih informacij na prevoda romanov *Rabbit Run* (*Teci, Zajček*) in *Rabbit Redux* (*Rabbit se vrača*).

UDK 792(497.4 Ljubljana)"16":821.111.09 Holinshed R

Nada Grošelj

DVE LJUBLJANSKI JEZUITSKI DRAMI IZ 17. STOLETJA Z MOTIVIKO IZ ANGLEŠKE KNJIŽEVNOSTI

Jezuitski učitelji, ki so prišli v Ljubljano konec 16. stoletja, so pripisovali velik pomen ustvarjanju in uprizarjanju šolskih dram. V teh se kljub prevladi religiozne motivike kaže pester nabor snovi. Pričujoči članek obravnava dve drami, ki sta črpali iz angleške književnosti, namreč iz Bedove *Cerkvene zgodovine angleškega ljudstva* in Holinshedove *Zgodovine Britanije*. Besedili sta sicer izgubljeni, toda za dramo, ki se je navdihovala pri Holinshedu in prinaša različico zgodbe o kralju Learu, se je ohranila vsaj podrobna sinopsa. V članku preučujem to sinopso, kakor tudi ohranjene rokopisne zapise o omenjenih delih, njune angleške vire in način, kako ju je obravnavala sodobna slovenska znanost.

Miljana Cunta

ROMANTIČNI SUBJEKT KOT ABSOLUTNO AVTONOMEN INDIVIDUUM

Prispevek se ukvarja z vsebino romantičnega subjekta kot filozofske in literarne kategorije. Upoštevač kompleksnost in raznolikost književnosti v obdobju romantike, smo se omejili zgolj na nekatere vidike tega subjekta, in sicer na vlogo domišljije ter subjektov odnos do narave in transcendence. Romantični subjekt se skozi vsa obravnavana vprašanja potrjuje kot absolutno avtonomen individuum, ki za svoj obstoj ne potrebuje nikakršne transcendentne gotovosti nad sabo, ampak se opira zgolj na svoje imanentne sposobnosti in potencialne. To tezo potrjuje tudi primerjava romantičnega mističnega izkustva s pristnim religioznim doživetjem, kakor ga razume Rudolf Otto. Filozofsko-spekulativno definicijo romantičnega subjekta v drugem delu preverjamo na dveh pesmih angleškega romantičnega pesnika, Samuela Taylorja Coleridgea.

UDK 821.111.09-2 Pinter H.(497.4)

*Tomaž Onič*ODZIVI KRITIKE NA IGRO HAROLDA PINTERJA *HIŠNIK*

Hišnik (The Caretaker) spada med zgodnja dela Harolda Pinterja in je postal uspešnica že ob prvi uprizoritvi. Mnogi preučevalci Pinterjevega opusa štejejo prav to igro za pomemben preobrat v odnosu kritike do del tega sodobnega britanskega dramatika, saj so pozitivne ocene podali tudi kritiki, ki so pred tem Pinterja razumeli in sodili drugače. *Hišnik* je odtlej doživel že številne uprizoritve po vsem svetu, dve tudi v Sloveniji. Ta članek obravnava najvidnejše med njimi, analizira in komentira kritiške odzive nanje ter slednje primerja z ocenami obeh uprizoritev v Slovenskem kulturnem prostoru.

UDK 821.111(417)-09 Jordan N.

*Stipe Grgas*REKONFIGURACIJA ZAHODA V PRIPOVEDI
"LJUBEZEN" NEILA JORDANA

V uvodnem delu članka avtor najprej opozori na veliko pomembnost, ki jo ima prostor, še posebej zahod Irske, pri opredeljevanju irske kulture in v prikazu irske identitete. Osrednji del članka je posvečen analizi kratke zgodbe »Ljubezen« Neila

Jordana, v katerem pisec članka prikazuje način pripovedi, ki jo Neil Jordan uporablja kot značilno za samopredstavitev Irske. Z detajlnim načinom branja te zgodbe lahko ugotovimo pisateljsko strategijo, ki odklanja splošno sprejeto podobo zahoda Irske. Nadalje avtor predstavi tezo, da se Jordanova zgodba nanaša na konec določene oznake za irsko identiteto. Na koncu se avtor članka sklicuje na pojem heterotopije (Foucault) in na ta način odpira možnost branja predstavljenega prostora v Jordanovi zgodbi kot njegovo opisovanje tistih mest, ki niso prisotna v utopiji irske nacionalne sage.

UDK 811.111'01'367.625.41

Frančiška Trebovšek Drobnak

JEZIKOVNA VARIANTA IN SPREMEMBA: SREDNJEANGLEŠKI NEDOLOČNIK

V srednjeangleški dobi se je paradigma neosebnih glagolskih oblik možno spremenila. Staroangleški namenilnik, ki je bil po svojem izvoru dajalnik izglagolskega samostalnika, je izgubil svojo namenilniško vlogo in prišel izpodrivati navadni nedoločnik v vseh položajih razen za nekaterimi (predvsem modalnimi) glagoli. Večina jezikoslovcev je izbiro dolgega ali kratkega nedoločnika utemeljevala s slovarskimi ali skladijskimi značilnostmi matičnega glagola. Teorija o jezikovnih spremembah kot izboru krepkih ali šibkih dvojnic predpostavlja, da je izbor jezikovne dvojnice odvisen od zapletenosti ali nezapletenosti okoliščin sporočanja, vključno s funkcionalno zaznamovanostjo slovničnih parametrov v sporočilu. Avtorica preverja veljavnost teorije na zgledu uveljavljanja dolgega nedoločnika v srednjeangleški dobi. Rezultati potrjujejo začetno domnevo, da se je dolgi nedoločnik najprej uveljavil v zapletenem slovničnem okolju in se postopno širil na manj zapletena okolja.

UDK 821.131.1.09 Alamanni L.

Irena Prosenc Šegula

VITEŠKA IN DVORJANSKA POPOLNOST V EPU *PLEMENITI GIRONE* LUIGIJA ALAMANNIJA

V Alamannijevem viteškem epu *Plemeniti Girone* je razviden vpliv poznorenesančnih literarnoteoretskih polemik in Castiglionejevega zgleda popolnega dvorjana. Avtor si zada, da bo napisal »regularen« ep, zato postavi v središče svoje pesnitve popolnega junaka Gironeja, ki je moralni, krščanski in viteški vzor, hkrati pa dober poznavalec družbenih norm. Njegov junak zato niha med popolnim vitežom in popolnim dvorjanom. Ljubezen ima v pesnitvi dvojno vlogo, saj plemeniti in degradira, kar je značilno za italijanske renesančne viteške epe. Ker ne pride do sinteze obeh nasprotujočih si teženj, se koncept ljubezni kaže kot nekoherenten in hkrati odraža

tudi globoko nekoherentnost Alamannijevega koncepta junaka, ki omahuje med vrednotami srednjeveškega viteza, renesančnega dvorjana in krščansko etiko.

UDK 821.131.1.09-94 Salsa C
UDK 821.163.6.09-94 Čebokli A.

David Bandelli

ŽIVLJENJE NA FRONTI

Literarne konvergence in divergence dveh vojnih dnevnikov:

Carlo Salsa in Andrej Čebokli

Pričujoči članek obravnava dve književni besedili, italijansko in slovensko, ki sta nastali med prvo svetovno vojno, obe na fronti, vendar vsaka na nasprotnih straneh. Prispevek izpostavlja njuna skupna mesta kakor tudi razlike med njima in skuša prikazati njun skupni izvor v tedanjem evropskem »duhu dobe«, obenem pa obe deli, četudi različni po oblikovni plati, umestiti v t. i. memoarsko oziroma dnevniško književnost.

