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# ‘Mother-Daughter Syntax’: Sound, Borders and the Inheritance of the Maternal in James Joyce’s “Eveline”

*Michela Borzaga*

## Abstract

This article offers a re-reading of James Joyce’s “Eveline” as a transnational story. The concept of the transnational is brought into conversation with motherhood studies, more precisely, with the notion of the ‘mother-daughter dyad’ (Hirsch). The key here is to explore the formal and narratological clues that Joyce uses to convey religiously inflected inheritances of the maternal, inner splits, patterns of repression and matrophobic reflexes. Joyce partly maps Eveline’s psyche by engaging the reader in a set of delicate auditory exercises and, thereby, offers an indirect re-writing of the Orpheus myth. This article shows how the short story has been conceived as a sort of soundbox and demonstrates that Stephen Clingman’s conceptualisation of the transnational through ‘vertical’ versus ‘horizontal’ patterns of identity can be productively applied in the exploration of literary representations of mother-daughter relations as well.

**Keywords:** James Joyce, *Dubliners*, Eveline, transnational, Orpheus myth, inheritance of the maternal, sound

[...] [T]here is a correlation between how the self is put together and how we navigate ourselves through space and time. It is this *how* that we can understand as a form of grammar, and movement is intrinsic to its constitution. (Clingman 11) [emphasis in the original]

With your milk, Mother, I swallowed ice. (Irigaray 60)

A powerful scene unfolds at the end of James Joyce's "Eveline" (1904), of a young, dutiful daughter who finds herself paralysed on the pier, unable to elope as she had promised to do by boarding the ferry with her lover Frank, first to England and then, eventually, to South America. This enigmatic moment comes after we, as readers, have observed Eveline sitting at home, ruminating for hours over her decision while she holds two goodbye letters in her hands – one for her father and one for her brother. Sitting by the window, she recollects her childhood, her dull life, her abusive father and her deceased mother, whose death-bed plea "to keep the home together" (Joyce 30) is suddenly re-evoked without warning by a melody she hears coming from the street. It is the same melody she heard on the night her mother passed away. The sound reaches her unexpectedly; not only does it re-awaken the image or memory of the dead mother, it also seemingly rekindles a deeper *bond*, sealed with the promise not to leave the house.

First published in the *Irish Homestead* in 1904, Joyce's "Eveline" clearly concerns itself with *transnational* issues – the impulse to move and cross over into a new life, the desire to break free – but also with a deep sacrificial logic of repression – the inner invisible boundaries of the self versus outer national borders. Whereas male characters in the story seem to navigate through space without too many obstacles (her brother moves to Southern Ireland; her father's friend to Melbourne; her lover, Frank, is a sailor), Eveline remains trapped in a strange space of crossing. And, yet, as we shall see, it is precisely this in-between space coupled with the impulse to elope that discloses the contours of a more secret and hidden map – what, Stephen Clingman, in the epigraph above calls the inner "grammar" of the self. This article is a re-examination of the transnational in James Joyce's "Eveline". More specifically, my aim is to analyse how formal and thematic transnational patterns operate in the text and are used by Joyce to convey a deeper matrix connected to identity and place, movement and gender.

As a term, the 'transnational' entered literary and critical studies roughly about three decades ago. Although writers and texts have been travelling in countries and across borders since time immemorial, the emergence of transnational literary studies can be traced back to the demise of the bipolar global order in 1989, the emergence of globalisation and the increasing flow of people, ideas and commodities across national borders (Appadurai). As has been acknowledged recently by some scholars, there is no homogenous or common understanding of the term (Jay; Wiegandt). One strain within the field has explored questions of poetics and the circulation of aesthetic forms (Ramazani); another has been concerned with the impact of textual circulation on marketing, processes of reception and textual production (Adesokan). Very generally, there has been an interest in hybrid and diasporic identities. For the specific purpose of this article, however, I am particularly indebted to Stephen Clingman's own theoretical and original inflection of the term.

In his superb study, *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (2009), Clingman makes the crucial point that a transnational approach to literature allows us to explore not only what happens to identities, characters and texts once they cross national borders. At a deeper and more philosophical level, such a framework also helps us problematise the *nature* of boundaries, both within and beyond the self (cf. Clingman 3-6). What is fundamental for my reading of "Eveline" is Clingman's insight that it is often once people put themselves on the move or contemplate the *possibility* of navigation that an inner morphology and geography of the self becomes tangible and explorable in the first place. The 'geo-psychic' material in question is far from easy to detect. It has to do with complex processes of identity formation, intersectional factors such as gender, class, and race, but also unconscious material, desires and affects, personal inclinations that reveal how the self might relate to the self, to others and to the world at large.

Clingman's book is based on the premise that movement and navigation are intrinsic to the formation and constitution of the human self – as foundational as language. 'How' we navigate time and space, Clingman writes, reflects 'how' our inner self is put together; he compares this inner 'how' to a kind of grammar made up of different possibilities, modalities, combinations (cf. Clingman 11-16). In what is one of the most original and intriguing insights of his book, he makes the point that, it is when prompted by movement that the self might reveal a more or less positive inner syntax. More specifically, he differentiates between a transitive syntax, which is open to change, difference and exploration, and an intransitive or non-generative type of syntax, that is, one that once confronted with change and difference reacts by constructing boundaries, refusing contiguity, touch and connection (cf. Clingman 28-9). Furthermore, in the attempt to define more concretely some of the dynamics and tendencies at play within the self, Clingman resorts to two notions: the vertical and the horizontal. With the former, Clingman associates mechanisms such as "repression, substitution, sacrifice" (cf. Clingman 135). These are all psychic mechanisms that complicate connection, touch and navigation. With the latter, Clingman associates navigation, transition and mutation. It goes without saying that these dimensions are not intended as fixed essences, but as potential alignments that always remain interconnected and interrelated in a dynamic way. Whether we carry within ourselves a more or less transitive grammar is something that we cannot predict, know or fix *a priori*; it very much depends on many variables: experiences of pleasure and pain, mechanisms of repression and fear; asymmetries of power; cultural and social constraints, mother-daughter relations, as we shall see. It certainly emerges and reveals itself only once we find ourselves on the move, in a *space of crossing* – in this case on the dock by the sea.

For the specific case of Joyce's "Eveline", this is a crucial notion that allows us to engage in a different type of inquiry. By placing his heroine in a space of crossing, Joyce allows readers to gain insights into a deeper drama and cartography that does not unfold or reveal itself merely on the level of plot or action. By following, combining, intersecting – eventually synthesising – a set of peculiar hermeneutical coordinates, textual clues and transnational formal elements – the reader glimpses a type of pattern that pertains to the interior life of the self. As Clingman reminds us, transnational texts can offer access to *inner maps* and inner human cartographies. Literature represents a valuable and unique archive of the wide range of possible configurations, trodden but also interrupted routes, that we have inherited throughout time (cf. Clingman 31).

A second concern of this essay is to put Clingman's original approach to selfhood and movement in dialogue with motherhood studies and, more specifically, with what has been referred to as the 'mother-daughter dyad' (Rich; Silva; Chodorow). Indeed, this article is premised on the assumption that there is a deep interconnection between the institutionalisation of motherhood, the nuclear hetero-normative family, gendered divisions of labour and how, in turn, spaces (domestic, public, geographical, political) and borders (both inner and outer) are navigated by daughters along a matrilineal lineage. If, as Clingman points out, navigation and movement are foundational for how selves are put together, we cannot ignore the extent to which mobility has always been and, to a large extent, still remains a possibility and experience conditioned by patriarchal predicaments.

Important scholarship in the field of motherhood studies has drawn attention to the fact that, within hetero-normative and Catholic cultures such as Joyce's Ireland, the process of individuation for daughters has involved a more tortuous process of de-passioning and separation from the mother, than for sons. In *Of Woman Born* (1976), a path-breaking critique of motherhood as a patriarchal and religious institution, Adrienne Rich dedicates an entire chapter to this phenomenon. The American poet and feminist intellectual was, most likely, the first one to set out the notion of a mother-daughter 'problematic' marked by paradoxical yearnings, strange mirrorings and passionate double-binds. In "Motherhood and Daughterhood", she describes the mother-daughter 'dyad' as a cathectic and passionate bond that "cracks consciousness" (cf. Rich 231); the work of separation by daughters from mothers is pictured as a relentless and laborious – potentially endless – process. Far from being a healthy form of attachment, Rich shows how the mother-daughter bond is a symptom of the limiting and stifling ways in which patriarchal structures have institutionalised motherhood on a spatial, symbolic and affective level. She mentions "impossible expectations" and idealisations imposed on women, the pressure to produce perfect daughters and an internalised degrading posture of women constantly in attunement to male needs (cf. Rich 233; 243). Mothers do not only automatically identify more intensely with

their daughters; their two biologically alike bodies mirror and attract each other; a “subliminal, subversive, preverbal” form of knowledge (cf. Rich 220) is transmitted between them. Seminal for my reading of “Eveline” is Rich’s comment on matrophobia, which she understood as a “womanly splitting of the self” (236), a psychic wound and the phobic fear of becoming like one’s mother (cf. Rich 235–6). “The mother”, Rich wrote, “stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers’; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery” (236). In this regard, then, it becomes evident that what transnational and motherhood studies clearly share is a general concern with the etiology and morphology of borders and, in turn, with the implications these have for the ways in which we navigate both space and human relationships.

The themes of motherhood and of the mother-daughter bond have already attracted a great deal of scholarly attention within Joyce studies. A number of critics have looked at the trope of the constraining dead mother, arguing that in “Eveline”, but also in other stories in *Dubliners*, mothers often function as disabling ‘ghosts’ that haunt and handicap the lives of their offspring (O’Gorman; LeBlanc; Paige; Rademacher). If, on the one hand, these critics have rightly detected a narcissistic dark trait in *Dubliners’* mothers, they have failed, on the other hand, to analyse how such negative sides are often a product of how motherhood and maternal roles have been institutionalised and disciplined for centuries within patriarchal Catholic societies, both on a cultural and political level.<sup>1</sup>

Another substantial body of work has addressed Eveline’s inability to elope from a more historically inflected perspective. Laura Reinares, for example, reads the story against the context of the emergence of global sex trafficking at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century whereas Katherine Mullin has famously read it in connection with the social purity propaganda that was circulating at the time.<sup>2</sup> As

1 See, for example, Nancy Chodorow’s canonical book *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (U of California P, 1978). By drawing on a sociological, feminist and psychoanalytic framework, Chodorow’s was one of the first systematic studies that showed how women are not by nature ‘carers’ and ‘maternal’. Rather they learn to be mothers and the institution as well as ideology of motherhood are used to limit women’s role in society and to reproduce gendered divisions of labour as well as patriarchal capitalist structures. See also Dorothy Dinnerstein’s critique of the division of labour between male and female spheres in *The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise* (Harper, 1976).

2 In *James Joyce, Sexuality and Social Purity* (Cambridge UP, 2003), Mullin provides ample evidence of the propaganda targeted at young women in Ireland against white slavery and the risk of falling into prostitution schemes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The phrase “going to Buenos Ayres” clearly insinuated taking up a life of prostitution. Similarly, Reinares, in her chapter “James Joyce’s ‘Eveline’ and the Emergence of Global Sex Trafficking” in (Routledge, 2014), offers a detailed historical account of the sex trafficking industry thriving at the time through, for example, the Jewish criminal association Zwi Migdal. See also Ellen Jones’s article on social purity (2006).

interesting as such contextual readings may be, they tend to reduce Joyce's story to plot and thematic procedures, thereby hardly taking the literary ambiguity and aesthetic subtlety at play in such a carefully crafted text into account. Reinares, for example, concludes her essay by making the rather reductive and unimaginative point that, despite her oppression and miserable life at home, Eveline makes the right choice to stay in Dublin: by sailing with Frank to Argentina, surely, she would have fallen into the trap of sexual enslavement (cf. Reinares 29).

Indeed, it is by putting too much emphasis on the final scene of the story that critics have seen in Eveline an epitome of 'Irish paralysis', a concept that recurs often in Joycean literature, particularly in the reception of *Dubliners*. As Dieter Fuchs reminds us, Joyce associated this expression with "the shallow essence of the Dublin world", a dull and sterile life "fully determined by the institution of the Roman Catholic Church" (cf. Fuchs 474). Thematically, critics have tended to pick up on the symbol of dust, on the chains of family bonds, on Eveline's lack of voice and, most significantly, on the haunting presence of her dead mother. Yet, similarly to other pathologising terms such as 'trauma' or 'madness', paralysis is a term that can be easily essentialised and, thus, turned into an empty container. In reality, no matter whether mental, cultural or physical, paralysis can neither be simplified nor homogenised. Each paralysis has different meanings and carries different contents; most significantly, each paralysis comes in different *forms*. Critics, so far, have tended to read transnational elements separately from the themes of motherhood and daughterhood. I argue, however, that Joyce relies on a transnational aesthetics less to make a point about (post)colonial relations between Ireland and Britain (Uphaus) or to make plain and expose Eveline's 'paralytic condition' (Wicht) than to thematise a *boundary problematic*, which is intimately related to the 'mother-daughter dyad' as well as to a patriarchal and religiously inflected inheritance that exceeds the domestic and private sphere. As will be shown in the following, then, the figure of the mother cannot be reduced merely to a haunting 'ghost' or to an 'absent presence' (O'Gorman) and it is reductive to read "Eveline" according to a hydraulic model of paralysis versus resistance (Wicht; Williams; Ben-Merre). A more complicated hermeneutical challenge is at stake, which goes beyond the consummation of plot, climaxes and anti-climaxes, one which has to do with allowing sonoric patterns to capture the violent inner interplay of contradicting *imagos*, a vertical versus a horizontal pulling, which, eventually, precludes the possibility of change. By drawing on Clingman's model of the transnational, we will see how Joyce resorts to an articulated spectrum of sonoric and textual clues to convey a specific 'vertical' (cf. Clingman 134-145) matrix underlying Eveline's paralysis.<sup>3</sup>

3 In his article, "Rereading James Joyce's 'The Sisters' – A Bakhtinian Approach" (2006), Fuchs has already convincingly argued that, often, in Joyce's short stories, 'paralysis' and monologism are effects on the surface of the text. On a deeper level, Joyce's short stories mask a polyphonic and dynamic quality that "subvert[s] the incapacitating atmosphere of paralysis" (Fuchs 475).

## THE VERTICAL AND THE HORIZONTAL IN JAMES JOYCE'S "EVELINE"

A yellowing photograph of a migrant priest; a broken harmonium; a coloured print of the promises made to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque.<sup>4</sup> The reader is likely to gloss over these three seemingly unrelated objects when reading James Joyce's "Eveline". They appear quite soon in the story. Joyce carefully places them in the living room of the eponymous heroine. Interestingly, they are not casually scattered across the room. The photograph of the priest and the print of Alacoque's promises hang next to each other above the broken instrument. To overlook them on a first reading is easy because, as readers, we are accustomed to identifying with characters and their inner conflicts; we tend to focus on *what* happens and to register spatial descriptions and material objects as part of a larger decorative setting or background against which the 'real' drama unfolds. In the specific case of this short story, moreover, the reader sees this triad of objects filtered and focalised through Eveline's point of view. As she sits by the window debating whether to elope to South America, she inspects the room and looks at the three objects; the reader is told that she has been dusting them for years "once a week" (Joyce 27). Interestingly, only the photograph of the priest catches her attention a moment longer; as she looks at it, she reflects that she could never find out the name of her father's friend who migrated to Melbourne. Otherwise, the two other objects are reviewed almost *en passant* and casually by Eveline.

With this narratological technique a double effect is reached: the reader sees through Eveline's eyes how she glosses over these familiar objects; yet, on a second or even third reading, the reader feels compelled to stop in order to take a closer look at them. Indeed, after multiple readings, a number of questions crystallise for the reader: why the photograph of a priest who has migrated to Australia? Why the print of the promises of a beatified French woman, Blessed Mary Alacoque, and not a portrait of St. Patrick, for example? Why the harmonium and not a flute? Why is the harmonium described as *broken*? Does it *have* to be broken? If

4 Born in 1647, Margaret Alacoque grew up in a fervent Catholic middle class French family. From a very early age she showed a deep and radical fascination with the world of prayer, with devotional and sacrificial practices, ranging from the celebration of Catholic sacraments to self-inflicted corporeal mortifications. She took a vow of chastity already at a very early age, soon after her first communion. Her first apparition of Christ dates back to 27<sup>th</sup> December 1673. Against the will of her family, she entered the cloister of Visitation at Paray in her early twenties, where she received several apparitions of Jesus pleading a particular devotion to his heart. She died at the age of forty-three in 1690. By the time she was pronounced Blessed by Pope Pius IX (in 1864) and canonised by Benedict XV in 1920, the cult of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus had witnessed great dissemination and transmission in Catholic Europe. It was, in particular, Pope Pius IX in particular who universalised this liturgical feast celebrated every year on the third Friday after Pentecost.

so, why? How are we to read these objects and what should we do with them? Is there a heuristic formula that Joyce asks us to detect?

This article is partly the result of long meditations around these three objects, the combination in which they appear, the narratological and aesthetic significance they have in relation to the larger themes and conflicts dramatised by the story. In their combinatory dramaturgy, these objects fulfil multiple hermeneutical functions that go beyond mere symbolism or decoration. While most critics have discussed these three objects separately and have tended to interpret them as 'symbols' of Catholic repression and submission or as 'thematic' markers of patriarchal power and paralysis, I suggest that in combination they help us identify a pattern connected to daughterhood and modes of navigating space, the relation between outer borders and inner boundaries, men-women relations, male and female devotion, the inheritance between mothers and daughters and the role that sound might play in tracing such inner cartographies.

If we take a closer look at these three objects and contextualize them within the larger themes of the story, we notice that the photograph of the priest evokes the themes of mobility and migration, and this in connection with a clerical and devotional life spent in the service of the Catholic church. This theme is directly connected to the central drama at the heart of Eveline's life: to move or not to move? To elope or not to elope? To devote herself to Frank and if so, in what form? To break the cycle of sacrifice or to repeat her mother's life? We should not overlook how, despite his promises to God and the official vows taken of poverty, chastity and obedience, the priest manages to navigate the oceans and to get to Melbourne. The second object, the print of the promises to Mary Alacoque, is set right next to the priest's photograph. This print, similarly, evokes a life of devotion, mysticism and self-sacrifice, yet, with a substantial difference: Whereas the priest is turned outward, crosses national borders and moves horizontally while inhabiting a position of clerical power (he can administer and celebrate Catholic sacraments and Holy Orders), the list of promises of Margaret Mary Alacoque – a mystic famous for embracing an extreme logic of male adoration and masochistic self-annihilation – suggests a different type of devotion, all turned inward, a posture of prostration toward the vertical, God, the Absolute. Finally, the broken harmonium below these two objects embodies the idea of potential sound and music. The harmonium *could* emanate sound, which, by definition is transitive and borderless, but the sonoric route remains interrupted. Once again, there is a complex correspondence between this object and the text, both on a formal and thematic level. From the very beginning, "Eveline" is replete with sonoric notifications – the melody which reminds Eveline of her dead mother, the music at the opera, the sea shanties Frank sings to her, the ferry's whistle in the final scene of the story.

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In a famous chapter of *The Second Sex*, dedicated to female mystics, Simone de Beauvoir refers to Mary Alacoque and denounces a particular pattern according to which women who have been indoctrinated by Catholic patriarchal culture, seek salvation by unconsciously embracing love as their supreme vocation. For de Beauvoir, however, this tendency can only result in failure: "[E]ither the woman establishes a relation with an unreal: her double or God; or she creates an unreal relation with a real being" (de Beauvoir 734). Alacoque was an extreme and interesting example in this sense. Beauvoir quotes from her memoirs, in which Alacoque recounts feeling extreme pleasure and joy while engaging in the most self-mortifying and self-abasing practices – such as cleaning the vomit off a sick person with her tongue. Beauvoir concluded her chapter by arguing that as an effect of Catholic patriarchal cultures, women efface and de-realise themselves to create a relationship with an idealised man. This, for Beauvoir, was a symptom of a deep split, of a state of mental confusion and loss of grip on the world (cf. Beauvoir 734). Whereas some critics rightly see a parallelism between the Alacoque's promises and the promises Eveline makes to her mother, a further and more intricate parallelism is created when Eveline refers to Frank as her *saviour*. It happens towards the end of the first section of the story after Eveline has been carefully weighing up the implications of her decision, when suddenly a melody reaches her from the street, the same melody she heard the night her mother passed away. Her impulse to the horizontal is suddenly interrupted by the return of the repressed and uncanny, a *matrophobic reflex*, which reveals a deeper boundary problematic. Eveline reviews "the pitiful vision of her mother's life [...] that life of commonplace sacrifices closing in final craziness" (Joyce 31). Suddenly she jolts, stands up and is caught by an impulse of terror: "She must escape!", she tells herself, she cannot become like her mother and fall into the trap of the same sacrificial logic. Frank, we read, would "take her in his arms, fold her in his arms. He would save her" (Joyce 31). Suddenly the reader realises that linked to Eveline's prompt towards the horizontal is the desire to separate and differentiate herself from her mother – a mother, we should not forget, who becomes unavailable and incoherent and yet, shortly before she dies, who finds the lucidity to plead with her daughter to keep the home together as long as she can. The pattern offered here is clear: in the attempt to escape the sense of having become the captive of her mother's desire, Eveline attempts to expel the maternal interiorised object. Yet, it is often when we refuse and reject, that our unconscious plays a trick on us; out of guilt and a sense of betrayal a strong sense of identification arises.

The very structure and visual dramaturgy of the text suggest disconnection, division, fracture, reflecting Eveline's psychic split. Joyce creates two specular tableaux, one the reversal or double of the other. The first sees Eveline sitting by the

window occupying a position on a threshold. She is inside, and the horizontal – the promise of freedom and change – is outside. She weighs up and contemplates the implications of her departure, but, at the beginning of the story, transitivity and navigation, exist only as approaching possibilities and projections. In the second section or fragment, the setting is reversed. Eveline is no longer inside; she is outside, where suddenly the horizontal is not only a projection or fantasy but becomes real. It is evening; she is at the dock, facing “the wide doors of the sheds [...] the black mass of the ship” (Joyce 31). In front of her is the sea, pure transitivity. Interestingly, from being her saviour Frank turns into a dark force who “would drown her” (Joyce 31). Again, this moment evokes the theme of separation, the lack of inner boundaries. The images suggest threat, castration anxiety, the fantasy of being devoured: “All the seas of the world tumbled about her heart. He was drawing her into them” (Joyce 31). The moment Eveline can embrace navigation with Frank, she is overwhelmed by distress. Eveline sets up a vertical boundary by directing appealing to God – the most vertical of instances – and starts praying. The story ends on a vertical and intransitive note. Frank departs and Eveline remains in Dublin. We see here a powerful matrix at work, one that keeps Eveline trapped within a vertical matrophobic logic that transforms each horizontal impulse into repression and prostration as she oscillates between the need for protection and the fear of becoming insane. Cutting through Eveline’s psychic map, is therefore, a *fault line*, a lack of clear boundaries between inside and outside, herself and her mother, ultimately between herself and Frank. This *fault line* in her inner cartography speaks of a syntax of connection and reciprocity, which, at the end, remains broken and interrupted.

## CONCLUSION: EVELINE – A BROKEN SOUNDBOX?

There is a final pattern that we still need to explore. For, the most puzzling element of the story concerns the presence of a broken instrument, which Joyce places in Eveline’s living room. Once again, we need to ask, why is the harmonium in Eveline’s room broken? What kind of connection and reading does it imply and how does it relate to the vertical pattern we have seen so far? The dead mother’s afterlife, interrupted sound, a broken instrument, the fantasy and desire to be saved. The immediate association cannot be but with Orpheus, the mythical Greek figure who, with his lyre, famously descended into the underworld to save his beloved wife Eurydice (who died after stepping on a viper shortly after their marriage).<sup>5</sup> Through the resonances and vibrations emitted by his lyre, he

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5 For this insight into how Joyce re-writes the Orpheus myth, I am particularly indebted to Dieter Fuchs, our numerous conversations about this topic and his generous feedback at the yearly AAUTE Conference in Salzburg (May 2022).

descends into the underworld and is able to rescue her. Yet, in the end, he loses her again. He had promised the Gods to guide Eurydice out of the underworld and not to look back at her until they reached the upper world. Unsure whether he would be followed by Eurydice or by a shadow, Orpheus fatally turns back as soon as he spots the sun and, once again, tragically sees her vanishing behind his shoulders.

The parallelisms and thematic reversals connected to this myth are multiple. Even if indirectly, they also connect to our vertical transnational pattern on various levels. For, Joyce draws on the pagan world to explore routes of transmission and sound as well as mother-son and mother-daughter relations. We should not overlook the point that Orpheus inherited the gift of music from his mother, Calliope, the Muse of epic poetry. The wisest of the nine Muses, she is also known as Homer's Muse, the one who inspired the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. Statues or figurative representations, traditionally portray her with a papyrus roll or a wax tablet on her knee and a stylus in her hand. Whereas the transmission between Orpheus and his mother is generative and creative (she is the one who teaches her son how to sing), in "Eveline" the transmission between mother and daughter fails. "Derevaun, Seraun! Derevaun Seraun!" (Joyce 31): many critics have speculated widely – in vain – about the possible meaning of these cryptic words pronounced by Eveline's mother before she dies. Whereas on a strictly literal level, the semantics of these exclamations remains obscure, onomatopoeically, and on a more auditory level, they evoke broken chords, the broken sounds which might well emanate from a broken harmonium. Thus, Joyce, creates a metonymic link between the body of Eveline's mother and the broken harmonium in the house. At the end of her life, Eveline's mother becomes inaccessible. She leaves behind a disfigured map.

This seems to have implications for how Eveline repeatedly transfigures horizontal sonoric gifts into vertical admonitions. Even if in an ironic and ambiguous way, Joyce depicts Frank as a modern version of Orpheus. Frank tries to seduce Eveline, to rescue her from her domestic mortuary and to ferry her across the Atlantic ocean through music. "He was awfully found of music and sang a little" (Joyce 29), we are told. Sitting by the window, Eveline ruminates about and reviews the evening spent at the opera with Frank to see *The Bohemian Girl*. Yet, unlike Eurydice, Eveline does not follow Frank. As she stands by the pier undecided whether to join Frank or not, Eveline hears the ferry's whistle. This potent sonoric inscription could be welcomed by Eveline as an encouraging and transitive, even festive sign. Yet, it seemingly hits her like a vertical indictment, a kind of sonoric prohibition that dialectically inverts the matrophobic impulse. At the very moment that she desperately tries to separate herself from the mother, she identifies with her – is re-possessed by her – and rejects the object of desire.

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By way of attending to the sounds inner boundaries make, this article has tried to show that there is still an unmapped history of vertical versus horizontal legacies that need to be explored. These work as thin, invisible threads binding the living to the dead, daughters to mothers, the past to the present. In this essay, I have shown that Joyce creates a metonymic relation between the interrupted sonoric routes in Eveline's house, her body and the text itself. In addition, through the trope of music and melodies and the iconic presence of a broken instrument in Eveline's living room, Joyce also re-writes the Orpheus myth: "Eveline" is conceived as a broken soundbox where sound (and her desire) fails to transform the internalised afterlife of the dead mother. The practice of registering sound in symbolic forms, Lawrence Kramer writes, has the power to change us because it opens up the possibility of "hearing ourselves know and feel" (cf. Kramer 9-10). Such a reading opens up a new hermeneutics and form of knowing that privileges the auditory, but not at the expense of the visual.

By drawing on Clingman's theorisation of the transnational, I have proposed a deeper inquiry into intransitive versus generative grammars of identity as inheritances of the maternal. Yet, by taking transnational elements, psychic maps and vertical versus horizontal patterns into account, this dynamic approach allows us to trace more nuanced and less predictable trajectories, where identity is never fixed but reveals itself as it moves. In this brief article, I hope to have shown that a short story like James Joyce's "Eveline" provides a small insight into an inner map we have inherited as women and daughters. By shifting our attention to inheritances of the maternal and to how space is navigated, an internalised logic reveals itself which is not predictable. An alternative way of thinking about paralysis, then, is to think in terms of vertical versus horizontal patterns. To remain paralysed means to be gripped by a vertical internal logic, a grammar which is not transitive. It can be due to refusal, projection or fear but also to internalised gendered norms of sacrifice and repression – of pleasure and desires. Yet this is neither a fixed nor an essentialised condition. It is a matter of psychic cartography. As long as the impulse to elope is given, the possibility of horizontality persists. This might be, indeed, the tortuous and painful ways in which, from mothers to daughters, horizons of freedom and longings for navigation have been passed down across the generations – through interrupted routes, out-of-tune bodies and intermittent, at times, broken syntaxes. James Joyce's "Eveline" allows us to objectify and externalise these psychic maps and, in this way, the work of navigation, at least the imaginative one, continues.

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## Sintaksa mati-hči: zvok, meje in dediščina materinskega v kratki zgodbi "Eveline" Jamesa Joyca

Prispevek ponuja ponovno branje kratke zgodbe "Eveline" Jamesa Joyca kot transnacionalne zgodbe. Pojem transnacionalnega je postavljen v dialog s študijami materinskega, natančneje s konceptom diade 'mati-hči'.

**Ključne besede:** James Joyce, *Dubliners*, Eveline, transnacionalno, orfejski mit, dediščina materinskega, zvok

## **“Sensation” India: *Gup. Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character* by Florence Marryat**

*Elisabetta Marino*

### **Abstract**

Florence Marryat was a prolific author, as well as being renowned for both her involvement with spiritualism and her parallel career as an actress. In 1854, she married Thomas Ross Church, an officer in the British Army, with whom she travelled through India for six years. On coming back to England, she began her successful writing career. She specialized in popular (and lucrative) sensation novels, but she also capitalized on her residence in India by penning a travel memoir: *Gup. Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character*, eventually released as a volume in 1868. By engaging in a close reading of the text, this paper sets out to demonstrate that, in crafting her account, Marryat concocted an imaginary, “sensational” depiction of India and its people, to please and entertain her readership, while serving her own social and political agendas.

**Keywords:** Colonialism, Florence Marryat, hybridity, India, sensation novel, women’s roles

## FLORENCE MARRYAT: A MULTI-FACETED AND CONTROVERSIAL ARTIST

Harry Furniss's 1923 portrayal of Florence Marryat (1833-1899) proves rather insightful, as it epitomizes the way she was perceived by her contemporaries, while shedding light on the biased reasons commonly adduced for her relative obscurity, which lasted for nearly one century after her demise. By depicting Marryat as "a good-natured, energetic woman, and a prolific writer—but not a great one"<sup>1</sup> (10), the celebrated author and illustrator pointed to her alleged artistic limitations which, nonetheless, he had become aware of from second-hand sources – actually, as Furniss candidly admitted, he had "never read her books" (11). He also mentioned her "eccentricity" (11) as well as two other contrasting features, joining conventionally feminine and unfeminine traits into one person: although she was a "striking-looking woman" (11), in fact, she would straightforwardly address her interlocutors just "like a man" (11). Marryat led quite a remarkable life,<sup>2</sup> becoming "an expert in the manipulation and multiplication of her own identity" (Palmer 141), as Beth Palmer has elucidated. She married, was divorced (on the grounds of adultery), remarried, and separated. She gave birth to eight children, penned countless short stories, 70 volumes (mostly fictional narratives), as well as a few plays.<sup>3</sup> She contributed to periodicals and, from 1872 to 1876, she edited *London Society*, a prominent and best-selling journal. She was involved in the Society of Authors (a group gathering professional writers, like a trade union); furthermore, in her late years, she established her own School for Literary Art. A self-supporting artist and a talented entrepreneur, Marryat also pursued an acting career with the D'Oyly Carte opera company. Finally, she was renowned as a public speaker, a singer, an entertainer, a spiritualist, an anti-vivisectionist, and even a dog breeder (Depledge 306; Hatter and Ifill 10).

Despite her numerous and often transgressive endeavors, she was at pains to cast herself as a model of Victorian domesticity, as she longed to meet the expectations of her diverse readership. Consequently, she concocted a perfectly acceptable version of her first approach to writing, by highlighting its therapeutic value. As she declared in an 1897 interview with *Woman at Home* magazine, in fact, she began scribbling her first novel almost unintentionally, only to distract her mind while nursing her children, affected by scarlet fever (Palmer 118). Despite her protestations of propriety and decorum, however, virtually all of her plots

1 The emphasis is mine.

2 Sarah Lennox describes it as "full and unconventional" (1).

3 She never assumed her husband's surname, also because, as a writer, she wished to exploit the reputation of her father, Captain Frederick Marryat, a distinguished author of seafaring novels.

revolve around taboo topics, thrilling crimes drawn from newspaper articles, the gratification of sexual impulses, the blurring of social and gender lines, and the resulting need to redraw the boundaries of femininity, beyond restrictive conventions. Hence, her novels have been easily ascribed to the fashionable and lucrative genre of sensation fiction.<sup>4</sup> While recent scholarship has devoted increasing attention to her fictional works (Lennox 1-13), Marryat's non-fictional texts are still largely overlooked, set apart from the rest of her oeuvre, and relegated to a marginal position. Conversely, as this article sets out to demonstrate, *Gup. Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character* (1868), which is a travel memoir focused on her six-year stay in India, is perfectly consistent with both the bulk of her output and the skillful performance of her contrasting identities as a respectable Victorian lady and an outspoken champion of women's rights. As demonstrated below, since Marryat aimed to serve the same personal and social agendas, the author observed her host country and its inhabitants through the very lens of sensation fiction she adopted in crafting her novels. Indeed, she delved into contemporary anxieties (in this case, stemming from the colonial encounter), while fostering a necessary reassessment of gender roles and prerogatives. A brief account of the reasons that prompted Marryat to spend such a prolonged time in India will precede the textual analysis of her memoir.

## MARRYAT'S INDIA IN *GUP. SKETCHES OF ANGLO-INDIAN LIFE AND CHARACTER*

In June 1854, Marryat married Thomas Ross Church, Ensign in the 12<sup>th</sup> Madras Staff Corps. She immediately joined him in India, spending most of her time in Bangalore, Mysore, the Neilgherry Hills, and Rangoon (Burma), which are locations that furnished the background for her later recollections. According to colonial ideology, children born in the Subcontinent had to be sent back to Britain when they reached the age between five and seven, to enhance their education in a *healthier* – in all respects – environment (Ghose 116). Pregnant with her fourth

4 According to Catherine Pope, the first sensation novels were published in the 1850s, even though the genre reached the peak of its popularity one decade later, when the subordination of women in society began to be more openly questioned (4-5). With their lurid and scandalous plots, these novels aroused hostile reactions on the part of several critics, who lamented their corrupting influence on the reading public. Henry Mansel, for example, blamed their lack of moral purpose, their "preaching to the nerves" (482): "excitement, and excitement alone, seems to be the great end at which [sensation writers] aim—an end that must be accomplished at any cost by some means or other" (482). Margaret Oliphant also thundered against "the school called sensational" (258), made up of writers with "no genius and little talent" (258) who, in their novels, clearly displayed "their acquaintance with the accessories and surroundings of vice" (258).

child,<sup>5</sup> therefore, in 1860 Marryat returned to her motherland, together with her two daughters and a son, thus leaving her husband behind. Ross Church visited her occasionally,<sup>6</sup> but biographers are unsure as to whether he continued to regularly provide for his family (Palmer 117; Pope 16). Financial insecurity might have pushed young Florence to start her multiple careers, besides urging her to capitalize on her extraordinary experience in a distant and mysterious land by composing a marketable account. *Gup. Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character* was first successfully serialized in *Temple Bar* (November 1866–November 1867), and then published as a volume by Bentley, in 1868.

A possible connection between her travel memoir and the sensation genre has been suggested by Beth Palmer, who has noticed how the author “relish[e]d” telling the most sensational and shocking episodes of the life she led” (125), adding that “the exotic incidents she recount[ed], often of a violent or vaguely erotic nature” (125), added to her growing reputation “as a sensationalist” (126). Unquestionably, the narrative abounds in exciting episodes, electrifying her (as well as her readers’) “nerves” (Marryat 67), as when she spotted a fierce tiger hiding amidst the foliage (67), when she was almost sexually assaulted by a crowd of impudent men, “touching [her] clothes with their hands” (119), or when she inferred – “knowing what [she did] of the eastern character” (164) – that some of her acquaintances had been cunningly poisoned by the natives. Nevertheless, the most profoundly transgressive and “sensational” element in the text may be identified in the description of the extraordinarily active and *public* life led by Anglo-Indian<sup>7</sup> women. As readers gather, in fact, in India Marryat seldom maintained a subaltern stance, nor did she restrict herself to the private sphere, whose invisible borders she actually crossed the very moment she undertook her journey. On the contrary, she felt entrusted with the same colonizing and civilizing mission as her male counterparts, thus turning herself and the other *memsahibs* into “indirect agents of empire” (McInnis 379). Accordingly, if, on the one hand, she seemingly downplays the scope of her own volume to fit Victorian ideals of female modesty and reticence – as she clarifies, *gup* “is the Hindustani for ‘gossip’” (Marryat 283) –, on the other hand she forcefully appropriates the language of power, while offering a performance of her own superior Britishness which somehow legitimizes even her violation of gender rules.<sup>8</sup>

5 She gave birth to a daughter, rumored to be the result of an extra-marital affair; due to her physical disabilities (she probably had a cleft palate), the child survived only ten days (Palmer 123; Pope 16).

6 Apparently, the couple generated four more children.

7 This term is used in its nineteenth-century acceptation, meaning British women living in India.

8 As S. Vimala maintains, English women in India performed “a distinctive identity embodying the essential Englishness” (285).

Through her imperial gaze, the Indian landscape is seldom perceived as worthy of contemplation. Even though the Seegoor ghauts are a sight that "almost reconciles you to India" (81), with their "rocky precipices, romantic waterfalls, and lovely eastern vegetation" (81), most of the times, the only views she genuinely enjoys are those that remind her of her country of origin, from which she cannot mentally separate. Consequently, Bangalore is a fine place so long as "it is very like England, both in climate and productions" (3); moreover, observed from afar, the cantonment she is quartered in reassuringly resembles "an English village on a large scale" (6): as a result, it looks welcoming and inviting. Yet, she soon finds out that this striking likeness with her cherished birthplace is a sheer delusion: in fact, if the presence of English fruit and vegetables contributes to recreating the impression of spatial continuity, their "stunted and sickly" (5) appearance, "like an embodiment of cholera morbus" (5), serves as a clear warning against a potentially harmful self-deception. Hence, Marryat carefully balances her scant words of praise for the novel environment, with copious considerations that betray her deeper scorn and mistrust. For instance, the "enchanted ground" (260) in the Rangoon jungle, full of flamboyant flower beds and scented bushes of pink roses, is equated to the "garden immortalized in the fairy tale of Beauty and the Beast" (260): one would almost expect "to see some hideous figure" (260) lurking behind the lush vegetation, ready to "punish [visitors] for [their] temerity" (261). The calm and outwardly beautiful lake in Ootacamund is actually "useless except to look at, as no fish live in the water" (91): reduced to a mere object of aesthetic appreciation lacking any practical value, it does not live up to her standards of perfection.

In her seminal 2002 volume, Indrani Sen investigated the complex construction of the *memsahib* – a cultural icon in colonial literature – "as a tragic exile, shouldering hardships, discomforts, tragedies" (28), while also functioning as a fully-fledged "membe[r] of the ruling race" (33), eagerly involved in the British imperialistic venture. Acting as a model embodiment of the *memsahib*, in the initial pages of *Gup*, Marryat openly refers to her itinerant and displaced condition, often mentioning the long, unpleasant years "passed in exile" (Marryat 1; 9) in the Subcontinent. Her sense of loss and nostalgia, however, proves short-lived, soon replaced by the deliberate development of Orientalizing strategies, aimed at widening the gap between herself (the representative of a righteous and domineering elite) and the natives. Indeed, in order to stress her own preeminence, the writer lingers on derogatory and stereotypical descriptions of the locals' depraved nature and habits. As she underlines, "[t]heir characters may be summed up in a word: the men are cruel, crafty, and indolent; the women notoriously vicious; and the consequence is that such a thing as natural affection is little known amongst them" (35). To support her thesis, she shares the alleged story of a woman who

had callously sold her own child for a few shillings. The author does not inquire into the real reasons for such a desperate act: possibly, both mother and infant were starving to death; albeit painful, their separation would therefore increase their chances of survival. Instead, she manipulates incidents and colors her memories to suit her narrative purposes. In truth, Marryat exhibits no compassion for the Indians, dismissed as a bunch of “inveterate liars” (36), willing to commit any disgraceful deed for the sake of “the magic rupee” (37). Unsurprisingly, she even condones the use of violence against them: for example, she feels “the keenest sympathy” (35) for an officer who, exasperated by the indolence of his “tardy domestic” (35), had eventually reacted with “an energetic kick” (35).

As Nupur Chaudhuri maintains, “1857 was a watershed year” (556) for most British settlers in India. Although atrocities were committed on both sides, sensational and upsetting accounts of the Indian Mutiny published in Britain tended to justify the brutal retaliation colonists enacted against the insurgents, by highlighting white women’s extreme vulnerability. The savage mutilations and the sexual abuses the “Angels of Albion”<sup>9</sup> suffered on the part of the Sepoys ignited public outrage, while feeding imperial ambitions (Agnew 3; Ghose 111). Since Marryat was a resident in India during the height of the turmoil, readers would have expected at least a cursory reference to the uprising; conversely, she deliberately omits any allusion to the Mutiny, thus distancing herself from the dominant narrative of female victimization and sacrifice. The only historical event the writer associates her travel memoir with is the Siege of Seringapatam<sup>10</sup> (1799), which marked a decisive victory of the British troops against the mighty ruler of Mysore, Tippoo Sahib. Once again, she opts for a cleverly crafted representation of her experience abroad, designed to emphasize her active participation in the sphere of politics and power, from which women were normally excluded. Her British superiority is also manifested through her portrayal of the current Raja of Mysore, whom she meets during one of her inland travels. To her judgmental eyes, accustomed to the highest standard of dignity and grandeur in her country, his palace looks ridiculous, nothing more than a gaudy puppet theatre; the building itself is “mis-shapen” (Marryat 128) and its front “is painted in the most glaring colors,

9 The siege of Cawnpore (a crucial garrison town for the East India Company) was one of the most gruesome; as Jane Robinson has argued, it was “not merely a matter of military affront” (98); it was “the first time the women of England had ever been slaughtered in the history of battle. The British response was a tribal one – even atavistic” (98).

10 The taking of Seringapatam is mentioned three times in the narrative (122, 131, 142). The author even describes the fort, which she visits before leaving Mysore, thus demonstrating her patriotic commitment even when sightseeing: “The fort is still standing, with the huge breaches made in it every here and there by the English shells; and the spot where Tippoo Sahib fell was pointed out to us by our native cicerone” (142).

giving it the appearance of a large Punch and Judy show, or a travelling caravan, or anything but a king's dwelling" (128). She focuses on the "dirty huts and shops" (128) that surround it and, once inside its walls, she explores the "badly-lighted and ill-ventilated stable" (129) where, to her dismay, the Raja's holy cows are kept, with their piles of dung. The farther she penetrates into the palace, the more filth and litter she notices. For Victorians, cleanliness and hygiene stood for moral integrity, discipline, rationality, and industry (McClintock 171, 211, 217).<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the Raja's authority and supremacy are downgraded and disparaged to such an extent that she expects him to be "seated on a dunghill for a chair of state" (129). On the other hand, his alleged subordination to the Crown is signified through the portrait of the Queen and Prince Albert, hanging in his reception chamber (132).

Marryat also dwells upon the physical description of the natives, only to prove their inferiority to the northern races and their resulting need for (British) guidance. The Raja is "a little shriveled-up man" (123), while the local people are frequently compared to brutes, as if they had fallen behind in the evolutionary struggle.<sup>12</sup> A group of men "grin[s] and jabber[s] like a set of monkeys" (119); Burmese workers are "agile as monkeys and lithe as snakes" (209); the younger monkeys engaged in games, "look quite as pretty and as cunning as little native children" (148). These *Othering* and dehumanizing practices persist even when the author seemingly spares words of praise; in voicing her admiration for the attractiveness of some workmen, in fact, she concentrates on their sturdy limbs – "[they] had the most wonderful arms and legs to look at" (208) –, thus transforming human beings into commodities, into coveted collector's items.<sup>13</sup>

Marryat's "sensation" India is also connected with contemporary fears of miscegenation and atavism, the staple features of colonial gothic.<sup>14</sup> Far from offering secure shelter, her "hybrid cantonment" (150) is viewed as a disquieting twilight zone, as a place which is "English, and yet not English, Indian, and yet not Indian" (150), where one's subjectivity is liable to transformation or effacement. The

11 According to McClintock, soap embodied "the spiritual ingredient of the imperial mission itself" (211).

12 In the *Temple Bar* version of chapter XII, she even contemptuously calls the natives "niggers," adding the following comment immediately afterwards: "I know they are not really 'niggers,' but I like to call them so" (180). This controversial passage was expunged in the 1868 publication.

13 Marryat's tendency to objectify living creatures and the environment is discernible in two other passages of her travel memoir; black bears are appreciated because of their skin, which would "mak[e] a very handsome rug" (112); the picturesque Coonoor landscape proves "most desirable for the study of an artist, and would have made a glorious picture" (94).

14 Colonial gothic elements are also present in Marryat's 1897 novel entitled *The Blood of the Vampire* (Edmundson 73–94).

author feels threatened by the numerous contagious diseases – such as cholera, leprosy, and smallpox (175) – which might pollute her body; nonetheless, her emotional stability and physical integrity are more deviously undermined by the detrimental effects of the climate. Indeed, she feels “enervated” (39, 58) by the intolerable heat, which affects not just the physical appearance of British ladies, but also their customs, which grow dangerously relaxed. To explain the harmful influence of the Indian weather, she resorts to a botanical metaphor: “you might as well transplant a mountain daisy into a hot-house and expect it to thrive, as look for an English complexion to last beneath the sun of India, or English customs to hold good in a climate so different from that for which they were instituted” (40). Marryat succeeds in defending her body’s boundaries from any form of foreign intrusion; for instance, in her Indian version of the Garden of Eden, she refuses to eat the fruit picked for her by her servants, namely “gentlemen who never wear any clothes” (6) – a sentence fraught with evident sexual overtones. However, due to the heat, her stamina and willpower (the two leading attributes of a conquering and dominant race) visibly fail her; initially, she cannot sing, nor can she embroider: “after a short time the needle would so dull in my hot hands, that the exertion of pulling it through the cloth was too much for me” (58). Her reference to traditionally *feminine* activities should not mislead the reader; actually, a few lines later, she restores the balance between the sexes by observing that the torrid climate produces similar outcomes in men as well: “the men who have not appointments waste their days quite as much as the women; for they smoke their lives away”<sup>15</sup> (59). Corrective measures must be enforced to prevent further degeneration. As Éadaoin Agnew has argued, in fact, “because indigenous women were consistently characterized as idle and indolent, imperialist women [...] demonstrated a real anxiety about not being sufficiently and appropriately engaged” (16). Hence, the writer meticulously describes her rigidly organized and intense routine, made up of activities to be performed, including horse-riding, cold bathing and light dining (to practice restraint), and dressing up to meet fellow-countrymen and women (Marryat 56). On the contrary, those who lower their cultural defenses, thus definitively relinquishing their wholesome habits, are doomed to “degenerate almost into a state of idiocy” (220, developing a condition of apathy and mental derangement which she calls “the Burmese Ennui”<sup>16</sup> (220). Contamination fears also involve British children fed by their native wet-nurses. According to Indira

15 In another passage, Marryat relates with horror her visit to a British family who received her “without stockings” (40): “in they came, as if it was the most natural thing in the world to go bare-footed in the hot season, and dressed in the most astonishing of costumes, with their hair done ‘anyhow’” (40-1). She is appalled at their lack of propriety, at their dangerously *going native*.

16 One of her acquaintances, affected by the disease, “would neither eat nor drink, but sat all day doing nothing, with the tears rolling almost insensibly down her cheeks” (221).

Ghose, during the nineteenth century, "colonial doctors forbade breast-feeding as too debilitating" (175); for this specific reason, therefore, local *amahs* were employed. Nevertheless, their physical intimacy with babies, their dangerous transgression of class and racial boundaries, were perceived as profoundly disturbing (Dussart 713). Moreover, as Marryat ominously reports, this widely-diffused practice was frequently exploited by Indian women to exercise their power over defenseless British mothers, whose dear progeny was liable to be cruelly starved. Unnatural and perverted *amahs*, in fact, were actually capable of "retain[ing] all [their] milk" (Marryat 166) at their will and pleasure, with tragic consequences on the survival of the British presence in India. As the writer dolefully remarks, "I have known several cases in India, where English children have been lost from the desertion, or constant change, of their 'amah'" (166). The corrupting exposure to autochthonous languages also raises concerns: since "the conversation of the natives, as a rule, is too filthy to be imagined" (55), children must be forbidden to pick up even a few foreign words from their *amahs*. Likewise, she is not allowed to study Hindustani, to preserve the purity of her mind from immorality and sin.

The violation of holy domesticity is undeniably one of the core traits of sensation novels; only this time, the menace is not posed by the usual female impostor, who shrewdly rises to a position of prominence within a respectable household.<sup>17</sup> In truth, what frightens both the author and her reading audience is the difficulty in clearly determining the line between the outside and the inside, while striving to recreate the illusion, at least, of a familiar environment in an alien context. According to the rhetoric of Victorian colonial discourse, the concept of *home* appeared to be highly politicized, almost synonymous with *homeland*, to be guarded against enemy attacks (Ghose 118). Once more, therefore, in *Gup*, the *memsahib* is assigned a key and active role, for the protection not just of traditional values (like the Angel in the house) but also – albeit symbolically – of British extended territories abroad. Marryat explicitly underlines the connection between public engagement and private sphere in her description of the "travelers' bungalows" where she often resides, i.e., the dwellings built by the Government for "the enterprising Briton" (Marryat 64), "for the use of the defenders of our country's possessions" (66). However, even though she enjoys the freedom of movement they guarantee, by providing comfort and shelter wherever possible, she laments their lack of individual character, the loss of authenticity that building a transient British abode (almost an oxymoronic phrase in itself), with indigenous materials, in such a different climate, necessarily implies: "No favorite pictures hanging around the room; no cozy spring-stuffed armchairs; no soft carpets in which to lose one's

17 This is the case, for instance, of the leading characters in Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and Wilkie Collins's *Armada* (1864-66).

footfall—above all, no mantelpiece! No fire-place; no dear old English poker and tongs” (173). Consequently, in her dual capacity as a British vestal of the hearth and a loyal Royal subject, she tries her utmost to support the British mission by attempting to appropriate and domesticate the place she inhabits. The typical verandah, a “contentious space” (Agnew 118) given its liminal position, is therefore *anglicized* by means of carpets, settees, little tables and chairs where ladies “might at any hour call for tea” (Marryat 118), a quintessentially British habit. Settled in her new house in Rangoon, Marryat first of all arranges the beds she had tellingly brought with her from her mother-country (203); then, she devises a way to safely hang familiar pictures on the bamboo walls, by means of colored strings. Finally, she wages war against all “unwelcome intruders” (204), starting from the dozens of rats living under the thatched roof, thus eventually managing to safeguard the outpost. *Gup* abounds with passages relating “the attacks of the insects” (276), as if the writer and her family were constantly under siege in the hostile surroundings. Lying in her cot, her baby-girl is frightfully bitten by hundreds of voracious ants (204); later on in the narrative, the same ants are compared to an “army” (274), ready to perforate and devour her British cushions and clothes, thus annihilating the material indicators of her own identity.<sup>18</sup> The language of the battlefield is yet again employed to depict their destructive fury against her husband’s boat-cloak, “made of stout military cloth” (277): after one week, in fact, “it was riddled through and through in every direction as though it had been planted as an ensign on the ramparts of a besieged town” (277). Through the precarious fate of their belongings, Marryat provokingly suggests that both men and women are equally vulnerable in India; hence, joining forces against common enemies is a pressing need that overcomes any form of gender asymmetry or prejudice.

Just like in her later sensation novels, even in *Gup*, the author devotes numerous pages to the condition of women in the nineteenth century, by openly challenging the conception of ideal femininity the Victorians were so obsessed with – the very model she was allegedly complying with, to please the most conservative among her readers. Firstly, she demonstrates that modesty, submissiveness, and propriety are not *innate* qualities in her sex, but the mere result of a Darwinian adaptation to external circumstances (or a performance, one may be tempted to add). Indeed, while in Britain women dramatically outnumbered men, the situation was reversed in India (Sen 19), where their chances to flirt and be actively involved in the selection of their partner obviously multiplied. As she observes, therefore, “I believe the charge of extra levity against ladies in India to be unfounded, and to have taken its rise simply in the reason that there are, comparatively speaking, so

18 Her precious Broadwood piano, her guitar, and her cherished English books are also endangered by the mold that spoils everything, including furniture and clothes (219).

few of them" (Marryat 38). In addition, as she explains, given "the spirit of patriotism which draws people of one nation so strongly together" (11), in India morning calls are more frequent, with no need of any preliminary introduction. The love of one's country (certainly a commendable feeling) serves as the perfect excuse to justify a conduct that, in Britain, would be deemed promiscuous if not scandalous. Taken out of this context, in fact, the following sentence would be thoroughly unacceptable, if uttered by a *lady*: "In this manner I have received and conversed with as many as a dozen men in one morning, whom I have never had the pleasure to see again" (12). Finally, she also ascribes the newly-developed *predatory* behaviour of Anglo-Indian women to their husbands' hazardous neglect, as wives are left "alone and unprotected for months and even years" (10), while their spouses are away on service.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the Neilgherry Hills, where ladies spend long periods, unchaperoned, are ironically presented as their sexual hunting ground:

There are always plenty of females on the hills, consequently the hills are dangerous to an idle man. There are the wives who *can't* live with their husbands in the plains; the "grass-widows" (or widow put out to grass), as they are vulgarly termed; and as *won't* might very often be read for *can't*, perhaps they are (without any reference to the amount of their charms) the most dangerous that the idle young man could encounter. (101)

## CONCLUSION

In the very last paragraph of her memoir, Marryat described her narrative as "harmless" (284). Even though it proved to be a best-selling volume (Black 87), *Gup. Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character* stirred harsh criticism among contemporary commentators. *The Calcutta Review* blamed the "objectionable tone" (195) of the text, as well as its exaggeration. In her 1868 essay entitled "The Position of Women in India," Mrs. Bayle Bernard identified Marryat with a "superficial woman of the world" (471), whose work was replenished with "frivolous details" (472) and written in a "slipshod slangy style" (472). Even *The Athenaeum*, while praising the "amusing and not uninteresting" (419) character of the account, questioned some of its most controversial passages which, according to the reviewer, were far from "harmless" (419), as they might increase "that feeling of dislike between the Indian and the European which [was] already too rife" (419). Whether it was acclaimed or censored, when it was released, Marryat's collection of travel sketches did not pass unnoticed. As this article has tried to demonstrate,

19 It could be argued that, by so writing, Marryat longed to condone her own-extra-marital liaisons.

the author's "sensation" India was the perfect setting on which to stage British colonial aspirations and anxieties, while eventually granting Victorian women the possibility to write History, and rewrite a more realistic and complex version of their own story.

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## **"Senzacionalna" India: Gup. Sketches of Anglo-Indian Life and Character Florence Marryat**

Florence Marryat je bila plodovita avtorica in znana po svoji vlogi v spiritualizmu ter vzporedni igralski karieri. Leta 1854 se je poročila s Thomasom Rossom Churchem, oficirjem britanske vojske, s katerim je šest let potovala po Indiji in zapisovala svoje vtise, ki so bili kasneje z uspehom objavljeni.

**Ključne besede:** kolonializem, Florence Marryat, hibridnost, Indija, senzacionalni roman, ženske vloge



# Transnationalism in American poetry

*Nina Kremžar*

## Abstract

The article researches the concept of transnationality on the basis of American theoretical sources and tries to connect it closely to the study of modern and contemporary poetry. Among several challenges of the transnational approach, the concept of the nation is mentioned as an important element, in addition to global connectedness, as is the importance of studying transnational contacts with all involved cultures in mind. Tomaž Šalamun and Charles Simic, two poets who have found success and a positive reception in the other culture, are given as examples of a transnational contact between Slovenia and the U.S. To explain and closely study this contact, the article offers an overview of the characteristics of both poetics, which have made both poets attractive for American or Slovenian critics and readers. Translation, its impossibility and urgency, is mentioned as the central activity that creates transnational moments between cultures.

**Keywords:** transnational, translation, contemporary poetry, Charles Simic, Tomaž Šalamun

## INTRODUCTION

Due to globalization, we are witness to a constant flow of capital, people, ideas, and also literary works, which now more than ever easily and often reach other or distant cultures. Because it is impossible in today's world to isolate and separate any national literature from others, literary theory of recent years has started to turn to transnationality. If the literature in focus is American, it is most important to remember that the U.S. represent not only an economical but also a cultural world power that, more than any other, intensively and constantly crosses the borders of its own nationality, and transports its cultural products to the rest of the world. The United States of America are centered around migration – from the very beginning, it has accepted new cultures openhandedly, at the same time connecting them and transforming them into American culture, which is a conglomerate of many different cultures that are still linked together by language and national belonging.

A transnational approach is necessary, because it “puts the focus on how those local and national structures interact with globalizing forces that work with and against them” (Ramazani, *Lines* 310). The approach is even more essential in American studies, since it is precisely American nationalism (including its military attitude) that brings the most consequences to the entire world. The turn to transnationalism in the U.S. happened mostly due to the different movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that denied the idea of American exceptionalism and started to foreground ethnic studies, feminism, and minority studies (Davis 3). However, it would be impossible to claim that the idea of American exceptionalism and superiority has ceased to exist. That is why “[a] complex and nuanced picture of cross-national and cross-civilizational fusion and friction is badly needed today, and denationalized disciplines in the humanities may be able to help provide it [...]” (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 355).

## TRANSNATIONALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE U.S.

Most critics agree that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when globalization has connected the world to the degree where data from anywhere is accessible immediately everywhere else, a transnational approach is necessary also in literature. One reason is that literature in our time of the Internet constantly crosses the borders of individual countries. In this scope it is also important to note that the position of English as a global language has made it possible for literature written in English to be accessible to everybody who speaks the language. However, different critics of course understand and define the term *transnational* differently. At this

moment, we will deal mostly with critics who think about transnationality in the context of the U.S., also specifically connected to poetry.

In the introduction to *Singularity and Transnational Poetics*, Birgit Mara Kaiser summarizes the idea of transnational poetics in the following manner:

Transnational poetics has emerged as a term for literary production that transgresses and questions national limitations and canonization, and critical literary scholarship is increasingly aware that the national framework of literary analysis has lost purchase in this regard. (Kaiser 3)

Winifried Fluck, on the other hand, very interestingly divides transnational movements into aesthetical and political ones. The former describe transnational phenomena in terms of experience that enrich and deepen cultural contacts, and therefore focus on fruitful consequences of cultural plurality that the U.S. has always been constructed of (368). According to Fluck, political transnational movements strive for political change mostly by including those most pushed-away groups that become new political actors (373). The mentioned division obviously exposes the double role of the transnational approach – highlighting intercultural connections and including the periphery. In the context of the U.S., transnationalism could be studied from both aspects, with the second one perhaps being the more obvious choice, since the literature of the field offers a large number of literary-theoretical anthologies and articles that describe and put focus on peripheral and minority groups<sup>1</sup>. Nonetheless, this article will primarily deal with the aesthetical aspect of the transnational approach, since its purpose is to study the reciprocal cultural influences and relations between the U.S. and Slovenia through an overview of poetry translations. The aim of this article is therefore not to surpass the peripheral position of the Slovenian literary space, which might be achieved by translating Slovenian poetry into English, but rather to offer a detailed overview of the position that is occupied by a dominant (American) literary production in this Slovenian peripheral territory, which is also a specific crossing of national borders on both sides.

Similarly to Fluck, Shelley Fisher Fishkin mentions four different approaches to transnationalism, which currently represents the central approach in American studies:

1 Routledge, for example, publishes a series of literary-theoretical anthologies and monographies under the joint title *Transnational Perspectives on American Literature*, in the scope of which we can find the following titles: *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, Feminism, and International Consumer Culture, 1880-1930* (edited by Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham), *Fictions of Black Atlantic in American Foundational Literature* (Gesa Mackenthum), *Mexican American Literature: The Politics of Identity* (Elizabeth Jacobs), *Native American Literature: Towards a Spatialized Reading* (Helen May Dennis), etc.

(1) I'll call the first category *broadening the frame*, integrating U.S. history and literature into broader historical contexts and comparative frameworks and integrating multiple national histories and literatures with one another more fully.

(2) The second category involves work exploring *the cross-fertilization of cultures*, particularly the ways in which literature and popular culture from different locations influence and shape each other.

(3) The third category involves exploring previously neglected *transnational dimensions of canonical figures* not generally viewed in transnational contexts before.

(4) The fourth category involves *renewed attention to travel and migration*. It also involves renewed attention to *how texts travel* and what we learn about different cultures in the process. This latter category of work often involves *recognizing the limitations of an English-only approach to American studies*. (14–15)

As can be observed, Fisher Fishkin's idea is not far from that of Fluck. It could even be said that Fisher Fishkin summarizes Fluck's concept of aesthetical transnationalism in her first and second category, and encompasses political transnationalism in the third category. Similar to Fisher Fishkin and Fuck, Rocío G. Davis, the editor of *The Transnationalism of American Culture: Literature, Film, and Music*, also defines the term *transnational* in close connection to the context of the U.S. and sees it as researching "the multilayered contexts of cultural production in and beyond the United States" (1). The one word that can be foregrounded in the mentioned quote is *beyond*, which is of key importance to Davis, who believes that transnationalism examines "the ways U.S. cultural production has been reimaged as a result of political and social movements in the twentieth century, how it has traveled and been received outside the country, as well as how globalization has shaped American sensibilities and artifacts" (1). It is exactly these aspects – the traveling of American culture, poetry specifically, and its acceptance in a foreign country, which is in this case Slovenia – that I put in the focus. However, this transnational consideration of the reception of American cultural production in Slovenia has certain demands, since "[t]hinking through the prism of the transnational requires us to reexamine and reconfigure the political and theoretical frames we use to discuss texts produced in the United States and/or consider the ways 'American' themes, motifs, or styles have influenced cultural production beyond the country's borders" (Davis 1).

In his article "A Transnational Poetics," Jahan Ramazani, who is one of the main experts in the field of transnationalism when applied to poetry, provides numerous examples of American poets and on that basis lucidly explains the necessity of a transnational method in poetry studies. In the introduction Ramazani first

points out the indisputable influences “globe-traversing” has had on the shaping of English-language poetry since modernism until now (*Transnational Poetics* 332). In the scope of the mentioned process of interaction, Ramazani especially points out individuals – poets, novelists and playwrights, but also readers, who together form new connections and surpass the boundaries of “geography, history, and culture” (333).

According to Ramazani, it is exactly because, in times of globalization, the Internet and ceaseless communication, literature cannot exist solely inside one national frame, the only possible method to deal with contemporary poetry is transnationalism:

The main reasons why mononational constructions of modern and contemporary poetry do not suffice should be obvious. That many of the key modernists were expatriates and exiles, transients and émigrés, is well known and frequently rehearsed; yet, the implications for nation-based literary histories have not been fully absorbed within institutions of literary instruction, dissemination, and criticism, which remain largely nation-centric. Further, the modernists translated their frequent geographic displacement and trans-cultural alienation into a poetics of bricolage and translocation, dissonance and defamiliarization, and this hybrid and strange-making art also defies the national literary genealogies into which it is often pressed. (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 333)

Like Ramazani, in his article “A New Beginning? Transnationalism,” Fluck finds the reasons for the increasingly more frequent resorting of American literary theory to transnationalism mostly in the fact that American studies have recently reached an “impasse”, where, in dealing with different questions, the effects of power actually become inevitable, which means that while reevaluating the relations between countries even more obvious peripheries are created. Transnationalism, on the other hand, offers a retreat from the idea of “American exceptionalism” and transcends national borders, which seems especially appropriate in a period of globalization (365).

However, globalization (and the related fast global flow of capital that) is not the only reason why the approach to contemporary American poetry should be changed. As some of the changes that put American and British poets, even those who never left their country, into contact with “images, peoples, arts, cultures, and ideas” from all over the globe, Ramazani mentions researches done by anthropologists, who are simultaneously world travelers, the expansion of the British empire, which controlled a quarter of land before World War I, and the development of the U.S. into a political and economic super-power (*Transnational Poetics* 334).

## THE CHALLENGES OF A TRANSNATIONAL APPROACH

Despite a widespread consensus of the necessity of a transitional approach and the aforementioned inevitable intertwining of American cultural production with the rest of the world, it is interesting to notice that a large number of critical monographies and anthologies that dealt with modern and contemporary English<sup>2</sup> poetry in the 90s and 00s adopted national approaches rather than transnationalism (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 334).

Ramazani nicely describes this paradox and the senselessness of insisting on a mono-national approach in his article "Lines and Circles: Transnationalizing American Poetry Studies":

Yet we still trick ourselves into believing there can be a poem or novel or song unambiguously 'made in the U.S.,' when such works, however nationalist in ideology, are verbal machines made out of words, techniques, and ideas of diverse origins. Their rhythms, images, or stanzas, their characters, plots, or narrative structures bear a multinationally heterogeneous array of traces. For scholar-teachers in the world's most powerful nation, often susceptible to self-congratulatory exceptionalism, it may be especially important that we remind our students of the myriad extranational elements migrating through culture's porous boundaries, lest we communicate the illusion that the literary or cultural artifact is a smoothly unitary mirror of the massive construct of the nation and its monadic reflection in the citizen. (*Lines* 311)

It could be said that the transnational approach has been given more attention in literary theory and has been used more consistently in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; however, new problems have appeared. Fluck, who never denies the usefulness of transnationalism and agrees that its different approaches can serve several purposes, reminds us that the transnational is always inevitably connected to the national of which it originates, or, in other words, that the two concepts create each other and remain co-dependent. Therefore, we can conclude that American transnationalism remains exactly that – American. By claiming that it widens the limits of understanding, American transnationalism at the same time supports the idea of America. And since a supposition about America always exists, every transnational approach will likewise be determined by this very supposition (366–37). Moreover, the U.S. have later started to excuse its imperialism with transnationalism and in this way remained the same leading force in new clothes (Fluck 370). Ramazani understands this vastness of the American canon, which is possible exactly due to the U.S.'s leading position, both as a positive result of the "American multicultural openness", but also as "an unfortunate consequence of American

2 English here meaning written in the English language

cultural imperialism and its need for aggrandizing self-narration" (*Transnational Poetics* 344).

The U.S., surely the biggest cultural melting pot in history, is therefore seemingly setting a good example for the rest of the world by emphasizing the plurality of cultures it encompasses or by insisting that this country includes and accepts all cultures. But when considering this idea of complete acceptance of cultural diversity, it is imperative to remember that we are talking about a country where it is also expected that all cultures intertwine in a specific way – some of their aspects can be kept, but at the same time they all should also adopt certain characteristics of Americanness. For example, the culture of those with Italian descent living in the U.S. (who maintain certain aspects of the Italian culture – be it the language, customs, food, etc.) cannot be equated with present Italian culture in Europe – even the contact between these two cultures is transnational. Thus, it could be said that one of the characteristics of the American cultural area is precisely the intensive mixing of different cultures; but this does not mean that this sort of Americanness should not be studied in full through a transnational approach and in the context of the rest of the world.

Ramazani expresses a similar idea when he writes that it is necessary to apply the deconstructive approach "not only to mononational narratives but also to the distinction between indigenists and cosmopolitans" (*Transnational Poetics* 348). When rethinking transnationalism (in Ramazani's case that of modern and contemporary poetry), "nationality and ethnicity still need to play important roles" and cannot be erased. Ramazani also claims that "*translocal poetics*" is "[n]either localist nor universalist, neither nationalist nor vacantly globalist", but rather emphasizes "dialogic intersections [...] of specific discourses, genres, techniques, and forms of diverse origins". Transnationality therefore does not mean "postnational history," where the author is seen as "floating free" and not belonging to any nation. Even in times of the most obvious globalization the existence of nation states and the influence of national cultures cannot be denied (*Transnational Poetics* 350).

The transnational approach therefore should not be understood unambiguously or as a negation of some other approach. In comparison to the national model that adopts a binary division between "self" and "other", the transnational approach is heterogeneous and emphasizes "infinite differences" that do not stem from us ourselves and thus do not oppose the equality as "dialectical negation" (Spivak in Kaiser 14). That is why, according to Kaiser, the heterogeneous approach does not mean denied inequality, but also not "celebrating 'global' harmony" (14). The transnational approach therefore neither excludes the nation nor presumes a homogeneous cultural area, but is based on pointing out differences and the dialogue between them. It is only with this understanding that the transnational model can really serve its purpose.

Another challenge of transnationalism that Ramazani points out is also its false inclusion under the broader term of modernism, which is supposed to similarly include also postcolonialism and other movements. This type of categorization would unite different cultures into a uniform category of modernist cultures of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century and in this way erase the differences between nations and cultures. Ramazani understands the term “global” as an expression for all world literatures as a similar danger, since in this way “intercultural friction and assimilation” (*Transnational Poetics* 353) would disappear once again. What is more:

When using such contested terms as transnationalism, hybridization, and creolization, we need to remind ourselves constantly that the cultures, locations, and identities connected or juxtaposed are themselves agglomerations of exceedingly complex origin [...]. (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 353)

As mentioned, American culture is a conglomerate of its own history and an intertwinement of cultures that migrated to the country with new immigrants, and should be researched as such. But because the U.S. has always been primarily a cultural melting pot, defining what is “American”, specifically what is “American poetry”, proves to be problematic at times.

Ramazani, for example, disagrees with the following explanation of American poetry, offered by editors Stephen Burt and Alfred Bendixen in their introduction to *The Cambridge History of American Poetry*:

Although our focus on poetry in the United States requires specific attention to the development of distinctively American literary traditions, including the role poetry played in the work of nation building and in shaping the social and political life of the United States, we also recognize that poetry crosses borders and boundaries, and that American verse has always existed in the context of the transatlantic, the transnational, and the international. (Bendixen and Burt 3)

Ramazani accuses the editors of maintaining a mononational approach under a guise of transnationality (*Lines* 310). He is mostly bothered by the fact that this definition of American poetry does not emphasize the concept “American” enough or, in other words, that the editors do not “take the poetry’s ambition to be self-consciously American [...] as an index of its value” (Bendixen and Burt 9). Ramazani warns that the editors no longer understand “Americanness” as a concept that unites American poetry, but they rather look at American poetry in the narrowest of senses, meaning the poetry that is written by citizens of the U.S. (*Lines* 309).

Besides the mentioned introduction, in his article Ramazani also deals with Burt’s article “Is American Poetry Still a Thing?”, which was published in the

same issue of *American Literary History* and where Burt defines American poetry as “a more or less diverse collection of representations – some apparently trivial, some almost holy – around shared events, chosen and brought into shared spaces, where they might be shining for a century or a day” (Burt 276). Ramazani sees this definition as too broad and could, as such, serve also for “Jamaican, British, or Indian poetry – or even world poetry” (*Lines* 310).

If we apply the transnational approach to American (or any other) poetry, the question whether the term “American” poetry even still exists appears sooner or later (Ramazani, *Lines* 308). I am of the opinion that all national literatures maintain certain characteristics that are bound to linguistic, cultural, historical, geographical, social and other differences between countries, and that uniquely form every national literature. This remains true also for American literature, which might be the most globalized, but also remains connected to a specific (American) cultural area, which was formed in a unique way – through the process of numerous migrations, the entering of new languages and cultures, and their own way of mixing and accepting the American culture as an open one, but at the same time one that possesses dominance precisely because of its dominance. But even if we disregard all the characteristics that separate American culture from others, we can, as does Ramazani, agree with Burt, who points out that the expression “American poetry” ultimately remains useful at least as an “organizing concept, so long as we acknowledge its porous borders” (Ramazani, *Lines* 312).

## POETRY BETWEEN THE U.S. AND SLOVENIA

The theoretical overview of the concept of transnationality has made it obvious that no poet can be placed solely in the national frame from which they originate, but is always also influenced by movements and influences from elsewhere. “[M] other tongue and familial, religious, and educational background” are not the only entities that affect the “poet’s sensibility”, since it cannot be overlooked that also new “geographic, cultural, or linguistic displacement can alter these fundamentals”. All migrations the poet experiences – acquiring new languages or intense experience of foreign cultures – shape and change them (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 343).

Ramazani gives famous modern and contemporary poets (Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Mina Loy, Claude McKay, Denise Levertov) as an example to show how deeply and fundamentally the transatlantic migrations of experience and ideas affected their poetics. The reverse is also true, as some foreign poets who moved to the U.S. adopted and adapted to the American cultural tradition and became “American poets” themselves. As Ramazani writes, alluding to Shakespeare:

“Some poets are born to Americanness, some achieve Americanness, and some have Americanness thrust upon them” (*Transnational Poetics* 344).

At this point it is important to understand that Ramazani deals exclusively with modern and contemporary poetry also because modernist poetic techniques (transnational collage, polyglossia, etc.) are precisely the ones that are based on intercultural enrichment (*Transnational Poetics* 336). Therefore, we will look at two examples of a transnational contact between American and Slovenian poetry on the example of two contemporary poets – Tomaž Šalamun and Charles Simic – to practically point out the characteristics of the American-Slovenian transnational relationship.

Tomaž Šalamun is without a doubt the one Slovenian poet who has gained the greatest recognizability in the U.S. His popularity is noticeable especially in the plentitude of translations and publications in numerous literary magazines and anthologies (Maver 24). The reasons for this can be mainly found in specific characteristics of Šalamun’s poetry which are in one way or the other close to the American poetic tradition and have made it possible for American readers to genuinely connect to Šalamun’s poems in translation. Igor Maver also points out the necessity of certain connections between the cultures when he writes about the critic Robert Hass, saying that in his introduction to *The Selected Poems of Tomaž Šalamun* he excellently “contextualizes Šalamun’s poems from an American point of view and helps the reader view his work through American eyes while appreciating his popularity abroad as well” (25). This quote actually rephrases the idea of transnationalism where one work is moved or adapted in a way that can reach the members of the other culture, while at the same time the multicultural influences and changes stay recognizable. What is more, Maver emphasizes those characteristics of Šalamun’s poetry that strongly resemble Walt Whitman (e.g., “catalogues, self-mythologizing, an emphasis on the subjective view with the ‘I’ in focus, a kind of transcendental self as the center of the universe, and, last but not least, a profound confidence in the power of imagination”) and thus sound typically American, and which undoubtedly contributed to Šalamun’s popularity in the U.S. (27–28). There also exists a significant similarity between Šalamun and T. S. Eliot, which is mostly expressed in “modernist and radically experimental poetic language” (28). We could further point out “Šalamun’s ‘radical imagism,’ which links him, if only indirectly, with the radicalism and the powerful imagery of the American Imagist school of poets from the beginning of the century” (31). However, Šalamun did not remain only a Slovenian poet recognized in the U.S., but, according to Brian Henry, became (together with other foreign poets, such as Pablo Neruda, Cesar Vallejo, Czesław Miłosz and others) an important influence on the younger generation of American poets:

The international allegiances of these young poets make them distinctly American: what is American poetry, after all, but the absorption of the past and the

present, the local and the distant, the familiar and the foreign into the mind and heart of a poet whose music is American English? (Henry in Maver 34)

The American culture, despite being bigger and more dominant, is therefore prepared to accept contemporary Slovenian poetry, which is capable of integration, but of course the same is even more true when the roles are reversed. The Slovenian culture has been accepting American contemporary literature with open hands for some time. T. S. Eliot was the first poet to receive a very positive reception in the 1960s, but was later joined also by Alen Ginsberg, Frank O'Hara, Gary Snyder, James Tate and John Ashbery in the 1980s. When I say positive reception, I of course mean mostly a rise in interest in the poetry of the mentioned poets, which resulted in new translations, since the number of translations is surely the indicator that appropriately reflects the position of foreign poetry in the local literary area. After the 1980s, the interest in translating contemporary American poetry into Slovenian has decreased, but some poets remain interesting for the Slovenian audience. One of them is certainly Charles Simic – an American poet born in Serbia, a recipient of numerous awards, among them the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1990, and currently one of the more important poetic figures in the U.S.

Simic's poetry has been translated into Slovenian multiple times. The collection *Razgaljanje tišine* (*Dismantling the Silence*)<sup>3</sup> was published in Slovenian in 2001<sup>4</sup> and then again in 2016 (when the poet was a guest of the Days of Poetry and Wine festival). Likewise, the collection *Izbrane pesmi* (*Selected Poems*) was published in 2012, when Maribor was awarded the title of European Capital of Culture and hosted Simic. Since Simic's *Dismantling the Silence* was published already in 1971, we could say that the Slovenian translation happened relatively late, which is also recognized by Aleš Debeljak. In his foreword to the mentioned collection, Debeljak points out that the translations of Simic's poetry coincide with the interest of Slovenian readership (241), which could be seen as another sign of the reborn Slovenian interest in American poetry. In the context of transnationalism, Simic is an interesting figure both because of his personal emigrational history and because of his connection to the Balkan culture, where an opportunity to connect to Slovenian culture arises. Interestingly, in her critique Gabriela Babnik points out that Simic is not only an American poet, since he "unites different voices":

Simic, born in 1938 to a bourgeois Belgrade family, could just as well be considered a Serb, a Balkan, a Mediterranean, later, when he found himself in Paris at

3 The translated collection has the title of one of Simic's collections, but actually includes selected poems from several collections, published between 1971 and 1999.

4 It is interesting to point out that the poems were selected and translated by Tomaž Šalamun himself.

fourteen years of age and was faced with the limitations of his mother tongue, he acquired the stigma of a “displaced person”; it wasn’t until 1954, when he arrived in the United States of America and settled in industrial Chicago, that he started drawing his poetical face, in which the anxious experience of being uprooted is one of its most characteristic traits. (Babnik)

The characteristics that Babnik points out in Simic’s poetry are “leaning on the Eastern-European experience”, irony, his focus on objects, and the easiness with which he mixes opposite elements. Veronika Šoster shares a similar idea in her critique of *Dismantling the Silence*, where she writes:

[H]is poetry is the constant mixing of tragical and comical, which has a relieving effect, but also a serious and strong one; but at the same time he is comfortable with playing with supernatural elements, mentioning all sorts of references from philosophy to mythology and also keeping enough distance from what is being said, and because of that manages to tell the most bitter of stories with taste. (Šoster)

In his foreword, Debeljak also emphasizes Simic’s “emigrant fate”, but does not see it as the main characteristic that makes Simic’s poetry quality. Debeljak believes the thing that makes Simic’s poetry great is “the masterful asceticism in using lyrical language where the profane easily mixes with the sacred, the comical with the tragical, and where a love ode walks hand in hand with rebellious ridicule” (224). Debeljak sees very obvious influences of the American poetic tradition “from Walt Whitman onward” mostly in Simic’s “spontaneously refined language that is intimately connected to the underground rhythms of jargon and the grandeur of street talk” (228).

It might be that the feeling of not belonging, which he experienced as an immigrant, made Simic develop such a sensibility for *otherness*, making his poetry more accessible to a wider audience and, consequently, more popular:

The high degree of universality, which has been noticed by both professional critics and the wider reading audience (let’s not forget that Charles Simic is one of the most popular poets in the U.S.), originates from a constantly renewed tension between detailed displays of situations of mostly the throb of city life on one hand, and the focal dilemmas of human existence on the other: this makes Simic’s poetry attractive and fresh at the same time. (Debeljak 235–236)

However, when researching the transnational contact between American and Slovenian poets, focusing only on the characteristics of specific poetics that manage to find common ground between two different cultural areas and open doors to

cross this boundary is not the only thing to keep in mind. As mentioned, Šalamun was the one who prepared the first translations of Simic, and Simic took care of translations of Latin American and European poets (Šalamun among them) into English. This fact emphasizes two things. Firstly, personal contacts between poets, and their personal affinity to the poetry they write essentially influence or enable transnational contacts. Isn't it the national poet, who is inseparably connected to the poetry and language of their home country, the one who will in a foreign cultural space intuitively find that type of poetry that will be positively accepted in their country? And secondly, translation is the only technique that makes a transnational contact even possible.

## THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN THE SCOPE OF THE TRANSNATIONAL

Kaiser points out that for the transnational approach translation is the most necessary foundation, since language is an inevitable trait of every literary work, and precisely language, which is also intertwined with other languages, demands translation (19). But translation also presents an unsolvable paradox, since translation "demands that we develop literacies which move between translation and untranslatability" (15). To support his claim, Kaiser uses Derrida and his deconstructive understanding of literature as something that can never be truly translated, but also needs to be translated constantly. Or, as Derrida writes: "what remains *untranslatable* is at bottom the only thing *to translate*, the only thing *translatable*" (257–258). This means that both the idea that translation is impossible and "a denial of their untranslatability" should be denied. No translation is final (Kaiser 16), translation is, as is transnationality, a constant crossing of borders.

Translations also open up another dimension, since it functions as an indicator of "how literary texts travel around the world" (Fisher Fishkin 23). "The project of exploring what translations and adaptations of works by American writers can teach us about the cultures in which these works are translated and adapted has been a particularly fruitful one in recent years" (24). In other words, taking a look at the reception of Simic in Slovenia has taught us just as much about Slovenian culture as it did about American, and the same remains true for Šalamun and his position in the U.S. This transnational contact between Slovenia and the U.S. is, as seen, reciprocal and mutually enriching.

## CONCLUSION

Even though literary theory still often overlooks the transnational approach, the overview of American theoretical sources discussed in this article has shown that this is the only sensible way of studying American literature, since American culture intensely crosses its own borders, imports, and mostly exports its own cultural products, which are bound to transform at the very moment when they cross the mentioned borders. It is then only logical to assume that no country, of course not even the U.S., exists independently and untouched by the rest of the world. The United States of America, where the flow of people, capital, knowledge, and ideas certainly is not limited to only one specific political entity, need to be understood in the broader context of the world in its entirety. Migrations work in all directions, and that is why only a broad transnational approach can deepen the understanding of the past and the present (Fluck 366).

The concept of the nation offers at least an organizational if not an identificatory label and cannot be entirely excluded in the transnational approach, but needs to be carefully observed so as to identify its characteristics and boundaries, and determine the changes that happen when different nations meet. However, when it comes to poetry (and literature in its broadest sense), it is also true that poets themselves “make and remake their often-interstitial citizenship” through writing and rewriting of their works “that can span multiple nationalities and ethnicities” (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 354). Both Tomaž Šalamun and Charles Simic are good examples of poets who have in the process of crossing national boundaries acquired multinational personas.

Modern and contemporary poetry that has been and is being made in the times of globalization is a complex transnational mosaic, created by “unwilled imaginative inheritances and elective identifications across national borders” (Ramazani, *Transnational Poetics* 354). To study it, we need transnationalism that will make it possible for us “to rethink the local and the global and how categories are modified when delinked from earlier static configurations” (Davis 2).

In the framework of the transnational, translation remains the main activity that enables transnational contacts between literatures and specific texts, even though translation is still an act that remains unfinished or that constantly tries to reach a text that will necessarily become different through translation. Nevertheless, these new translations sooner or later acquire a character and life of their own and start forming an entirely new canon, which we could also call “the literature of the transnational” (Lim in Fisher Fishkin 21). This new canon demands its own approach – the transnational one, which can “reveal to us the ways in which creative intelligences and critical approaches formulate more comprehensive premises about our place and action in a complexly interlinked world” (Davis 10).

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## Transnacionalizem v ameriški poeziji

Članek na podlagi ameriških teoretskih virov razišče pojem transnacionalnosti in ga poskusi čim bolj tesno vezati na študije moderne in sodobne poezije. Izpostavi tudi določene izzive transnacionalnega pristopa, predvsem dejstvo, da je kljub globalni povezanosti narod nemogoče odmisлити in je vsak transnacionalni stik potrebno premisliti skozi prizmo vseh vključenih kultur. Kot primera transnacionalnega stika med ameriško in slovensko poezijo sta izpostavljena Tomaž Šalamun in Charles Simic, ki sta oba na svoj način prestopila omenjeno mejo in doživela uspeh na tujih tleh. Pregled omejenih stikov služi predvsem kot oris določenih potez obeh poetik, ki so privlačile ameriške ali slovenske kritike in bralce. Članek izpostavi še nezmožnost, a hkrati nujnost prevajanja, ki je tisti postopek, ki sploh omogoča transnacionalne stike med kulturami.

**Ključne besede:** transnacionalno, prevod, sodobna poezija, Charles Simic, Tomaž Šalamun

## The Contested Charm of *Dunciad Minor* by A. D. Hope

*Igor Maver*

### Abstract

How literature is made from literature, what kind of *procédés* are used in expressing or covering a text with the fabric of quotations in it, how a meta-text regulates the reception of the original text and to what degree it is part of the latter, how a palimpsestic superscription unveils the reading and the understanding of tradition? All these questions pertaining to intertextuality (e. g. citations, allusions, parody, literary travesty, pastiche, etc) are addressed in the article. This is not done purely theoretically, but is applied in the examination of literary affiliations between two poets and their satirical works, the English Augustan poet of the 18th century Alexander Pope and a major twentieth-century Australian Augustan poet A. D. Hope.

**Keywords:** intertextuality, Alexander Pope, A. D. Hope, Australian poetry, English 18th century poetry

Two verse satires are contrasted here, written more than two hundred years apart. The analysis employs intertextual reading strategies in relation to Alexander Pope's mock-epic *The Dunciad* (1728, 1742), which serves as a pre-text, and A. D. Hope's *Dunciad Minor* (1950, 1970) that represents a meta-text. Intertextual phenomena cannot be viewed solely from the point of view of chronologically earlier texts (e. g. *The Dunciad*), which are (often) an active impetus for later, accommodating works (in this case *Dunciad Minor*). On the contrary, particularly interesting are the affiliating strategies and the procedures of accommodation of the secondary text that somewhat adapts and changes the original's signifying literary material and codes, thus changing also its role and significance and ultimately emerging as a new, original text.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was a master of the heroic couplet, which he used to satiric and philosophical ends and one of the main representatives of the Augustan age in Great Britain as a central figure in the Neoclassical movement of the early 18th century. His mock epic *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) derides elite society, while *An Essay on Criticism* (1711) and *An Essay on Man* (1733-34) articulate many of the central ideas of 18th-century aesthetic and moral philosophy. Pope was known for his involvement in public feuds with the (hack) writers and publishers of the low-end Grub Street in London, which led him to write *The Dunciad* (1728), a powerful satirical criticism of what he saw as an English cultural decline.

On the other hand, a powerful sign of the Australian poet A. D. Hope's (1907-2000) unabashed admiration of the neo-classical poetic ideal, notwithstanding his strong Romantic streak, is the satirical work *Dunciad Minor* (Hope 1970), directly modelled on Pope's original text. Its prose summary can be found in Hope's programmatic essay "Literature Versus the Universities," published in his book of criticism *The Cave and the Spring: Essays on Poetry* (Hope 1965). Exaggerated assertions of Hope's exclusive dependence on the English neo-classical Augustan tradition are, however, misplaced, despite his clear strong literary interest in the 18th century poets. A. D. Hope's satirical pieces, to be sure, are usually not directed against specific individuals or contemporary events. *Dunciad Minor* is an exception to the rule, insofar as it begins as a sharp attack on the then influential literary critic and Melbourne school teacher Arthur A. Phillips (1900-1985), but later takes on a more general significance, ridiculing the entire academic literary criticism principle *sui generis*. It can be argued that Hope's satire overtly and deliberately follows the pattern that had been set by Pope in his famous mock-epic verse satire *The Dunciad* first published in 1728 (Pope).

It should be pointed out from the outset that it is ironical that Hope, an influential Australian poet and critic, should, in some way or other, draw inspiration from Pope's satire, which in its turn mocks the then literary life in London and

England, namely the decline of its intellectual values and art, employing most of Pope's poetic "machinery". For A. D. Hope, to be sure, values most highly the traditional, Augustan characteristics of poetry. However, in this satire he, with great intellectual wit and gusto, attacks the "exaggerated" increase of literary criticism in English and its influence. In other words, he aims at the academic „sterility“ of the post-World War Two era, as embodied in the critical contentions of A. A. Phillips (Arthur Angell Phillips).

For Hope himself is an active literary persona, as well as an important literary critic. He knows both worlds well, because he is an integral part of them. Hence, his condition somewhat sets him asunder, for he makes fun of himself, of his *alter ego*. He mocks, not his poetic vocation, but rather his professional career as a university teacher and an influential literary critic. The conflict between the "academic" and the "creative" literary principle, in his view, is deftly depicted in the form of the attack on, in his view, irrational contemporary academic criticism and its pedantic pettishness, as well as self-projection.

It is noteworthy in this regard to examine Hope's Preface to the verse satire.

After pointing out what he considers the besetting sin of all academic critics – that they regard themselves as "judges standing above the storm," he continues:

Having spent most of my life in this academic pursuit, I suppose in the last resort my poem is the protest of a poet against the arrogance of the professor who shares his body. (Hope 1970, Preface x)

Like any satire, Hope's *Dunciad Minor* too, achieves its paradoxical effect of ridicule through the emergence of a sort of "humbleness" on the part of the reader, who is supposed to come to terms with and to consequently accept the human (and possibly his or her own) limitations. The poet bitterly describes the reasons for his decision:

If I had any choice I should not be a professor but a poet But the damn truth is that if I tried to earn my living at poetry ... should sumolv starve to death there is something uncommonly odd about a world in which thousands of academic persons are able to make more or less comfortable livings out of unsaleable verse. (Hope 1952, 3)

In the Preface to his verse satire A. D. Hope gives an exhaustive account of the cause which gave rise to *Dunciad Minor*, of its genesis and intentions. Both Hope and A. A. Phillips (in the text appearing as Ambrose Philips), in 1950 took part in literary talks on the Australian radio, entitled "Standard Works I'd Like to Burn." A number of other well-known literary critics were also invited to express their opinions. A. A. Phillips was then known as an outstanding

teacher of English literature at Wesley College in Melbourne, while A. D. Hope lectured at the University of Melbourne. Hope chose Matthew Arnold as his butt, Phillips, on the other hand, the works of Alexander Pope as the Object of his ridicule, particularly certain passages from Pope's "An Essay on Man". Since Hope regards Pope as one of the greatest English poets, his "blood very naturally began to boil," as he writes, especially after hearing the opening passages describe Pope as:

an industrious enough craftsman, if not always a very good one, who chose to earn his living in one of the only ways open to an educated English century ... a moderately skilful purveyor of Catholic in the early eighteenth spite and platitudes.... (Hope, 1970, Preface, v)

Indignant, Hope immediately sent to Phillips by mail the following couplet.

Phillips, I heard you talk on Pope tonight,  
O that *The Dunciad* were again to write! (Preface, vi)

A jeering reply brought the final decision. Hope further admits in the Preface that he had long felt the desire to try his hand at the art of mock-epic. And so he embarked on the forbidding project. The four books of the work, originally titled *Dunciad Minimus*, published in the *University of Melbourne Magazine* in 1950, were later revised by the author, because the satire was primarily directed to answer the attack on Pope and was mainly concerned with Phillips as a critic of Pope. It seems that Hope still did not want to go too far in his ridicule of Phillips, because, he admits, he generally appreciated him as a critic. Hope stresses that he added the two books of Funeral Games, published as *Dunciad Minor* in 1970 together with the earlier written books from 1950, in order to turn the main attack against certain famous literary critics of our time. Their influence on literature has been, in his view, pernicious indeed (Preface, viii).

To be sure, the nature of a mock-epic as a variant of satire is not essentially the holding of individual persons up to ridicule, but aiming at ideas and various theories. Because of its comic and narrative mode, however, it has to make its point through persons and their actions by exaggeration and burlesque. Hope achieved all that, and more. It is appropriate to give a short outline of A. A. Phillips's critical standpoints (1901-1986) in order to be able to understand Hope's attack on him. Phillips was one of the central figures of the "nationalist" tradition in contemporary twentieth-century Australian literary Criticism. His essay "Provincialism and Australian Culture" (Phillips 1958) is indicative and epitomizes the aspirations of this tradition/school. In it he set up an opposition

between the "metropolitan" centres of culture and "provincial" communities, and furthermore asserted:

... I am advocating the acceptance of the provincial status  
typical gadfly statement, aimed at stinging orthodox notions of the necessary  
superiority of metropolitan culture. (qtd in Bennett 39)

Arthur A. Phillips was a teacher by profession and conveyed his interest in English literature to the generations of schoolboys at Wesley College Melbourne. Schoolmastering was Phillips's prime activity, and much of his early published work consisted of anthologies and textbooks. His 1932 anthology with Ian Maxwell, *In Fealty to Apollo*, was the first that added Australian verse to the standard English poetry selections. When Clem Christesen arrived from Brisbane in 1945, bringing *Meanjin* with him, Phillips helped to give the magazine a distinctive Australian voice. The short essay was his *métier*: erudite, terse, and enlivened by a wry wit. Over the years *Meanjin* published most of his important pieces, including "The Cultural Cringe" (1950), a term which was quickly taken to summarise Australian deference to English taste. Literary criticism, however, remained incidental to his teaching. He also reviewed new books in newspapers and for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. *The Australian Tradition*, Phillips's first published collection, was widely acclaimed when it appeared in 1958. "I was deliberately flying a skull-and-crossbones", he said of the title, challenging the view that no such heritage existed. In 1970 his monograph on Henry Lawson appeared—an author for whom he held no particular esteem, but whom he saw, along with Joseph Furphy, as best expressing a distinctively Australian democratic, egalitarian, even proletarian perspective. According to John McLaren (McLaren 23-4), his essay "Three Schoolmasters" is both a notable piece of autobiography, and the record of his own career as a teacher. It is also significant that Phillips always worked on the margin of "professional" literary activity in Australia, but he was published and broadcast as a freelance critic, receiving some academic recognition only after his retirement. Hope, to his satirical ends, has taken full advantage of his position as an "outsider", although he retained enough respect for Phillips as a critic, apart from his (to Hope's mind) unjustified sharp attack on Pope.

The main fabula of A. D. Hope's *Dunciad Minor* is in the desire of Arthur Angell Phillips (also called Great Arthur) to succeed Ambrose Philips at the throne of Dullness, which is in Pope's *The Dunciad* occupied by the poet-laureate Colley Cibber. Phillips's request is considered by the "immortals" Pope, Swift and a few other literati. Phillips's success depends largely on his capacity to prove he is dull enough that he deserves mentioning in *The Dunciad*. Since he is inspired by the

Goddess Dullness herself, he succeeds and is granted the right to ascend the throne. Before that, however, the Goddess decides that Funeral Games be held in his honour at which his successor shall be chosen. These "games" were, as we have already pointed Out, added by Hope later in books IV and V. Among the main figures of the critics attacked can be found, for example, G. W. Knight, F. R. Leavis (Leavites are under attack here), R. P. Blackmur, W. Empson, D. Daiches, etc., who in turn all express their claims to the throne of Dullness. The abstract notion of "Pure Criticism" finally becomes Phillips's heir-apparent. The following lines are indicative enough of Hope's bitter scorn for the academically sterile modern critical stance:

Pure criticism triumphs over all  
 Without resort to Raw Material.  
 The last Age, primitive although it was  
 Produced Pure Poetry, eschewed the dross  
 Of subject, narrative, connective themes;  
 Now ours at last evolves the Dream of Dreams:  
 Pure Criticism, without thought or fuss;  
 Pure Theory formed, with nothing to discuss! (Hope 1970, 76)

Comparing these events with Alexander Pope's satire, it can first be noticed that in Book I the poet Bayes is chosen by the Goddess Dullness as her *poeta laureatus*, Book II brings the depiction of the ancient Greek Olympic Games (like Hope's Funeral Games), and in Book III the poet falls asleep in the lap of Dullness, who has visions of her future "empire." These are only realized in the final Book IV. Pope also uses Duncie (a jester/fool) as the embodiment of Foolishness and four guardian Virtues: Fortitude, Temperance, Prudence and Justice:

Still Duncie the second reigns like Duncie the first;  
 Say how the goodness made Britannia sleep, ..  
 Thou Cibber! thou, his laurel shalt support,  
 Folly, my son, has still a friend at court. (Pope 330)

Pope attacks everyone in a row, regardless of literary or critical chronology: Cowley, Wycherley, Fletcher, Shakespeare, Congreve, Addison, Milton, etc. Book IV is the most biting of all. It shows a contemplation of the vision and prophecies expressed in the preceding book. It shows the Goddess Dullness in all her majesty, coming to destroy art, science and order in general. The first to speak in Book IV are the "Geniuses of the Schools" (in Hope's case literary critics). They try to assure the grateful Goddess of their support in her advancement. Then the universities appear, confirming that the method of "keeping the real knowledge of

words from the young people“ shall be observed in education too. The restoration of Night and Chaos conclude the poem with grim echoes of Milton:

Indulge, dread Chaos, and eternal Night!  
Of darkness visible so much be lent. ...  
Tyrant supreme! shall three estates command  
And make one mighty Dunciad of the Land! (Pope 373, 391)

The ending of Hope's *Dunciad Minor* is decidedly less majestic. Moreover, it does not have the same Popean undertone of tragic horror, which probably was not Hope's intention in the first place.

Looking at *Dunciad Minor*, one cannot but first note that Hope's satire is more (structurally) self-contained than Pope's. It is also more self-explanatory, since the helpful footnotes form an integral part of the humorous and comic effects. Pope uses too many obscure references in which, quite clearly, contemporary readers do not take the slightest interest and his footnotes are far from being helpful to understand them. And, of course, there is a big cultural horizon gap between the twentieth and eighteenth century readers. A. D. Hope's deft usage of the heroic couplet deserves to be praised. Sometimes, even, the idea comes with the rhyme itself. Satire is at its best in Book V, which, unlike Pope's commences with an invocation of the Muse of the Southern Seas (for the Muse, too, according to Hope, has her Antipodes)

Now Muse assist me, aptly to describe  
Mechanic contrasts of the Critic tribe;  
Let me shed light on things both dark and dense  
Yet never move them into common sense. (Hope 1970, 58)

The first one to feel Hope's biting epigrammatic arrows in view of his analysis of *The Tempest* is the famous Shakespearean scholar G. W. Knight, "a double boiler fixed on fiery wheels," who "hisses hysteric or ecstatic squeals:"

Where are the plot, the actor and the stage?  
These are irrelevant, explains the sage;  
Damn action and discourse; the play's no more  
Than drifts of an extended metaphor  
Who think *The Tempest* tells a tale perhaps  
And not a long-drawn metaphor, poor chaps;  
In three Did simple Shakespeare think: "The play's the thing?"  
short hours how could they hope to judge.  
What takes a critic twenty years of drudge? (Hope 1970, 58-9)

It is at this point that F. R. Leavis takes over and cries out in an appropriating and most uncourteous fashion:

What, infringe my patent, thievish swine!  
The "extended metaphor" conceit is mine,  
Mine the "dramatic poem" device, I say,  
By which I demonstrate a play's no play. (Hope 1970, 60)

Further, the "psychoanalytic" critical attitudes become the objective of Hope's ridicule:

Ur-hamlets? Fudge! Old Saxo? Tush and Pish!  
Castration Fantasies, the dark Death Wish,  
Oedipus Complex, narcissistic blocks:  
This Key and this alone his heart unlocks. (Hope 1970, 64)

Shakespearean scholars do not get away with it easily in the satire. A. D. Hope in the following lines masterfully and with great humor directs his satirical attack on them:

Now fetch me Hamlet - handle him with care  
Now press this button and let in your clutch:  
The play which Shakespeare wrote in Double Dutch,  
Which lay dissolved in endless Wilson Knight,  
Behold! Let Freud appear and all is light!  
Was Hamlet mad or indecisive? Come,  
He simply longed to go to bed with Mum;  
And so did Shakespeare:  
"to avoid worse rape."  
He found this mechanism of escape  
Good-night, Sweet Prince; to dream, perchance to skid  
Between your Super-ego and your Id! (Hope 1970, 65)

Hope freely moves back and forth in time in choosing his literary (critical) targets. Among them are, for instance, David Daiches, William Empson, Northrop Frye, R. P. Blackmur, Herbert Read, Christopher Caudwell, Maud Bodkin, and scores of other critics. Occasionally he goes so far as to directly borrow the names of A. Pope's *The Dunciad* in order to establish a greater degree of satirical "inter-textuality" between the two works and a greater emphasis. He uses, for example, Pope's names of Merdament and Cloacina, who are two "nymphs" but whose etymological origin speaks for itself, thereby creating a comic effect in contrast. Pope wrote:

In office here fair Cloacina stands,  
And ministers to Jove with purest hands ... (Pope 331)

Hope, in turn, writes:

An altar of the critic's works she builds  
Which Merdament with bilge-and-bitters gilds;  
Sweet Cloacina lights the sullen flame, ... (Hope 1970, 78)

Apart from literary issues, Hope's *Dunciad Minor* also picks at certain typical Australian features, such as, for example, the importance of horse-racing in Australian everyday life. It describes the inhabitants of New Holland in Book I as Swift's "Yahoos," who are slaves to the horse:

For in the South, beyond the burning line,  
Where Gulliver that much-wrecked mariner  
Described their customs, such as they were,  
And found them, like their manners, somewhat coarse,  
The Yahoos live in slavery to the horse. (Hope 1970, 50)

The readers' enjoyment of the superb comic effects and technical virtuosity of *Dunciad Minor* seems indisputable. Nevertheless, in the first books there is a certain academic aloof "superiority" of A. D. Hope and his Augustan poetic credo (of a critic) over the Romantic principles (of an artist) that he satirizes. Dorothy Green in her review points to the fact that, although ridiculing them, Hope made the same "mistakes" himself, which is in keeping with the already mentioned contention of the author's precarious paradoxical position of a critic and artist in personal. Green writes:

Delightful as these speculations may be in themselves, they provide a particularly clear example of scholarly criticism making use of poetry for its own end. (Green 429)

However, Hope's intentions are perhaps more complex and complicated than they appear, but such complexity is a general problem of satirical works and cannot be the subject of this study. The object of ridicule in Hope's satire *Dunciad Minor*, A. A. Phillips, in his reply to Hope "Popeful Hope" published in *The Bulletin* (December 5, 1970) stresses the fact that his view of modernist critics is close to Hope's, namely that he loathes their pedantries, their "abominable" vocabulary, "with its indigestible lumps of abstract verbiage." However, he concludes by defending himself and saying it is "a pity Hope should have wasted so much ammunition against the invulnerability of one of the Goodies" (Phillips 1970).

The visionary quality of Alexander Pope's satire *The Dunciad* arises from his conception of the desolation of English culture of the period, which saw the triumph of low aesthetic literary standards, corrupt personal ambitions and general deterioration of the mind. In this connection, Hope's often anthologized poem "Australia" that has become something of a myth comes immediately into mind. In the poem he criticizes the Australian cultural scene, but likewise expresses his dissatisfaction with the European "chatter of cultured apes", whereas in Australia "second-hand Europeans pullulate/timidly on the edge of alien shores." However, using a Biblical parallel, he feels that from Australian deserts a new "prophet" and culture may emerge. The effect of his mock-epic satire, in which contemptible objects or persons are endowed with majestic and heroic qualities, is one of a powerful caricature. The wit, subtle humour and the liveliness of his literary allusions make an interesting reading. The satire is certainly underrated within the extant Australian literary criticism and it has remained practically unknown to the general readership. Patrick Deane wrote in his monograph on Hope about the objects of attack in the following manner: "The attack that is mounted has, beyond the person of A. A. Phillips, an unclear object – the assault is dispersed and generalized – and it seems to be waged in the name of nothing so much as a system of exclusively literary or poetic values embodied in the style of the piece" (Deane 145). Kevin Hart believes Hope may have had more propagandistic and political concerns behind writing his satire, however, "when one looks at the objects Hope chooses or commends for satire they turn about to be not as straightforwardly political .... Rather, one finds attacks on contemporary literary criticism, marriage, psychoanalysis, radio, sport, suburban life and tourism" (Hart 51).

In examining the genesis and the critical mixed response to *Dunciad Minor* which has been insufficient and unsatisfactory, we have shown Hope's literary affinities and possible models of literary influence through his attitudes and the treatment of individual literary and cultural figures. In this case, the direct model was Pope's satire *The Dunciad*, with which some parallels were established here: Hope's meta-text is undoubtedly very witty and humorous, but less sharp and direct than Pope's pre-text, because the mock-epic element is more unobtrusive and its subject at times somewhat unclear. This mock-epic satire in the eighteenth-century manner is really a comic burlesque upon the pretentious pedantry of contemporary literary criticism during much of A. D. Hope's lifetime. It was provoked by a contemporary critic's attack on the poetry of Alexander Pope. In his fable, Hope shows the Goddess Dullness urging the critic on to his attack, inspiring him by the promise of elevation to the Throne of Dunces. Many leading critics make an appearance, among them David Daiches, F. R. Leavis and Northrop Frye etc. This polished, entertaining poem attacks the barren "absurdities" of Leavisite criticism

under which literature is, in his (today somewhat dated) view, buried ever deeper, until finally "one vast snore seals the eclipse of mind".

If it were true that from deserts prophets come (cf. Hope's famous poem "Australia"), then Alec Derwent Hope with his poetry, which deals not only with purely Australian issues but with literary, cultural, philosophical and aesthetic considerations of literary art at large, can, indeed, be hailed as a prophet himself.

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### **Kontroverzni šarm satire v verzih satire *Dunciad Minor* A. D. Hopa**

V članku je intertekstualna metoda uporabljena na primeru literarnih povezav med dvema pesnikoma, Angležu Alexandru Popu iz 18. stoletja ter Avstralcu A. D. Hopu iz druge polovice dvajsetega stoletja. Slednji je napisal sodobno verzijo Popove znamenite satire v verzih in jo naslovil *Dunciad Minor* (1970).

**Ključne besede:** intertekstualnost, Alexander Pope, A. D. Hope, avstralska poezija, angleška poezija 18. stoletja

# Weldon Kees and the Poetic Landscapes of Despair

*Mirko Starčević*

## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to contribute to the efforts to renew an interest in the poetry of Weldon Kees, a more or less forgotten American poet of late modernism. The main argument of this paper is that Weldon Kees, while a belated poet of modernism, successfully swerved away from the earlier poetics of modernism and proved capable of constructing a unique poetics of despair and alienation. In many ways, an heir of Hart Crane's tragic sense of life, Kees' misreading of Hart Crane was highly fertile and crucially conducive to the creation of his own visionary poetics. In the first part of our discussion, a more generalized overview of Kees' poetry is developed, while in the second part, we analyze the four Robinson poems which constitute the nucleus of Kees' existential aesthetics. Notwithstanding the fact that despair is a ubiquitous presence in Kees' poetry, it does not manifest itself as an inhibiting force; on the contrary, while despair is inextricably linked to his tragic fate, it also acts as a major creative impetus, which helped Kees express his relationship to the world and, consequently, his place in it.

**Keywords:** Weldon Kees, poetry, Robinson, Hart Crane, despair, alienation

Weldon Kees is now a mostly forgotten poet. His name occasionally graces a page in an anthology of 20th-century American poetry and has predominantly become the subject matter confined to the arcana of literary studies. During his lifetime, three volumes of his poetry were published, 'The Last Man' (1943), 'The Fall of the Magicians' (1947), and 'Poems' (1947-1954). Donald Justice, a poet and one of the Kees revivalists, points out in the 1960 'Preface' to 'The Collected Poems of Weldon Kees,' of which he is the editor, that none of the three volumes aforementioned are 'at present easily obtainable' (xiii).

Kees harboured high literary and artistic ambitions – as a poet, a novelist, and a painter – and notwithstanding the fact that his literary star has sunk into obscurity, his poetic output has never been swallowed by the ravenous tendencies of time to the same extent his contributions as a novelist have. It is important to mention that his failing to make his novel, entitled *Fall Quarter*, see the light of day launched him into a swirling vortex of self-doubt which became his daily bread and, not infrequently, made him likewise question the nature of his poetic quest.

He evinced great despondency over having been thrown into the midriff of what may be termed late or 'residual' modernism, which was marked by the afterglow of aesthetic sheen found in the works of T. S. Eliot, E. E. Cummings, William Carlos Williams, and Wallace Stevens. Kees' poetry had often been dismissed as a repository of imitative proclivities, as in being overly deferential towards the works of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Kenneth Fearing, W. H. Auden, Arthur Waley, and others.<sup>1</sup> Admittedly, Kees felt great reverence for the preceding generation of poets and wrote, in a sardonic tone innate to him, in the 1946 edition of *Partisan Review* that "If that was a Wasteland and they were the Lost Generation, then what is this moldy milieu, in which we find ourselves, and what are we" (qtd. in Siedell 86). Notwithstanding this observation, it is a facile conclusion to regard Kees' poetry as a product of an indolent epigone. While Kees did share a view with the early modernists that poetry "must be rooted in a tragic sense of life," (qtd. in Reidel 260), entrenched in the High Romantic themes of belatedness and the apparent lack of aesthetic expansiveness, it was the combination of the tragic sense of life as a poetic mode and the tragic sense of life which he endured that rendered his poetic output so unique.

On account of his tragic life, Kees' name is often encountered in the company of John Berryman, Robert Lowell, Delmore Schwartz, and Hart Crane. Of these names here mentioned, it is Hart Crane who exerted the greatest amount of influence upon Kees the poet. Herein lies the reason why calling Kees' an imitator of the earlier modernists like T. S. Eliot or W. H. Auden is erroneous, for, like Hart Crane, Kees envisions the world not so much as the wasteland without hope

1 For further discussion of the multifarious influences upon Kees' poetry, see Nelson 844.

as the world which fails to step upon the path of self-understanding and cannot internalize the meaning of hope in the first place. As David Wojahn writes, in the world of Weldon Kees, “the apocalypse has run its course” (vii), the most tragic has already transpired and the course of destiny cannot ever be reversed. There is no place for the voice seeking for the light of “spiritual renewal” (vii). It is swallowed in the cacophony of limitless chaos, in the cosmos shattered into bits and pieces, barren from and to its ailing core.

The imaginative landscapes inherent in the poetry of Weldon Kees take on a form of a “slashed world” (3), as he describes it in his poem, entitled “A Salvo for Hans Hoffmann,” a poem which indirectly represents his affirmation of abstract expressionism along with its penchant for “nonhierarchical, all-over composition,” (Yau 29) where all images are of corresponding importance.<sup>2</sup> The poet very curiously and, I believe, quite purposefully employs the adjective *slashed*, for it mounts a powerful image of the world fragmented, not unlike a mirror which can never be glued back to its former faultless sheen. Thrown into existence thus to be here with “our rootless feet” (“Variation on a Theme by Joyce” 2), we are left to flounder in a perpetual transition between two levels of Being-in-the-World, that is, swinging eternally, as Kees understood it, between summer and fall, warmth and cold. Kees names the first state of Being-here as “once it was summer” and the other “almost Fall” (“White Collar Ballad” 21). The two adverbs, *once* and *almost*, imply an intransigent midway between the two finalities, incarnated in both a spatial and temporal dislocation from the realm of the presently present. Summer and fall exist for the poet only ideationally, the former as an echo reverberating from the past and the latter beckoning forth only as a possibility and a promise of an iron year. In the same poem, Kees declares that there “isn’t any season now” (22); it is time seasonless. Reality no longer conscripting to the ordinary claims of time forces Kees to ask the following question: “Where is the grave / Of time?” (“To the North” 12-13) The state of existential limbo, between the feast of light and the abyss of dusk everlasting, spells out an ominous proposition that “there isn’t any love” (“White Collar Ballad” 6), that “there wouldn’t be any love” (18), that “there won’t be any love” (24).

These is an underlying darkness in the poetry of Weldon Kees that led to its being labelled as bitter. One of the best-known proponents of this school of thought is Kenneth Rexroth, himself an accomplished poet, abstract painter, and Kees’, I hesitate to say, friend. Even though Rexroth praises Kees’ poetry on

2 Weldon Kees was also an abstract painter of non-negligible reputation. Hans Hoffman to whom the poem is dedicated was a great European abstract painter. He held Weldon Kees’ poetry and artistic work in high regard: “*You are as great a poet as you are a painter. I found your exhibition fascinating. It’s poetry in color. That it is what painting should be*” (*Weldon Kees and the Midcentury Generation* 117).

account of its authenticity – while, nonetheless, regarding it as overly steeped in the eyeless emulation of Eliot’s “The Waste Land” – he ultimately finds a temptation to call Kees a bitter poet unduly overwhelming. Rexroth proceeds along the same path in writing that while “others have called themselves Apocalyptics, Kees lived in a permanent and hopeless apocalypse” (qtd. in Justice xvi). Donald Justice, who to a large degree reciprocates Rexroth’s estimation of Kees’ verse as being bitter, attributes Kees’ purported bitterness “to a profound hatred for a botched civilization, Whitman’s America come to a dead end on the shores of the Pacific” (xv). Calling Kees’ poetry bitter is, in my view, a case of oversimplified mis-reading, for bitterness implies one’s emotional investment with the world one feels embittered about.

One would hardly be disinclined to recognize in this description the foundational principles of resignation, yet resignation just like bitterness hints at some form of involvement with the world, whereas Kees’ poetry evinces the mood of coldness, alienation, as the incipient stage of Being-here, which transpires and establishes itself prior to the arousal of one’s emotional surrender. Kees’ existential bent is that of surrendering in the face surrendering.

He is likewise intimately preoccupied with the themes of “decay, imprisonment, moral and physic” (Nelson 830). In “Early Winter,” in particular, Kees intimates a universe that is replete with the daemon of decay and confinement, of alienation and of the metaphysical nothing. In the very first verse of the poem, he affirms the universe as being in a disjointed relationship to any form of expectation, conviction, and anticipation. The summer of life is for him a trunkless construct, for “memory of summer is winter’s consciousness” (1). In the rest of the poem, winter’s consciousness takes over the atmosphere, rendering it a servant to the unforgiving cold of despair and despondency:<sup>3</sup>

But the room is cold, the words in the books are cold;  
And the question of whether we get what we ask for  
Is absurd, unanswered by the sound of an unlatched door  
Rattling in wind, or the sound of snow on roofs, or glare  
Of the winter sun. What we have learned is not what we were told.  
I watch the snow, feel for the heartbeat that is not there. (“Early Winter” 7-12)

3 Despair, in relation to Kees’ life and poetry, is taken as an ontological – not psychological – state of Being, in that it signifies the manner in which “with infinite passion the self by means of imagination despairs over something earthly” (Kierkegaard 348) and is, thus, interfused with the falling apart within the self of the Laws of Eternity. In other words, despair projects forth the ontological disorientation within the innermost Being of one who despairs, which, moreover, means that despair correlates with one’s inability to become the self that one was perhaps intended or expected to become.

The world without a heartbeat is reminiscent of a barren canvas, of a heart spilling emptiness, exuding the blossoming of anguish. In other words, the central stage is usurped by the withdrawal of Being, an ontological mode which is closely related to nihilism. The rambling mind has no way of avoiding being shattered upon its self-generating shores of destruction, as Kees so powerfully tells us in his poem "Covering Two Years":

This nothingness that feeds upon itself:  
Pencils that turn to water in the hand,  
Part of a sentence, hanging in the air,  
Thoughts breaking in the mind like glass,  
Blank sheets of paper that reflect the world  
Whitened the world that I was silenced by. (1-6)

The image of pencils turning to water brings to mind John Keats' famous epitaph engraved upon his tombstone: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." The theme of failure, pre-ordained as it appears in these words, assumes a pivotal role in the incipient stages of Kees' poetic career; and yet rather than focusing the eye on himself alone, he casts the judgment upon the society as a whole, upon the society that is inimical and uncharitable to the exigencies of one's poetic calling. Silence regnant in the world is not pleasurable; it is profoundly deafening, devoid of becalming contrasts, lacking dialectical hues and shades.

Hart Crane writes in his famous poem "Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge" that "only in darkness is thy shadow clear" (38). Only in the dungeons beyond the reach of the world does the quintessence of meaning acquire genuine prominence. Although hope is not what Kees is after, he nonetheless longs for the conditions propitious for the birth of a creative spark. It does not come as a surprise that he chooses a passage from Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Marble Faun* as an epigraph for his final book of verse: "Those dark caverns into which all men must descend, if they would know anything beneath the surface and illusive pleasure of existence" (87). The eye habituated to the tenebrous forms of nocturnal existence comes to appreciate the delineative and inventive force of the night. Kees, notwithstanding his indebtedness to Crane, goes a step further, encountering in the undue adulation of night a paradox, for the presence of night admits to the presence of day, albeit as absently present. In Kees, night becomes day and day becomes night, neither overruling the other which renders the middlemost point of their mutual essence the innate force of creative divergence.

We will now direct our attention to the centre holding together the pivotal part of Kees' opus, to the four poems which feature a protagonist named Robinson. The quartet of Robinson poems is significant for two different but not

unrelated reasons. The first and foremost reason which renders these poems remarkable is the fact that they represent Kees' carving out of his manifesto of despair, delineating and keeping aesthetically genuine the arc of his imaginative undertaking. The four poems were written within the span of six years: "Robinson" (1945), "Aspects of Robinson" (1948), "Robinson at Home" (1948), and "Relating to Robinson" (1951).

The poems are highly autobiographical and their protagonist has been the focal point of a multitude of differing opinions as to his true identity and hermeneutic value. Most frequently and predictably, Robinson has been read as a Robinson Crusoe double, "the daemon of solitary existence," (408) as Bloom eloquently phrases it. Still others recognize in the figure of Robinson the undertones of Louis-Ferdinand Céline's novel "Journey to the End of the Night," where the protagonist, likewise named Robinson, functions as the author's double. Merlin Thomas in his "Louis-Ferdinand Céline" writes that Robinson is "to be thought as an average, deluded human being who never really has a chance and who only realizes this dimly very late on" (55). This brief description aligns with the mood evinced by Kees' Robinson, yet a slight misalignment between the two persists, and it needs to be highlighted. The surrendering of Kees' Robinson to the heights of despair is so profound that the concept of chance never enters the dominion of his thought.<sup>4</sup> His horizon is indeed one of uncertainty, a blank canvas deprived of hope, neither implied nor intimated.

In "Robinson," Kees fronts us with a vanishing presence. In the very first line, Kees tells us that "Robinson has gone" (1). The verb *gone* is ambiguous. We are left guessing if Robinson has only left or died. This foreshadows Kees' own fate, for just before his disappearance in 1955, he had spoken of leaving for Mexico. His car having been left on the approach to the Golden Gate Bridge, it remains to this day unknown whether he indeed travelled to Mexico or committed suicide by jumping from the bridge – though the latter version has been heavily favoured, bearing in mind that Kees had been obsessed with the topic of suicide and was by his peers deemed quite an expert on it. That the world is gray seems a statement independent of Robinson's disappearance although it might have factored heavily

4 I employ the phrase *the heights of despair* as a reference to the work of the Romanian essayist and philosopher Emil Cioran, whose work "On the Heights of Despair" explores the ontological moods of despair and hopelessness, of alienation and angst, of futility and decay. Cioran maintains that "the terrifying experience of death, when preserved in consciousness, becomes ruinous," and yet, talking of death, you can "save part of your self" (4). Nevertheless, when lingering for too long upon the mysterious themes of death, "something of your real self dies because objectified meanings lose the actuality they have in consciousness" (4). The best one can hope for is to sublimate the death-drive in the form of creative endeavor. This very act of creative sublimation was Kees' great accomplishment, for he proved at one and the same time creatively most daring, unapologetic, and original, when "in the throes of death" (4) and existential uncertainty.

in his having taken off. There is a broken world imaged in “the mirror from Mexico” (5), an indirect allusion to Hart Crane, who spent the last year of his life in Mexico and committed suicide by jumping from the stern of the steamship *Orizaba* as it was making its way from Mexico to the U. S.

In the second tercet of the poem, the motif of blankness charges across the poem’s canvas:

The pages in the books are blank,  
The books that Robinson has read. That is his favorite chair,  
Or where the chair would be if Robinson were here. (12-14)

The books whose pages are blank is a metaphor for books which kindle no interest in Robinson; they could easily have been books yet unwritten, a desideratum of the failed poet; they could also have been the books circumnavigating the rugged shores of Robinson’s own life. The curious switch from the ontological to the mundane in the poem’s reference to the anatomy of Robinson’s room yet again hauntingly predicts future events in Kees’ life. Following Kees’ vanishing act, his very good friend, Michael Grieg was informed by the California Highway Patrol about the finding of his friend’s car. Thereupon Grieg with another friend and two police officers entered Kees’ apartment, making a note of things as they were laid out. Grieg had visited Kees’ apartment shortly before his disappearance which means his was a privileged insight into Kees’ last few days, affording him, at the same time, an exceedingly advantageous vantage point for picking up any hints that might have proven valuable in making sense of his friend’s sudden though not wholly unexpected vanishment:

The Jack Daniel’s had not been touched. Sheet music was spread across the upright piano. There was a pile of reel-to-reel tape that Kees had made with his musician friend ... Dostoevsky’s *The Devils* ... was placed near his bed beside another book, Unamuno’s *Tragic Sense of Life*. A note lay on the telephone table ... In the kitchen, beside a bookcase that Kees kept there, stood a plate of congealed milk for his cat, Lonesome, which turned out to be the only living thing in the apartment. (Reidel 5)

“Robinson alone provides the image Robinsonian,” is one of the most haunting lines in the entire quartet of poems. The image is that of emptiness and absence. All the things he left behind in his apartment are a telling reminder of that ardent absence, the last vestige of his presence. Robinson’s reality has changed beyond re-pair while the outside world takes no note of the event. It is this tragic fact which obsessively occupies Kees, the inability of people to fundamentally relate to one another, to feel another’s grief and joy alike. As the curtain of night is lifted,

the light of day protrudes unto the scene but nothing appears changed. Kees masterfully captures this sobering indifference of both nature and civilization, nay, of the cosmos, to the disappearance of the forlorn individual, thus prefiguring the dominant theme of the last Robinson poem, "Relating to Robinson":

Outside, white buildings yellow in the sun.  
Outside, the birds circle continuously  
Where trees are actual and take no holiday. (17-19)

With the image of white buildings Kees apostrophizes Hart Crane again. Harold Bloom astutely points out that for Hart Crane "white buildings gradually answer day. For Kees they yellow silently" (409). However, I argue that unlike Hart Crane's white buildings, Kees' white buildings never undergo the spring of renewal. They do not become yellow, not even silently. What prevails is the limbo of blank indifference, symbolized by the trees which continue to be present, taking no time off, standing there resolutely, a firm signature of nature's detachment from the sufferings of a tortured consciousness.

In the second Robinson poem, entitled "Aspects of Robinson," Kees' fascination with Hart Crane assumes a central role less tentatively. Robinson apparently succumbs to mental torpor, designated by Harold Bloom as *acedia*, which he beautifully defines as "the malady of monks ... the sin of being sullen in the sweet air" (408). The air is sweet, for the poet shares his mental landscape with the imaginative landscape of Hart Crane, a poet he looks up to. Wandering around New York, he comes upon places which are related to Hart Crane. Robinson stands on a roof above the Brooklyn Heights, a residential neighbourhood where Hart Crane lived in the 1920s. In one of the photographs, Crane stands on a roof of a building with the Brooklyn Bridge, his grandest of muses, towering ever unspent in the background. Crane continues to loom large in the rest of the poem, most prominently in the line: "Here's where old Gibbons jumped from, Robinson." This is a clear allusion to Hart Crane's suicide even though he did not end his life by jumping from the bridge but from the stern of a steamship. It is worth mentioning that the line could also be referring to Hart Crane's poem "To the Brooklyn Bridge," to a quatrain which reads like a dirge written unto the spell-bound bedlamite gazing into the vast abyss below, unseen by the busy, mocking, and uncaring passers-by:

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft,  
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,  
Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,  
A jest falls from the speechless caravan. (17-20)

The poem is abounding in the elements of prosaic mundaneness, such as the reading of a daily newspaper or visiting local restaurants. For all that, beyond the mirage of such effortless preoccupations lies the hidden yet vibrating abyss of despair. Robinson, well-dressed as he is, in "Glen plad jacket, Scotch-grain shoes / Black four-in-hand and oxford button down" (21-22) is shattered by the blandness within, where "his sad and usual heart, dry as a winter leaf" (25) lingers on unheard and unseen; a possible allusion to Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem "Richard Cory," whose protagonist appears not to be possessed by a single agonizing thought, while the final truth does not correspond to the impression of appearance, which the tragic end of the poem so poignantly showcases.

In the third Robinson poem, "Robinson at Home," our hero inhabits the land of mental oblivion. This mental state appears to be his true home, inferno and heaven all at once. This is where "the moonlight and the odors of the street / Conspire and combine toward one community" (3-4), the community of light mingled with darkness, and vice versa. The rooms which keep Robinson in concealment from the world are "Bleached, wan, and colorless this light, as though / All the blurred daybreaks of the spring / Found an asylum here" (6-8). The meaning of the place transcends its immediate physical dimensions, projecting forth an overwhelming ontological mood of indifference. And while "his old desire / To die like this has known a lessening," he has not shed the "coldness that he has to wear" (13-14). He is caught between the extremity of a frenzied dream and silence which meets him upon awakening. Even silence in Robinson's world becomes white noise, the cause of inner strife. It is anything but comforting for, like a disturbing presence of the other, "it drones like wires far beyond roofs / And the long curtains blow into the room" (26-27). The movement of air beyond the walls heralds the fore-knowledge that he has forfeited the self-within, in the sense that he is gripped by the prepossessing drive to be rid of the self. The curtains, introducing and concluding the poem, are indicative of Fate's cruel decrees. At first, the curtains stand aside, "drawn back" (1), and are then transformed into the very shadow which blocks the shining of the light of life into Robinson's rooms and the voice which so desires to express this razing anguish. The rooms close for Robinson, the final refuge from indifference become its unalterably powerful progenitor.

In the last Robinson poem, "Relating to Robinson," the poet takes to the streets again, following Robinson, who is constantly a dozen steps ahead of him. The two share a brief interval of spatial reciprocity: "We were alone there, he and I, / Inhabiting the empty street." (7-8) Together they are working out the kernel of the jigsaw of emptiness. Soon enough the poet, in a rare spell of lucidity, is disabused of his hallucination, realizing that it is not Robinson he sees, as he is "out of town" (14). In spite of knowing that Robinson "summers at a place in Maine / Sometimes on Fire Island, sometimes the cape," he cannot resist the urge to call out "Robinson!"

(15- 17). Seamlessly, the poet is submerged anew in his pursuit of the seemingly familiar silhouette. This time the doppelgänger is uncannily rendered even more indecipherable in spite the unprecedented proximity of his facial features:

Turning my head to search is face,  
His own head turned with mine,  
And fixed me with dilated, terrifying eyes  
That stopped my blood. His voice  
Came at me like an echo in the dark. (19-23)

The poet apparently becomes the unknown other as the delimiting bounds between the two passing entities emerge as seemingly inseparable. As he turns towards Robinson, he meets himself in the eyes of the other, over-hearing his own voice which is telling him that “an empty paper floats down at the last” (27). In an overt yet fragmentary reference to Emily Dickinson’s poem “The First Day’s Night,” the poet confesses to finding unbearable the curtain of despair having been made potent by the veil of hallucination. The fragment is broken by the poet’s descent deeper into a hallucinatory state. “I had not certainty / There in the dark, that it was Robinson, / Or someone else” (32-35). Uncertainty, as Norris Getty observed, is the poem’s strength, and Kees himself in a letter expresses gratitude to Getty for having revised one of the final lines in an early draft of the poem, thus singling and crossing out the line, “The man had looked / Enough like Robinson to be his twin.” The last version of the poem refrains from making a pronouncement as to the man’s true identity which consequently ameliorates the overall essence of the poem. Indeed, Kees’ ability to be at one with uncertainty is one of the main strengths of his poetry.

The poet as Robinson’s double closes in on the water, and Harold Bloom, who suggests that “Death by water ... haunted Kees” (411) offers a natural dénouement to the poem, providing us with another reference to Hart Crane and with the plaintive portents of Kees’ own tragic fate. John T. Irwin writes that the ending of the poem seems to display “the return of the speaker’s consciousness to a melancholy if precarious equilibrium after the crisis of his ventriloquizing the words of his double” (94). The poet, in the same fashion as Kees, hurries West, where he sees the boats that move “silently” and “the low whistles” (“Relating to Robinson” 39-40) blowing hauntingly. This signifies the movement from the personal to the impersonal, from the human to the inhuman, towards the shadowy elements belonging to the cruel sea.

The four Robinson poems round off Kees’ preoccupation with the language of dejection and solitude and, as Sharon Mayer Libera points out, with “an unbearable tension between the insistent presence of things and their unsubstantiality” (156).

Nothing in these poems yearns to understand anything beyond itself. And though Kees looked “to build a quiet city in his mind: / A single overwhelming wish” (“To Build a Quiet City in His Mind” 1-2), he ultimately fails to achieve the goal, succumbing to the dread of disquietude and to the loss of his ontological identity. He has ultimately learned only “to speak to silences of altered rooms, / Shaken by knowledge of recurrence and return” (“Covering Two Years” 12-13). The recurrence he speaks of is the recurrence of the invariably identical, of that which is devoid of its genuine *haecceitas*, hence failing to insert colour into life, colour which he so craves for but ever eludes him. The image Robinsonian in the end triumphs over the false sense of hope and takes for its own the idiom of despair.

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## **Weldon Kees in pesniške pokrajine brezupa**

Namen pričujoče razprave je prispevati k naporom, ki si prizadevajo obuditi zanimanje za poezijo Weldon Keesa, bolj ali manj pozabljenega ameriškega modernističnega pesnika. Glavna teza članka je, da se Weldon Kees, navkljub temu, da je zapozneli pesnik modernizma, uspešno odkloni od predhodne poetike modernizma in ustvari edinstveno poetiko brezupa in odtujenosti. V prenekaterem pogledu je Kees naslednik tragičnega občutja življenja, ki ga najdemo pri Hartu Cranu, vendar se njegovo mimo-branje Crana izkaže za plodovito in ugodno pri ustvarjanju njemu lastne vizionarske poetike. V prvem delu razprave opredelimo splošne zakonitosti Keesove poezije, medtem ko v drugem delu analiziramo štiri pesmi in njihovega protagonista Robinsona, ki predstavljajo jedro Keesove eksistencialne estetike. Kljub dejstvu, da se brezup v Keesovi poeziji vzpostavlja kot vseprisotna prezenca, se le-ta ne manifestira kot inhibirajoča sila. Nasprotno, ne glede na to, da je brezup neločljivo zvezan s pesnikovo tragično usodo, se v njem razgrinja silno ustvarjalni vzgib, ki je Keesu omogočil ubesediti lasten odnos do sveta in posledično njegovo lastno umestitev v njem.

**Ključne besede:** Weldon Kees, poezija, Robinson, Hart Crane, brezup, odtujenost

# Transculinary Practices of Transmigrants in Aleksandar Hemon's "Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls", "Family Dining" and *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You*

Nina Bostič Bishop

## Abstract

In the present transnational world populated with transmigrants, food and foodways have assumed a new, hybrid role. In the process of transformation of transmigrant cultural identity of which food and foodways are a central element, the production and consumption of food that is often the result of Svetlana Boym's reflective nostalgia, may act as a bridge between the homeland and the host land as a material means for maintaining ties with the home country. However, while transmigrant food can assume an inclusive function in their exilic lives, it might also deepen migrants' sense of displacement and trauma and other them further. The article explores how transmigrants in Hemon's "Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls", "Family Dining" and *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You* experience food and foodways and what role culinary practices assume in the process of constructing their new, fluid and flexible hybrid identities in Homi Bhabha's liminal Third Space.

**Keywords:** Aleksandar Hemon, transnational literature, food and foodways, transnational culinary practices, transmigrants, exilic identities

## EXILIC AND TRANSMIGRANT IDENTITIES

In “Reflections on Exile”, Edward Said writes that exile is the “unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home” and whose “essential sadness can never be surmounted” (137). Similarly to Said, who stated that we are living in a period of mass migrations, Salman Rushdie also claims that “the distinguishing feature of our time” seems to be mass migration and mass displacement (Rushdie 425). Furthermore, as a result of the development of telecommunications and transport in the contemporary globalized and transnational world, traditional migrants have transformed into transmigrants who may find it easier to maintain ties with what they had left behind beyond national borders albeit their loss of home, family and friends and all the familiar, should not be underestimated.

In the present transnational world the nation is no longer a straightforward and unambiguous phenomenon but rather an “imagined community” according to Benedict Anderson, signifying a community of people who view themselves as part of a group, existing simultaneously in the same national space (24), creating a common sense of ideology, history and culture even though they are members of dislocated communities, but nevertheless form a sense of homogeneity that extends through time to exist between many presents, pasts and futures by means of common views on for example, politics, ideology and history (6-7) and also food and foodways. Here, literature may have a role of negotiating borders that have become more porous and fluid and transnational migrant writers such as Aleksandar Hemon typically address subjectivities often marked by the loss of homeland and the transformation of cultural identity of which culinary practices form part, as well as displacement, fragmentation, notions of home and belonging, and trauma.

## NOSTALGIA

Nostalgia is inextricably connected to exilic and migrant life and in her book *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym defines it as a longing for a home that is no longer, so it is a “sentiment of loss and displacement” (19). Most of Hemon’s protagonists experience nostalgia for their lost homelands and past lives of which food and foodways are an important part. Here, it should be noted that Boym understands the concept of nostalgia paradoxically since there are two ways in which an individual can view their past and their imagined community. The first type is restorative nostalgia or unreflective nostalgia that Boym states “breeds monsters” (21), emphasizes national symbols and images and may be dangerous as it

generates extreme nationalism<sup>1</sup>, while the second type is reflective nostalgia which focuses on an individual and cultures coming together, focusing on details rather than symbols<sup>2</sup>.

Similarly, Hemon also states in his essay on the future of exile titled "Budućnost egzila" that it is the reflectively nostalgic way of dealing with exile that is productive, while the restorative type consolidates collective fantasies about the past until they become national myths and monuments that are indispensable for the production of nationalist ideology, so exile in this case does not only generate lyrical reflections, but also fascist utopian projects (Hemon "Budućnost egzila" 11)<sup>3</sup>.

## TRANSMIGRANT CULINARY PRACTICES

Food consumption and preparation form an example of material and immaterial culture and may be viewed as practices of Boym's reflective nostalgia, contributing to forging diasporic hybrid identities, as Hemon writes in "My Parents: An Introduction" that reflective nostalgia is "private, personal nostalgia" (39) that is "privately constructed around the personal memories of sensory experiences: smells, tastes, visions, sounds, life in all its quotidian sensual detail" (ibid.), which inevitably includes migrant culinary practices.

Immigration typically brings a possibility for change in the lives of migrants as well as shifts in their self-conceptualization and social identity. If and how these changes occur, depends on migrants' level of agency, their personal circumstances

- 1 This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time. (Boym 130)
- 2 This kind of nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world, which engage in the antimodern myth-making of history by means of a return to national symbols and myths and, occasionally, through swapping conspiracy theories. Restorative nostalgia manifests itself in total reconstructions of monuments of the past, while reflective nostalgia lingers on ruins, the patina of time and history, in the dreams of another place and another time. (Boym 130)
- 3 Reflektivni način bavljenja egzilom je zbog toga produktivan, te pripada domenu ne samo estetike nego i etike, budući da se zasniva na ličnom suverenitetu koji ostvaruje u supostavljanju ličnog odnosa prema prošlosti. S druge strane, restaurativni pristup konsoliduje kolektivne fantazije o prošlosti sve dok se ne skamene u nacionalne mitove i spomenike, bez kojih je nemoguće reprodukovati nacionalističku ideologiju. Mi sa ovih prostora dobro znamo kakve su posljedice fašizoidne nostalgije koja je u egzilu kvasala dok su nostalgičati maštali o etničkom čišćenju domovinskog prostora kontaminiranog prisustvom onih drugih, o genocidnim operacijama koje će poroditi totalni i totalitarni nacionalni suverenitet. Egzil je kategorija neutralne vrijednosti, iskustvo unutar kojeg se jednako kristališu lirske refleksije i fašizoidne utopijske projekte. (Hemon 2014a, 11)

but also on the reasons and context of their migratory experience. Although they are often characterized by a potential desire to maintain original cultural identities and practices, modification and cultural change are common (Vallianatos and Raine 356) and the preparation and consumption of foods and foodways are frequently central to the ways that immigrants deal with this change as food is an essential need and, as such, it defines the human experience and functions as a physical and symbolic act that generally communicates individuality or membership within a larger group (Wilk 245). Therefore, food may be a primary symbol in maintaining solidarity within a group as well as personal and cultural identity for members of diasporic and imagined communities. As a result then, food may for exiles and transmigrants act as a bridge between their host- and home- land with the production, preparation and consumption of foods possibly enabling migrants to recall their memories and diminish their sense of non-belonging. Consequently, activities related to food preparation and consumption may also be acts of reflective nostalgia since they allow migrants to remember the people, places and culture that they left behind in accordance with Holtzman: "Heritage food and foodways are a physical means through which immigrants maintain ties to and remember the world they emigrated from (Holtzman 369). Therefore, foodways are closely tied to migrants' homelands and serve as a way in which migrants can maintain connections although they are physically separated from their country of origin (Cook 824). On the other hand, the inability to produce and consume the food that is typical of migrants' home country may be associated with the change or even loss of one's cultural identity. As a result, the role of food in the formation of transnational subjectivity of transmigrants is double since it can either have an inclusive function by making migrants a part of the diaspora and connect them to their home countries, or it may exclude them by separating them from the dominant in the host country by 'othering' them, making them even more deeply displaced. Moreover, authenticity of food or lack of it might deepen migrants' displacement further if they are not able to recreate it in line with Bourdieu, who stated that eating habits are often amongst the most difficult to change:

And it is probably in tastes of food that one would find the strongest and most indelible mark of infant learning, the lessons which longest withstand the distancing or collapse of the native world and most durably maintain nostalgia for it. (Bourdieu 79)

In other words, food and foodways might provide migrants a domain where they can pursue continuity, which can contribute to their sense of belonging and rootedness because foodways make it possible for them to hold to the familiar at least

to an extent since food may serve as an anchor point in their fluid transnational world of exile on one hand, but may other and displace them further, on the other. Such food and foodways are what David Sutton calls 'migrant food', denoting food that accompanies people moving across borders literally or metaphorically, food that is sent from home, or food that is re-created and represented in a different context of the host country. According to Sutton, migrant food has the power "to evoke the memories on which identities are formed" (Sutton 75), so if and when food is recreated properly it may provide more stability to a fluid and changing identity of transmigrants.

Moreover, if, as a result of migration, migrant identities eventually hybridize in Bhabha's Third Space of in-betweenness, food and foodways, along with other elements of culture, are then also hybridized despite frequent attempts to recreate them traditionally as migrants' homeland culinary practices merge with those of the host country as well as with foods and foodways of the locals and members of other diasporas to become a fusion, often as a result of migrants experiencing reflective nostalgia. If it considered that "[u]nderstanding how and what people eat as a species cannot really be done without acknowledging that diets appear and disappear, diversify and converge, expand and contract, all as a function of cultural factors" (Allen 64-5), then culinary practices of migrants, their foods and foodways inevitably transform in the Third Space.

## ALEKSANDAR HEMON

Aleksandar Hemon is a Bosnian-American author whose works have thus far generally focused on the subjectivities of exiles turned transmigrants, who are able to maintain real time contact with their friends and families in their homelands more often than migrants of the past before the development of modern transport and telecommunications, but nevertheless, continue to suffer from trauma, displacement and loss of their original cultural identity.

Culinary practices featured in the novella "Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls" from *The Question of Bruno* (2000), a short story from *The Book of My Lives* (2013) titled "Family Dining" and finally, Hemon's dos-à-dos memoir *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong* (2019) are analyzed below to demonstrate how Hemon approaches transmigrant attitudes to food, whether foodways in the Third Space are a result of reflective nostalgia and whether they feature the double role of being markers of inclusion and exclusion, contributing to the hybridization of transmigrant identity by analyzing a few extracts focusing on food and foodways.

## **THE QUESTION OF BRUNO: “BLIND JOZEF PRONEK AND DEAD SOULS”**

In this novella Hemon introduces food at the very beginning as a metaphor for Pronek's loss of homeland and identity as well as for the displacement and feelings of non-belonging and being the Other that the protagonist experiences in the host country. Firstly, *bourek* is included in the description of Pronek's arrival in the USA after he had just lost his luggage except for “a piece of three-day-old *bourek*, designed by his mother to sustain him on the trip, which was now – we can be sure of that – breeding all kinds of belligerent Balkan microorganisms in its entrails” (Hemon *The Question of Bruno* 144-5). *Bourek*, which is a Bosnian street food staple can be packed and transported quite easily. The most common varieties contain minced meat or potato or cheese. *Bourek* is quite greasy, so microorganisms can breed quite quickly, but here Hemon uses it to suggest a change in Pronek's experience as he has transitioned to a migrant, losing his past identity, here symbolized with *bourek* having rotten, so that it must be discarded upon the arrival to America. In other words, the spoiled *bourek* is used as a metaphor for Pronek's loss of homeland and past identity.

In addition, according to Simone Weil, staying rooted is the most significant, but least identified need of the human soul (1). Through the character of Pronek and other uprooted migrants in the novella, Hemon brings this need closer to the audience, while by up-rooting and spoiling *bourek*, metaphorically the protagonist is also up-rooted. The spoiled staple, therefore, functions as a metaphor for his lost self as he had known it, the loss of his previous identity and the path to nowhere-ness that began as soon he touched down on American soil.

## **THE BOOK OF MY LIVES: “FAMILY DINING”**

In the short story titled “Family Dining”, Hemon first focuses on how food was consumed in his country of origin Bosnia and Herzegovina when he was growing up and where he and his sister “were never allowed to eat in silence, let alone read or watch television” since eating was highly important as it was the time when the family gathered around the table and discussed what happened to them during the day when they were not together (30). Also, they “were obligated to finish everything on our plates and thank [their] mother” (ibid.). Hemon, here being reflectively nostalgic remembers how for him and his sister, “the ideal dining experience [...] involved *ćevapi*, or “grilled skinless sausages, a kind of Bosnian fast food” (32). Hemon continues to give descriptions of food while serving the Yugoslav People's Army where food choices were far more limited than at home:

For breakfast, apart from dry bread, we would get a boiled egg, a packet of rancid margarine, occasionally a slice of sticky, thick unsmoked bacon" (ibid.)

Hemon never liked the army, he was missing his home and was craving his mother's food, similarly to how he craved Bosnian foods once he became an exile as he writes:

Perpetually hungry, I recalled my family dinners before sleep and constructed elaborate future menus featuring roast lamb or ham-and-cheese crepes or my mother's spinach pie (33).

Food, therefore, may act as a trigger that brings back memories and emotions in line with what John S. Allen states in *The Omnivorous Mind*: "Food has meaning, it evokes memories, and it shapes identities" (2). and similarly:

taste, smell, and texture of food can be extraordinarily evocative, bringing back memories not just of eating the food itself but also of the place and setting in which the food was consumed. Beyond memories of taste and place, food is effective as a trigger of even deeper memories of feelings and emotions, internal states of the mind and body" (150)

For Hemon, here clearly practicing reflective nostalgia, food is a trigger of the memory of family dinners, the year spent serving the military in Macedonia and then his mother coming for a visit, bringing food that she had prepared, making him feel a little closer to home:

Mother had dragged heavy bags of food on the many trains from Sarajevo and brought along a feast: veal schnitzels, fried chicken, spinach pie, even a custard cake. She spread a towel on the bed, as there was no table, and I ate from food containers, much of it with my fingers. The first bite into the spinach pie brought tears to my eyes and I silently swore that from thereon in I'd always respect the sanctity of our family meals." (Hemon *The Book of My Lives* 35)

Further on, Hemon writes about the recipe for the family *borscht* and dives into migrant attitudes to food by emphasizing that food is the one item that migrants are able to physically reproduce, which as a result may reduce their levels of displacement since food can function as an effective trigger of deep memories of feelings and emotions, connecting migrants to their intimate histories, childhood memories, people that they had left behind as well as home and a sense of belonging. However, by depicting transmigrant attitudes to food, Hemon emphasizes that, despite attempts to recreate dishes to perfection, it is quite unavoidable that the food in the end fails to taste as it did in the homeland since it can hardly ever be perfectly reproduced because some authenticity is always missing. For instance,

the *borscht* that Hemon attempted to cook according to the family recipe as an exile in America during the Balkan war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, was not as *borscht* that he had memories of consuming in his homeland. This is on the account that it lacked a certain mystery ingredient, in addition to the family and friends who Hemon used to consume it with back in pre-war Sarajevo:

In the early, lonely days of my life in Chicago, I often struggled to reproduce the pleasures of my previous existence in Bosnia, I nostalgically sought good-I didn't expect perfect-borscht. But what I found at Ukrainian restaurants or in supermarkets with ethnic-food shelves was merely thin beet soup, and I was forced to try to reconstruct the family borscht from my addled memory. I'd make a pot for myself and live on it for a week or two. But what I made in this land of sad abundance was nowhere near what I remembered. I was almost missing at least one ingredient, not counting the mystery one. More important, there is nothing as pathetic as solitary borscht. Making borscht for myself helped me grasp the metaphysics of family meals-the food needs to be prepared on the low but steady fire of love and consumed in a ritual of indelible togetherness. The crucial ingredient of the perfect borscht is a large, hungry family. (38-9)

From this extract it is, therefore, clear that, when it is not authentically reproduced, food and foodways may also deepen migrants' feelings of loss, trauma and displacement, othering them even more, confirming Edward Said's view that there is no escaping exile since migrants often "make their food to taste of home, but it inescapably ends up having the taste of displacement" (Hemon *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You* 103)

## **My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You**

"Space" is the fifth chapter in this memoir in which Hemon describes the characteristics of his parents' displacement and in a manner that is quite similar to Said's view of exile being the defining moment in one's life as Hemon writes that for the displaced, migration inevitably becomes the center of their lives that divides an individual's life into the before and after exile:

When I write about my parents I'm compelled to claim that their displacement is the central event of their lives, what split everything into the before and the after. Everything after the rupture took place in a damaged incomplete time – some of it was forever lost, and forever it shall so remain. (68)

In the story, Hemon explains how his parents eventually adapted to the host land in a process that featured food as a central component. He gives an example of his

father's failed attempt to dry meat in his basement as he used to in his homeland, pointing to the fact that in exile the food and foodways generally end up tasting of displacement:

He even experimented with drying meat in the basement: he hung some pork, lightly smoked elsewhere, near a window with a ventilator. It was edible, but far from impressive, or even enjoyable, although he insisted it was as good as any dried meat. (70)

Hemon goes on to state that his parents as most immigrants "identified themselves by way of the food they ate" and that, therefore, "food was one of the few conduits of continuity between the before and after" (ibid.) thereby identifying food as "one of the crucial issues related to [his] family's displacement" (ibid.) in line with Weller's view that "food is a crucial source for maintaining and negotiating identity" (Weller et al. 1) where individual agency, otherwise often reduced due to exile, may be practiced in a dignified manner and with some sovereignty. Similarly, in an interview Hemon states that nothing had taught him more about his parents and himself than the "food they cherished after fleeing war-torn Bosnia." (Hemon "Bread Is Practically Sacred: How the Taste of Home Sustained My Refugee Parents"), so in Hemon's view, migrant food and foodways are not merely a product of nostalgia and a search for the lost roots, tradition and authenticity, but when they are put in a globalized and transnational context, they may contribute to the construction of a new hybridized identity.

Hemon gives food a double role as it might ease migrants' burden of non-belonging and displacement, but it may also be one of the main areas in which migrants feel most uprooted if they cannot re-create it. An example of this is Hemon's father's attempt to recreate the smoked meat that he used to enjoy in Bosnia above, but rather unsuccessfully. Therefore, Hemon's father attempted to recreate the staple of his country of origin, but failed, which deepened his sense of displacement. In addition, Hemon also states that the food and foodways often serve as an element of exclusion. He gives his parents and their Bosnian friends and family as an example as they view Canadian produce as being of a lower quality than Bosnian products. By doing this, they exclude or other themselves from the host culture by perceiving the dominant as the Other in line with what Hemon writes in *The Book of My Lives* which is that "[t]he moment you other someone, you other yourself" (12), so when they focus on the differences between their foods and the host country's foods they are othered:

Among my family in Canada and their friends, much time was spent debating dietary and other differences between "them" (Canadians) and "us" (people from Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia): "Their" bacon was soggy; "they" didn't

know how to make sausage; “their” sour cream was not thick enough; “they” didn’t eat things we ate; “they” were fat and incapable of truly enjoying life because “they” worried about getting fat all the time. (71)

Therefore, as immigration inevitably results in alterations in self-conceptualization and changes in cultural identity, food, in terms of its preparation and consumption along with the meanings and interaction with others associated with food, might be one of the crucial ways in which migrants deal with the alterations in their subjectivities in the sense of accepting new foodways on one hand, but also losing traditional ones, on the other. Which foodways will be preserved and which ones will be lost depends on each individual migrant or more broadly, on a particular diaspora and in the above example, sour cream and bacon are the foods that for Hemon’s parents and Bosnian diaspora in general are lost, as they cannot seem to be able to recreate them. Sour cream and bacon, similarly to *borscht* above, may therefore, be understood as reminders of the unsurmountable deficiencies and the incompleteness of exilic life due to a perpetual lack resulting in life that can never be complete again. There is always a missing ingredient that cannot be found, which reaffirms Said’s understanding of duality that makes exile unbearable. This duality refers to migrants’ position of in-betweenness, involving separation and displacement with regard to the place of origin, and the desire to belong and fit in the host country and its culture (Said 173).

On the other hand, migrants may also transform the space into which they settle to make it appropriate for them and therefore, encourage a sense of belonging also through food and foodways, so for Hemon’s parents, food represented the domain where continuity could be most pursued and which may serve as an anchor in the otherwise quite unstable, fluid and mobile exilic life, albeit not entirely.

The significant relevance that Hemon ascribes to the migrant preparation and consumption of food is clear from chapter 6 that is simply titled “Food”. Here, in a transnational and translingual manner, Hemon uses Bosnian words to name all the meals of the day: for breakfast (*doručak*), lunch (*ručak*), dinner (*večera*) (80, 82). In addition, also Bosnian staple foods are named in Bosnian. In this way, *ćevapčići* are then explained in notes as “\*The Bosnian national kebab, made of a mixture of ground beef and lamb.” (81), “the *meza* (cold cuts, boiled eggs, cheese, pickles), [...] *sarma* (pickled cabbage rolls)” (84). Hemon also writes about his parents’ attitudes to food, stating that for them it is really a matter of their personal history and original culture, which is in line with Koc and Welsh’s view that identities are subject to the “social and historical conditions that create and define these identities and their social limits” (1) and also to Hemon’s view:

Food can never be enjoyed unto itself; it's never just a sensory experience, let alone a matter of sophisticated taste. Its meaning is always dependent on the outcomes of potentially catastrophic situations, its value always assigned in the context of particular lives and histories" (88).

For example, Hemon's parents, in contrast to the practices of the members of the host country, have an aversion to going to restaurants since "[t]here really was no restaurant culture in the Sarajevo of our previous life" (85). For the parents, restaurant food is "impersonal, uncommunal, consumed in the isolation of public space" (89) and because as a result of the poor living conditions in which they grew up, the war and finally emigration, the food intake was for the parents always considered to be "proportional to the uncertainty of the future" (87). Here, Hemon transculturally and translanguistically compares the English idiom of "being full" to the Bosnian equivalent of *sit*, which reveals a different concept and understanding of 'being full'. In Bosnian, the word *sit* does not mean "a sense of fullness, but an absence of hunger" (87). Furthermore, Hemon gives a well-known Bosnian proverb as an example as he writes: "There is also a proverb: *Sit gladnom ne vjeruje*. The full one doesn't trust the hungry one. The proverb doesn't work in English because "full" and "hungry" don't belong to the same semantic zone." (87), demonstrating that "food is more than a basic set of nutrients" and that it is "a key component of our culture" and "central to our sense of identity" (Koc et al. 1). In a similar manner, Hemon refers to the Bosnian idiom *Dobar k'o hljeb*, which he translates to "as good as bread" (91) and *zaraditi koricu hljeba* as "earning a crust of bread" (92) to show how in Bosnian culture bread is close to being sacred because it has a symbolic value of survival since anyone who is in possession of bread cannot starve and therefore, survives.

Hemon also explains that a different view on food and bread in particular, is a direct consequence of Bosnian history that is filled with occasions when people were concerned that they would starve and die. However, this distress is not a characteristic of the historical narrative of the American or Canadian locals on account of their puritan history that equals self-denial. To put it in other words, the attitude to food for Hemon's parents is based on food equaling survival, which is the exact opposition to the American and Canadian understanding of food as being connected to "the basic puritan operation of rejecting – indeed transcending – pleasure in order to become a better person". (99). This is, therefore, a further example of how foods and attitudes to food consumption may deepen the displacement of migrants when they differ from the dominant culture's attitudes. Furthermore, it also demonstrates how food and language are both expressions that are, as Allen states "necessarily shaped by both biology and culture: they are both biocultural phenomena" (4) and that human "diet and approach to food

and eating have [...] been remade by [...] enriched, language-mediated cultural and cognitive environment" (5) because it is in fact the brains that we eat with, meaning that food consumption is not merely intake and digestion, but "involves decision making and choice: we do not simply eat what is edible, and we do not always like foods that taste good", so "food plays a role in our lives that goes beyond simple calories and nutrients" (ibid.), but is rather formed both by neurological pathways and by the cultural surroundings in which we were brought up and in which we live (ibid). Therefore, if as Allen states, the "human brain is the ultimate, evolving source of culture, but culture in turn shapes the function, and to a lesser extent the structure, of the brain" (5-6), then similarly to language "eating is a behavior that is integral to the human experience" (6) so food and food consumption of transmigrants and transdiaspora are inevitably shaped by the old and new cultural environment.

A further example of how reflective nostalgia of eating in the country of origin in "Food" is when Hemon writes that his parents did not care for expensive restaurants in Canada, but the foods consumed in their culture of origin when they were children:

My parents have never been in one of those Michelin-star-craving restaurants where thimblefuls of artistically arranged healthy ingredients are served on a satellite dish, but I know for a fact that the mere sight of something like that would appear insultingly ridiculous to them. Tata's favourite dish is *steranka*, which his mother made for him when he was a kid. It's dough boiled in milk. For my mother, eating the heel of a fresh loaf of good bread is a three-star experience. (88)

Therefore, his parents, similarly to most migrants came to Canada with a set of food choices, shaped by the individual, cultural, societal, historical and economical influences, and since food is central to the sense of identity (Koc et al., 9) and transmigrants' identity is fluid rather than fixed, their attitudes to food and foodways also generally change as a result of displacement as he writes that "[t]he value and meaning of food is always necessarily altered, just like everything else, by displacement" (Hemon *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You* 101). He gives his mother's complaints that lasted "for years after their arrival" (ibid.) about the quality of Canadian and Bosnian sour cream as an example. In accordance with Hemon's observation, Koc et al. refer to this phenomenon of 'othering food' as 'food security' which "includes not only availability of food at all times but also accessibility to all" and "access to sufficient, nutritious, and quality food at all time" (Koc et al., 9) that should also be "personally acceptable" (4). Moreover, the authors state that food security is part of "feeling at home" that is

not “limited to having access to nutritionally sufficient but also culturally appropriately diets” (ibid.). Consequently, when Hemon’s mother complained about the insufficient quality of Canadian sour cream, she did not belong and was feeling nowhere because the food had lost some of the authenticity that it had in her homeland because as Hemon writes “[o]ur food [...] stands for the authentic life we used to live, which is no longer available except as a model for this new, elsewhere life” (Hemon *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You* 101).

Moreover, the extract below reaffirms Wilk’s view that foodways define the human experience and that they are physical and symbolic activities that are generally used to communicate individuality and membership within a larger group and may, therefore, contribute to maintaining diasporic group solidarity and, therefore, also personal identity.

There was always far more [food] than necessary, which would compel the hosts to insist that everyone put more in their plates (*Ma, uzmi!*), while rejecting the spurious claims that another bite would lead to an abdominal explosion. So the guests would take more, and the feast would go on for a while, everyone talking and shouting over one another, joking and teasing, often singing, all in a state of high agitation and plain joy. Nobody would ever call that whole endeavor dinner – the activity revolved around food, but could never be reduced to it. In Bosnian, the verb that describes such an activity is *sjediti*, which means to sit, as the whole operation consists of sitting around the table, eating, drinking and being together for the purposes of well-earned pleasure. If I want to invoke an image of my parents being unconditionally happy (not an easy task), I envision them with their friends at table, roaring with laughter between bites of the delicious fare and sips of slivovitz and grappa. (84)

## CONCLUSION

As food is a biocultural phenomenon, its production and consumption are significantly shaped also by the cultural environment, so food preparation and consumption of transmigrants in displacement are subject to transformation. Migrant food that is often the result of experiencing reflective nostalgia can other and deepen feelings of displacement as in the case of Hemon’s parents who emphasize the dissimilarities between Bosnian and Canadian foods and foodways. However, food may also have a unifying function as it may bring family members and members of transdiaspora closer together in the Third Space where culinary practices, similarly to other parts of transmigrants’ cultural identity such as language, are therefore, also hybridized as they attempt to recreate and negotiate their culinary culture. Therefore, in the liminal Third Space, food acquires a significant role in

migrants' negotiation of belonging. In this way, food is then not only the food we eat at home, but connected to the histories, temporalities and subjectivities of the past life. In line with Said who states that the "achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind for ever" (137) Hemon also believes that it might be impossible for migrants to ever experience a state of non-displacement again also on account of hybridized food and foodways in the Third Space and while cultural hybridity is emphasized as migrants inevitably come into contact with the foodways of their host country, it is not romanticized or exoticized as Hemon demonstrates the difficulties that arise in the process.

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### **Transkulinarične prakse transmigrantov v delih Aleksandra Hemona "Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls", "Family Dining" in *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You***

V sedanjem transnacionalnem svetu, ki je poln transmigrantov ima hrana in vse povezano z njo novo, hibridno vlogo. V procesu transformacije kulturne identitete transmigrantov pri kateri je hrana ključen element, lahko priprava in poraba hrane, ki sta pogosto posledica reflektivne nostalgije po definiciji Svetlane Boym, delujeta kot most med domačo in gostujočo deželo. Vendar pa, če po eni strani transmigrantska hrana lahko vključuje, lahko tudi izključuje, ker pogloblja občutke razseljenosti in nepripadnosti, s katerimi se

eksilanti pogosto spopadajo in jih tako dela Druge. Aleksandar Hemon se v svojih delih pogosto ukvarja s subjektivitetami eksilantov in transmigrantov v transnacionalni sedanjosti. Članek analizira kako transmigranti v treh Hemonovih delih: "Blind Jozef Pronek and Dead Souls", "Family Dining" in *My Parents: An Introduction/This Does Not Belong to You* doživljajo hrano in vse v povezavi z njo in kakšno vlogo imajo kulinarične prakse v procesu oblikovanja novih, fluidnih in hibridnih identitet v liminalnem Tretjem prostoru Homija Bhabhe.

**Keywords:** Aleksandar Hemon, transnacionalna književnost, hrana in prehranjevanje, transnacionalne kulinarične prakse, eksilne identitete

## Homecoming, *You* and Genre in “Mlle. Dias de Corta”\*

*Jason Blake*

### Abstract

This paper focuses on style and aesthetic risk in a single Mavis Gallant story, “Mlle. Dias de Corta.” It considers the narrative trajectory in this story that is in letter form but is a letter that can never be received because the intended recipient’s whereabouts are unknown. In examining Gallant’s story, I consider the vast emotional terrain the narrator traverses, while also looking at generic considerations, *you*-narrative and the foundations on which the narrator’s apparently sudden change in character are based.

**Keywords:** Mavis Gallant, genre, short story, *you*-narrative

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The Paris-based Canadian writer Mavis Gallant would have turned 100 on August 11, 2022. This momentous occasion could have been marked by an unveiling of the diaries she kept for most of her life, or a glimpse into her decades-long work on the Dreyfus case. As it happens, the anniversary passed quietly, without pomp, publishing or republishing. Despite her remarkable 116 short stories in *The New Yorker* between 1951 and 1995, and despite the fact that she is praised by such marquee authors as Michael Ondaatje, Russell Banks, and Jhumpa Lahiri, Gallant remains somewhat forgotten. She bears that unfortunate mantle of being “a writer’s writer,” much esteemed, highly influential, but not much read. At least one effort has been made to put things right. Author Bill Richardson, formerly of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, established the online “Oh, MG: My Mavis Gallant Centennial Diaries” in part to tempt “someone with commissioning chops who was as interested as am I in what became of her diaries” to usher those volumes into print (“June 21”). If filmmaker Wes Anderson is reading Richardson’s blog, perhaps he has those chops. Clearly a fan, he lists Mavis Gallant as a dedicatee in the credits for his 2021 film *The French Dispatch*, which contains a reference few viewers will appreciate. The “Revisions to a Manifesto” chapter, starring Frances McDormand as Lucinda Krementz, is based on Gallant, who wrote extensively about the 1968 Paris revolts for *The New Yorker*. Krementz parrots a line from Gallant’s commentary on those heady months: “the touching narcissism of the young” (Wyatt, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

My article has a proselytizing aim: to highlight a single Gallant story in hopes that more readers will take up her works, and maybe even to convince a translator to introduce Gallant to the Slovene reader.<sup>2</sup> In terms of method and research, a consideration of second-person narration is followed by a close reading of “Mlle. Dias de Corta” (1992), in which a seemingly grumpy widowed narrator writes a letter to a young female tenant she knew two decades ago. Along the way, I consider *you*-narration and loneliness as a spur to writing. Finally, I examine questions of genre in this story about a narrator that we come to care about over the ten decades-spanning pages we spend with her. If that seems like a lot, it is. “Mlle.” contains multitudes and any stylistic or close reading merely scratches the surface. This paper is in keeping with Marta Dvořák’s 2019 *The Eye and the Ear*, in which the scholar and friend of Gallant shows the craft that goes into her crystalline prose, shows how her works work.

Mavis Gallant does not make things easy for herself in “Mlle. Dias de Corta.”

1 The line first appeared in “The Events in May: A Paris Notebook” (Gallant 59); see also Gallant 1986, 11.

2 A Cobiss search of the Slovene library systems yields no Gallant in Slovene. However, “The Prodigal Parent” exists in Maja Kraigher’s 2006 translation (“Izgubljene Oče,” (from the anthology *Zgodbe iz Kanade*).

Aesthetic risks abound, from an initially unlikable narrator, to a string of *you's*, to a curious choice of genre. The first paragraphs lead the reader to believe that the unnamed letter writer is fatuous, property obsessed, nasty and bigoted. Students and other readers who breeze through these paragraphs might not see the narrator's drastic change during this story that begins with acerbic accusations and concludes with tenderness and longing.

Before turning to point of view and genre, however, a few words on Gallant's opening page, including the title, will be useful. Titles determine how we read. They may provide information about what is to come, they may indicate genre – such as when a poem is titled "Sonnet" – and they definitely raise expectations. "Mlle." suggests formality, while indicating Frenchness and unmarried status. The narrator sees the last name "de Corta" as definitely not French and for her the "de" represents not nobility but foreignness. She regards young Alda Dias de Corta as being from somewhere else.

The first line reads "You moved into my apartment during the summer of the year before abortion became legal in France; that should fix it in past time for you, dear Mlle. Dias de Corta" (131). The line reads like a letter, down to the "dear Mlle. Dias de Corta" that is shifted to the end of the sentence so that "dear" sounds like it is half letter convention, half sarcasm. If it is rude to begin a letter with "I," it is doubly rude to begin with "you" because accusations begins with that moralizing pronoun. The chiasmic flipping<sup>3</sup> of "You" and "my" in "You moved into my apartment..." hints at an fixation on property, ownership and belonging that will be borne out as we continue reading. Rather than writing a specific date, the narrator uses oblique time references throughout. This usage is realistic because many of us remember key events in our lives by placing them in relation to other events (*It was the year before our third child was born... It was the summer Tadej Pogačar won his first Tour...*). We are therefore drawn into the narrative, even if we cannot identify with the widow at the outset. The whiff of accusation established by the moralizing "you" is maintained as the narrator badgers a young woman, the titular Alda Dias de Corta, who lived for a time in the 1970s as an (eventually unpaying) tenant in a Parisian apartment also inhabited by the narrator and her twenty-two-year-old son. Impregnated, probably by the narrator's son, Alda secured a then-illegal abortion before she disappeared from their apartment and their lives. Thus, if "Mlle." is in the form of a letter, it is a letter than cannot be sent. The "you" that is being addressed has long ago left the building.

3 For a concise examination of criss-cross structure of chiasmus in Gallant, see Dvořák, 54, 101.

## YOU-NARRATIVE

*I'll see you* leads many a dad to reply, *Not if I see you first*. This joke hinges on the question of who is seeing, on grammatical subject and object, and is not good for any laughs. It is, however, a neat illustration of how slippery the second-person pronoun can be and how quickly first and second person switch. In spoken discourse the *you* is a participant in the conversation, that is, the addressee can potentially respond to what the sender or addresser has said. But even in person, ambiguity looms. If a lecturer turns to a group and asks, "What do you think?", the members of the group don't know whether the *you* is meant as singular, male, female, plural, or generic. Who is the lecturer talking to specifically? Jonathan Hope and Laura Wright point out that "the reference of *you* in actual usage can be surprising" (34), even in seemingly straightforward written texts. When Uncle Sam's visage and index finger point at us and proclaim "I want you for the U.S. Army," we may feel like we are in the crosshairs, even if we are too old or too non-American to head to the "nearest recruiting station."

Francine Prose says "Mlle. Dias de Corta" is "written in the second person" (84), which is not entirely accurate, since it is in the form of a letter, implying that a first-person subject must be guiding the pen. A film version could consist of a single older Frenchwoman, alone in an apartment as she writes to an absent audience. Gallant's literary letter is more like a diary entry as the narrator provides an overview of the decades leading up to the time "Mlle." appeared in *The New Yorker* in 1992. The first few pages exhibit the narrator's nationalism; she is convinced that "Asians," "Arabs and Africans" and "unskilled European immigrants" (133) are taking over Paris. Eventually she explains the *why* behind her writing: the narrator, along with her son and his wife (who presumably does not know about the abortion and who seems to know Alda only through stories) felt "great joy and astonishment" because they saw Alda on television "last night" (135).

Though few specific dates are given, the narrator whisks us from around 1970 to 1992, a date subtly revealed through a reference to "Euro Disney" (135) – Disneyland Paris opened in April of that year. The recipient of the letter is conspicuously absent, meaning that even though "you" appears some 150 times, there is no primary addressee. The opening sentence ("You moved into my apartment...") immediately excludes the reader and only as we continue to read do we realize that Alda will never see this letter. That raises a crucial question that I will return to: Why write to a *you* that cannot receive the letter?

As narratologists have noted, until the 1990s there was little investigation into second-person narrators simply because there was little "second-person narration"

to be found (Leech and Short 301). Since then, theory has caught up.<sup>4</sup> Before turning to theorists, however, a word from authors who have considered this narrative perspective in aesthetic terms is in order. Francine Prose argues that the "you" form can all too easily come to seem like a distracting tic" because the reader might bristle: "What do you mean, *me*?" (2012, 83). Moreover, a *you*-story can seem as superficial as a look-at-me fake limp on stage, or an attention-seeking hat above a threadbare suit. That is why Prose, writing specifically about "Mlle.," elsewhere states that the second-person is "the potentially trashiest point of view" (2022). There have, of course, been two prominent and successful examples of pure *you*-narratives: Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* and Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*, but they are the exceptions that prove the rule. As Howard Mittelmark and Sandra Newman quip, in a whimsical but entirely useful popular writing guide, "it was named the 'second person' when McInerney became the second person to get away with it and it became clear that he would also be the last" (161).

When a writer opts for a *you*-narrative or inserts a *you* outside dialogue, the pronominal referent is doubly slippery because a *you*-narration implies a double addressee. "You" can refer to a fictional character but also to the reader – such as when *Lolita*'s Humbert Humbert says, "if you can still stand my style" (8). However, in such cases the *you* is imposed because we cannot respond to what the writer is saying and we are therefore objectified. We are voiceless spectators to a dialogized monologue. As per the contract we enter every time we read a print book, we are addressed, but unable to respond. The more vague the *you*, the more we feel that the narrator is speaking to us. As Alice Bell and Astrid Ensslin point out, we are less likely to feel directly addressed, less likely to identify with "you," as the "defining attributes of 'you' become more specific" (317). James Phelan further highlights the shifting ground beneath the one being addressed. He argues that

when the second-person address to a narratee-protagonist both overlaps with and differentiates itself from an address to actual readers, those readers will simultaneously occupy the positions of addressee and observer. Furthermore, the fuller the characterization of 'you,' the more aware actual readers will be of their differences from that 'you,' and thus, the more fully they will move into the observer role, and the less likely this role will overlap with the addressee position. (351)

We slip into an observer role just as we do when a stranger waves at a person *behind* us and we think they are waving at us, resulting in overlap, hesitation or confusion.

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4 Nevertheless, there is still relatively little academic focus on second-person narration and even in guides to narratology this type of narrator is generally given short shrift.

Slippery *you*-references aside, it is evident from the first sentence of “Mlle. Dias de Corta” that we are not addressees of the narrator’s unsendable letter. Like all fiction, this story is an invitation to voyeurism, as thrilling as impersonation.<sup>5</sup> We might, however, by proxy take up Alda’s position as a voiceless individual being harangued by a curmudgeonly former landlady. If asked *Whose side are you on?* few will respond: *The reproving landlady’s!* Within the first few pages, Alda is accused of many things: she is “careless” (131) because she spilled a few crumbs; lazy because she did not spring to clean up the mess (“Actually, you had not made a move” (131)); she eats too quickly (131); she is wasteful (because this tenant from the south ruined an electric heater “before its time by leaving it turned on all night” (134)); and she is gluttonous because she takes advantage of the included breakfast (“What a lot of coffee, milk, bread, apricot jam, butter, and sugar you managed to put away!” (134)). Our sympathy for Alda may grow as the list grows. Many a reader can imagine consuming a hearty breakfast at another’s expense; many others will have left their own heaters on all night. Because these are peccadillos committed years ago, the narrator seems petty, begrudging, and trapped in the past. Would the present-day Alda feel addressed or would she think that was a different Alda?

## THE ACTOR AND THE ACT?

Gallant’s narrator confuses Alda with the roles she played on television – once in a film and once in an “oven-cleanser commercial” (135). Within a single paragraph, Gallant speaks to Alda the actress and Alda the individual. To our amusement, she blends the role with the actor: “You assured us that the product did not leave a bad smell or seep into food or damage the ozone layer” (136). She then directly addresses the flesh-and-blood Alda of yore: “I recall some of the things you told [my son] Robert about your early years. He was just twenty-two and easily moved to pity” (137). There is a lacuna and a coldness in these two sentences. We are not told what these “things” are (presumably Robert has been vague when discussing the tenant with his mother), and the declarative sentence that ends in “pity” is chillingly terse.

The widow then recalls the last time she saw Alda acting, in a television film that aired almost ten years before the time of writing (“April 24, 1983”). Again to our amusement, she reminds Alda of the plot of a movie she knows better than most: Alda’s character becomes romantically involved with an architect, and is seen “making mad love” with him (137); “Then you and he have a big quarrel,

5 From Tamas Dobozsy’s 2006 story “Dead Letters,” about illegal trade in letters that have been sent but can’t be delivered: “The collectors’ interest wasn’t so much voyeurism, peering into someone else’s life, as impersonation, taking on that life, becoming the person the letters were sent to” (62).

because of his basic indifference to the real world, and you take a bunch of red roses out of a vase and throw them in his face. (I recognized your quick temper.)" (137). Gallant is bold for spending such a "disproportionate chunk of narrative time" on a "shabby love-plot" (O'Donoghue, "Best Story"). Her description is a virtuoso variation on what it means to be tedious, right down to the overt symbolism of throwing not just roses but *red* roses. If describing a television show or, worse, a television commercial is death to conversation, describing them to the very actor who committed their lines to memory is murderous. Yet the aesthetic risk is worth it because Gallant simultaneously gives us an insight into the narrator's seemingly simple mind and, meanwhile, hints at the passing years. Where the younger Alda was "standing around with no clothes on" (138), the once-slovenly Alda is now the maternal face of a cleaning agent that does not harm an ozone layer that few people had heard of before the early 1990s.

It would be easy to mock the widow's inability to see the difference between the flesh-and-blood Alda and the characters she plays. However, she is distanced from Alda, who is effectively a blank space onto which she projects her ideas, and it is this reminiscing distance that sends the narrator looking for clues into Alda's character. At least some of the artlessness arises from desperation, which becomes clear only as we follow the widow's progression from a badgering landlady to a solitary individual inhabiting a lonely Parisian apartment.

## ACCUSATIONS

The accusations the narrator levels against Alda may be petty, but they are at least founded in reality. Alda had indeed left a trail of crumbs and "spilled milk" (131). Her gravest accusation, however, is that Alda is not French. The story's second sentence contains the slight "You had just arrived in Paris from your native city, which you kept insisting was Marseilles" (131), with the gerund form implying Alda's rote answer to a question asked over and over again. Later we read this witty exchange:

"I'm afraid you must think we French are cruel to animals, Mlle. Dias de Corta, but I assure you not everyone is the same." You protested that you were French, too. I asked if you had a French passport. You said you had never applied for one. "Not even to go and visit your family?" I asked. You replied that the whole family lived in Marseilles. "But where were they born?" I asked. "Where did they come from?" (135)

The back-and-forth of this I-asked-you-said inquisition is comic because there is nothing Alda could provide or say to convince her landlady that she legitimately belongs in France. The narrator jabs and dodges like a boxer, first asking for the

documentary evidence of a passport, then playing a game of lineage by asking where Alda's family was born, where they came from. This line of inquiry could stretch back to Adam and Eve. Read aloud, these terse lines would sound like comedy<sup>6</sup> – not least because they are an *almost* dialogue that replicates in miniature the structure of the letter as a whole. In neither letter nor inquisition does Alda have a voice. She exists as a blank that the narrator longs to fill, including with confirmation of Alda's ethnicity. The sly humour, of course, lies in the fact that whatever Alda answers can be used by the widow against her, since the question of where Alda's forebears came from would remain relevant even if Alda possessed a French passport.

Indeed, Gallant sets up this witty exchange perfectly because the widow clearly delights in heritage and names. For example, she believes "Thousands of foreign-sounding names are deliberately 'lost' by the authorities and never show up in telephone books or computer directories" (133). Like any good conspiracy theory, this one is unprovable and water-tight in its logic. How do you prove that an absent name exists? The narrator describes her son's wife Anny as "a young lady of mixed descent. (Two of her grandparents are Swiss.)" (132). (The parenthetical clarification always stokes laughter when students read it aloud in class.) Just before that, she describes two of her son's co-workers: "One was born in Martinique and can't pronounce her 'r's. The other looks Corsican" (132). What does a Martinique "r" sounds like? How does one spot a Corsican at fifty paces? Although Mavis Gallant has said in an interview that Alda "is obviously Portuguese" (Gallant 9:43), there is no hard evidence in the story itself that she was not born and educated in France. Ariel Katz argues the paucity of information about Alda's background means "the widow's assumptions rest almost entirely on Alda's name" (2022); there is also the fact that many Portuguese emigrated to France around the time the story takes place.

Gallant masterfully suggests the many negative aspects of the narrator's character, but the final impression she leaves is more complex. Comparing the first and the final words of a story is often illustrative and fun because we can trace the narrative arc. "You moved into my apartment.... dear Mlle. Dias de Corta" are the feisty opening words, focussing on property and dwelling (and, passingly, on abortion). The final paragraph is in complete contrast to the open lines<sup>7</sup> because it provides a painfully honest look at the widow's inner state. The widow now pleads for Alda to return:

You need not call to make an appointment. I prefer to live in the expectation of hearing the elevator stop at my floor and then your ring, and of having you tell me you have come home. (142)

6 Marta Dvořák argues that "oral delivery" or a sense of the same is crucial to recognizing Gallant's "quiet but sustained humour" (8).

7 In this regard, "Mlle." ends like many of Gallant's early stories because it contains a final that "soften[s] the dispassionate perspective" of a seemingly cold narrator (Gadpaille, 39).

A story that began with an obsession with ownership, belonging and property concludes with an open admission that Alda is, more than the narrator's son, at "home" in her apartment. More importantly, the final word casts a warmer glow over what we have just read. If the "dear" in the first sentence seemed conventional or sarcastic, here, in retrospect, it assumes a shade of the far more intimate "chère." Francine Prose, in one of her appreciations of "Mlle.," says that Gallant, "without ever venturing very far from the narrator's claustrophobia-inducing flat," traverses decades in this "unsent – and unsendable – letter" (2022). By the end of the letter, she has also traversed vast emotional terrain.

## GENERIC PATHS AND LONELINESS

"Mlle. Dias de Corta" raises important questions of genre and it is by design that I have referred to the story as a letter, as a diary entry, and as a monologue. In *Writing in General and the Short Story in Particular*, Rust Hills views the monologue as "probably the most awkward way to tell a story," not least since the monologist "is presumed to be the same after he ends his harangue as he was before he began it" (149). If we think of real-life monologues delivered by this or that uncle, or of clumsily handled monologues in fiction, we will agree with Hills. Gallant, however, creates a work that approaches a stage version of monologue, where "the character is altered by saying" their piece (Merlin, 85). It would be fascinating to hear "Mlle." not only read aloud but performed, because it is an exercise in character development or change. The reader who is not immediately turned off by the narrator's odious views gets to see how she becomes more welcoming as the final lines draw near.

Michael Ondaatje argues that in Gallant's works "tenderness arrives unexpectedly" (8). His assessment is only partially true for "Mlle." In that story, Gallant so carefully lays the foundation for the narrator's change from crustiness to tenderness that the change of heart in the final paragraph seems abrupt; a second or third reading reveals just how brilliantly Gallant sets up the shift. This is no eleventh-hour, unmotivated conversion with credulity-straining alacrity. Equally important, we are placed in the position of feeling compassion for the widow in her solitude even while remaining keenly aware of "and angry at her prejudice" (Katz, 22). It is this unsettling balance that saves the story from falling into sentimentality.<sup>8</sup> As well, we can more easily forgive or forget prejudice that exists only in theory. The narrator does not carry out any prejudicial actions.

That the narrator is intensely lonely becomes obvious as we turn the pages. Her relationship to her son seems cold and distant, especially in this remembered

8 Lenore Myka is more strident: "We feel pity and maybe a little bit of shame at having been as judgmental as the narrator herself" (2015).

exchange: "Once, as he was going out the door, I asked if he loved me. He said the answer was self-evident: We were closely related" (132). Given that we have already seen the dark side of the narrator, "self-evident" could be justifiably interpreted to mean *No!* One wonders why the narrator asked her son this question just as he was exiting. Was she summoning courage? Robert's cold reply, meanwhile, indicates his pragmatic desire to arrive at his destination but also a refusal to put on a show. He is, like Cordelia in *King Lear*, unwilling to make a spectacle of his love. From Cordelia's "I love your Majesty / According to my bond, no more nor less" to Robert's "self-evident" is not far. Of course, Robert lacks Cordelia's love and he performs neither through words nor actions.

Proving that the narrator is lonely would be breaking through unlocked doors. The aim here is to show how Gallant adroitly structures the narrator's evolution from intolerance towards a gentle tolerance. The tolerance grows from a longing to have Alda return. Early on, when considering how to invite a paying stranger into her home, the narrator recalls that "even those concerned for my welfare, from coiffeur to concierge" (132) had suggested that a male tenant was the wiser option. On first reading, the phrase "coiffeur to concierge" appears like a dash of French to add a certain *je ne sais quoi* to this very Parisian story (as she confides in the two as if they were close friends or family); it may appear to be a lapse in taste for the superb stylist Mavis Gallant, there for the sake of alliteration, what Bill Richardson calls "the cheap perfume of literature" ("June 21"). Most importantly, the sweeping "from ... to" suggests a wide circle of friends worried about the narrator's wellbeing. Nothing of the sort. In fact, the convergence of *c*'s is fortuitous. Beyond the family – cold son Robert, long-deceased husband, and the prim "Swiss" daughter-in-law whose character is summed up in a single line: "She is employed in the accounting department of a large hospital and enjoys her work" (132) – few other acquaintances are mentioned. Only the concierge and Alain the coiffeur are shown to converse with the widow, and though they may have been on friendly terms with her, each was essentially an economic or business associate. Alain retired and departed, and the "concierge you [Alda] knew stayed on for another fifteen years, then retired to live with her married daughter in Normandy" (142).

Never having been allowed to work (late husband's orders), the narrator has neither retired nor moved. Although she seems stuck in a past that precedes the tumultuous changes of 1968, she frequently shows awareness of changing times. After interrogating Alda about her heritage or where she is *really* from, she glosses the passport exchange (quoted above): "There wasn't so much talk about European citizenship then. One felt free to wonder" (135). "European" in this gloss implies an identity category that shackles imagination. Later in her letter she mentions Portugal but checks herself: "Portugal is a coincidence: I am not implying any connection with you or your relations or fellow citizens" (138). Though she has

not shaken off the conviction that Alda is Portuguese, she attempts to downplay or mitigate the ethnic connection. The next line reads in part like boilerplate language cribbed from a European Union document: "If we are to create the Europe of the twenty-first century, we must show belief in one another and take our frustrated expectations as they come" (138). The turn after "belief in one another" is insightful in its ambiguity. The first-person plural seems to indicate prejudice, but it is another hazy referent. "Our frustration" can apply to all, to those who, like the narrator, are wary of the new arrivals in France, but also to those new arrivals who are aiming to build a new life within western Europe.

## CONCLUSION

A western bon mot about money reads, "When a feller says: 'It hain't th' money, but th' principle o' th' thing,' it's th' money." Gallant reverses this adage in "Mlle. Dias de Corta," when the widow claims she took in Alda for "companionship rather than income" (132). On first reading, this phrase appears to be a lie, a concession to bourgeois pieties about *never* discussing money, since it follows immediately after the revelation that the widow's husband's "last words" to her were about her "financial future and were not overly optimistic" (131). It becomes clear that these words are utterly sincere, since companionship is what the widow yearns for. The letter manifests a desire to reset the calendar. Again we are offered insight into the narrator's mind: according to her daughter-in-law and new coiffeuse, "fashions of the seventies are on the way back" (141). The suggestion is that Alda, too, can come back.

*Seeming* and *being* is ever crucial in literature, and rarely more so than in "Mlle. Dias de Corta." A six-word version might read: "A crusty old lady becomes kind." A six-word generic assessment might ask: "Is this story really a letter?" The question of genre is crucial to "Mlle.," and if we imagine this story to be a letter, it is a love letter that slowly unfolds itself. It is a love letter, which, even if fictional, retains a dose of the real and the emotionally sincere. As the line "companionship rather than income" evinces, the widow is writing truthfully about her love for a young woman who briefly imbued her life with "joy and astonishment" (135).

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## Vrnitev domov, *ti* in žanr v zgodbi »Mlle. Dias de Corta«

Ta članek raziskuje stilistična in estetična tveganja v izbrani zgodbi pistaeljice Mavis Gallant, "Mlle. Dias de Corta." Razmišlja o narativni poti v zgodbi, ki je napisana v obliki pisem, ki nikoli ne bodo prejeta, ker je prejemnikov naslov neznan. V poglobljenem pogledu v zgodbo preučim obširen čustveni teren, ki ga pripovedovalka prepotuje in sproti opazujem žanrske pomisleke, drugoosebno pripoved in korenine, na katerih temeljijo pripovedovalquine nenade značajske spremembe.

**Ključne besede:** Mavis Gallant, žanre, kratka zgodba, drugoosebna pripoved



# Redefining Female Subjectivity in Australian Indigenous Women's Poetry

*Danica Čerče*

## Abstract

This article discusses the poetry of Romaine Moreton and Lisa Bellear, particularly the poems in which they address the violence against Aboriginal women and girls. It demonstrates how the two poets' representation of Australian historical and cultural memory destabilises the continuum of colonial power relations and confronts the ongoing stereotypes of Aboriginal women constructed on the basis of a decidedly racist and misogynistic colonial ethos.

**Keywords:** Australian Indigenous protest poetry, Romaine Moreton, Lisa Bellear, Eurocentrism, racialised and gendered violence

## ‘INTERACTING WITH THE ARCHIVE’

In Australia, since the late 1970s, literature has been at the forefront of Indigenous peoples’ political expression. Together with other forms of activism, it has served as a vehicle for “retrieving previously repressed history of colonial violence” (Horakova 54), challenging the processes that have enabled the imposition and maintenance of white hegemony, and the concomitant subordination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. As Lisa Slater has observed, well into the 1990s, “the statement that Australia was colonised was for many [white Australians] radical and divisive,” and it was not until the publication of reports, such as Elliott Johnston’s *Deaths in Custody* (1991) and Sir Ronald Wilson’s *Bringing Them Home* (1997), that a “deeply unsettling image of white Australia came into frame” (14). Particularly Wilson’s report on the traumas of the Stolen Generation, was a “transforming force” (Slater 14), inciting a number of white Australian writers and academics to align with the protest voices of Indigenous Australians.

However, and despite the enlightened views of white Australian intelligentsia, articulating what may be termed a “disturbed settler Australians’ sense of belonging and legitimacy” in the land that bears scars of colonial violence (Slater 6), and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s formal apology to Australia’s Indigenous peoples in February 2008—the event that signalled Australia’s revised policy of social and cultural coexistence, Indigenous Australians have not yet been granted “the deserved discursive and material space in Australian society and identity formation” (Renes 93). Doubts such as those expressed by Michael Griffiths, as to whether Australia has “in fact moved beyond colonialism” (15), or Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s suggestion to conceptualise Australia as a “postcolonising” nation (2003), are neither unusual nor unjustified, considering the ongoing interventions into and invasions of Indigenous peoples’ property and bodies.<sup>1</sup> As Waanyi nation writer Alexis Wright claims, “Our history spurs me to write, just as much as our present-day realities” (18).

To deconstruct the logic of presumably irredeemable binaries of colonial discourse, Indigenous Australian authors “interact with the archive,” claims Jeanine Leane, Wiradjuri poet, short story writer and academic from New South Wales (2017, 242). As Leane further explains, the term ‘archive’ is to be understood in Jacques Derrida’s sense as something that includes “storehouses of official paperwork and records” and “evokes voices from the past that recall and remember trauma and resilience through ‘blood memory’” (2017, 242). In other words,

1 For instance, the 2007 Northern Territory Intervention seized control of many aspects of the daily lives of residents in 73 Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Australian authors interrogate the discursive history of colonisation and reappraise it through “informed imagination,” filling the gaps missing or intentionally left out of the official records with “transgenerational blood memory” (Leane 250).<sup>2</sup> Beginning with the poetry of Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal tribe of Minjerriba, formerly known as Kath Walker,<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal literature foregrounds memories and traumas that the state archives conceal, constituting an integral part of an organised struggle against the colonialist authority.

Indeed, as is generally believed, Australian Indigenous literature cannot be truly understood by severing it from its historical and socio-cultural context. As one of the traditions of the new postcolonial literatures in English, it “writes back” to the literary traditions of Empire and their white literary subjectivity (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 6), challenging what George Lipsitz in the US context calls “the exclusionary concept of whiteness” (370). However, it was not until the 1988 Australian bicentennial celebration that the wider Australian public showed interest in this literature and culture (Wheeler 5). This resulted in an increased production of Indigenous authorship in various genres, including autobiography, fiction, poetry, film, drama, and music; in each of these areas of creative expression, Indigenous Australians have made a significant contribution (Čerče 2017, 33).

For many Indigenous Australians, poetry seems to have been a preferred medium for the articulation of their political thought, constituting an indictment of white Australian racial hegemony, a recuperation of neglected Aboriginal history, and a call for redefining Indigeneity. As Narungga poet and activist Natalie Har-kin writes,

The only way for me to shift and transform the archive-box was to write poetry and weave my way out; an embodied reckoning with history's record in an attempt to better understand my family's place in a broader history of colonialism. As contemporary agents of memory, we can re-signify, assert and re-insert our family stories, beyond symbols of servitude and subjection, and privilege the voices of our ancestors.” (qtd. in Whittaker and Watson 182)

Anita Heiss rightly contends that, belonging to the society with “incredibly low literacy rates” and entering the field which used to be monopolised by the white elite, many Indigenous Australians have embraced poetry rather than prose or drama as their “political platform,” believing that it offers “fewer restrictions on

2 For the poetry of Jeanine Leane, see Danica Čerče's *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* article, “Jeanine Leane's counter-reading of Australian historical and cultural memory locally and internationally.”

3 Kath Walker changed her name to Oodgeroo to protest against the Australian bicentennial celebration in 1988 (Brewster 2017, 256). Her 1964 collection *We Are Going* is the first book of poetry by an Aboriginal writer and the first book by an Aboriginal woman (Heiss and Minter 40).

style and technique" (181). In addition, poetry has proven to be a useful vehicle for creating an "activist discursive space" for a dialogue with the mainstream discourses and constituencies which otherwise has been constrained (Brewster and Kossew 121). According to Adam Shoemaker, for Indigenous Australians, "the [very] act of composing poetry is an inherently political one which is itself an invaluable form of activism" (180).

Although any reading that acknowledges only the socio-political relevance of Australian Indigenous poetry and neglects its artistic merit is too narrow to do it justice, protest continues to be its most resonant characteristic. In accordance with Michael Lipsky's contention that the category of protest can also refer to a symbolic action (such as that undertaken by literature), and his definition of protest as a "mode of political action oriented toward objection to one or more policies or conditions" (1145), this poetry makes overt references to and objections against the ongoing position of Indigenous population as "the ethnic minority submerged in and governed by a surrounding majority" (Mudrooroo 231). Another essential aspect of protest writing is its capacity "to offer revelations of social worlds to which readers respond with shock, concern, sometimes political questioning" (Coles 677). By focusing on the poetry of Romaine Moreton and Lisa Bellear, this article will demonstrate that Australian Indigenous poetry is capable of ensuring strong emotional impact on its readers, urging them to contest the myth of objectivity of the imperial idea of history and its traditional discriminatory dialectic of self and 'other.'

## ABORIGINAL WOMEN'S POETRY

According to Anne Brewster, the emergence of Indigenous writing has provided a new understanding of contemporary Australian culture and nation, demonstrating that the social contract of the nation is both "gendered and racially inflected" (2009, 109). Several feminist writers and scholars have stressed a prominent role of gender in the identity construction of subject peoples and called for "gender specificity" in analysing the impact of racism on Indigenous peoples (Ferrier 1). In Australia, Aboriginal women, who are amongst the most subjugated, have struggled with the inequalities of being both black and women. Their urge to denunciate the ideologies that served to establish and maintain Aboriginal women's double colonisation may explain why the protest poetry tradition, initially dominated by Aboriginal male poets, has recently taken a "gendered turn" (Brewster 2017, 246). Much of the verse by Lisa Bellear, Anita Heiss, Ali Cobby Eckermann, Roberta Sykes, Romaine Moreton, Yvette Holt, Jeanine Leane and Natalie Harkin, among others, thematises the oppression and abuse of Indigenous women in Australia,

seeking to repudiate white patriarchal constructions of race and gender. This is by no means to suggest that male poets have not reacted to the violence against Aboriginal women. The Wirajuri Nation poet and activist Kevin Gilbert, in particular, saw them as those “who suffered the grossest violation” at the hands of the white oppressor, which is evidenced in his poems “The Other Side of the Story,” “Riches,” “Mum,” Guarwundul’s Wish” and a few others (Rooks 50).

With the focus on Moreton’s and Belleair’s poetry, this article will analyse how Australian Indigenous verse problematises the politics of polarity and encourages the dismantling or subversion of what Nicholas Birns (2002) calls the “sundry truisms of standard literary histories” (116). My approach to the two poets’ writing, which I find particularly powerful in their depictions of racialised and gender-based violence, is aligned with the views of Martha Nussbaum (2000), who sees literature as “a bridge both to a vision of justice and to the social enactment of that vision” (364). I argue that, by re-writing the European historical and cultural memory, the two poets intervene in the continuum of colonial power relations and contribute to the recovery of independent and vital Indigenous identity. In particular, they expose the history of sexual abuse suffered by Aboriginal women and girls and confront the ongoing stereotypes constructed on the basis of a decidedly racist and misogynistic colonial ethos, graphically described in Carol Thomas’s *Sexual Assault: Issues for Aboriginal Women*: “On pastoral stations Aboriginal women were preyed on by any and every white man whose whim it was to have a piece of ‘black velvet’ wherever and whenever they pleased” (140).

Throughout colonial and postcolonial history, Indigenous women have been subjected to a high level of violence. Although, in the words of Eualeyai/Kamil-laroi scholar Larrissa Behrendt, violence has become a normal part of life of many Aboriginal women (2000, 360), it has not been given the same public attention as other instances of Aboriginal mistreatment. Given a broad range of women’s relationship to violence (as victims, survivors, advocates, accomplices or perpetrators), the protest against it mounted by Indigenous women voices also takes various ways and modes. Most often, they reconfigure the trope of Aboriginal women as victims by representing them both as victims and “agentic survivors” (Brewster and Kossew 229). The category of ‘survivor’ undoes the binarism of victimhood and agency and, in Linda Alcoff’s words, allows women to “turn shame into anger, or fatalist desolation into the capacity for regaining one’s self-regard” (qtd. in Brewster and Kossew 5). As Leane has observed, [Aboriginal women] were indeed victims [...] but they are not perpetual victims – ultimately, they were survivors” (qtd. in Brewster 2015, 87). In this article, I will focus on men’s violence against Aboriginal women, although white women also participated in the British project of colonisation as complicit accomplices or perpetrators “in the name of so-called goodness and a more civilised world” (Vernay 65).

## RECONFIGURING OF THE TROPE OF ABORIGINAL WOMEN AS VICTIMS IN MORETON'S VERSE

Critics tend to concur that Romaine Moreton's verse is among the most penetrating indictment of colonialism in Australia. Moreton expresses her indignation at the social and political marginalisation of Indigenous Australians and her Goenpul Jagara nation by writing prose and poetry, performing her verse, and making films. Her poems are collected in three books, *The Callused Stick of Wanting* (1995), *Post Me to the Prime Minister* (2004) and *Poems from a Homeland* (2012), and included in several anthologies of Australian writing. Moreton sees black life in Australia as inherently political and considers her verse in the first place as a site of resistance. In "Working Note," she writes, "To create works that do not deal with the morbid and mortal effects of racism for one, and the beauty of indigenous culture for another, would be for me personally, to produce works that are farcical" (1). Similarly, one of her poems in the collection *Post Me to the Prime Minister* includes these revealing lines: "It ain't easy being black / this kinda livin' is all political" (111).

Driven by the creative urgency arising from her anger at those inflicting injustice on other people and her affection for those experiencing the inhumanity of racial subordination, Moreton unrelentingly exposes and condemns the brutalising effects of the "Crown's acquisition of 1770, which made sovereign Aboriginal land *terra nullius* and Aboriginal peoples *vox nullius*" (Heiss and Minter 2). Moreton's combination of sharp analytical reasoning and affective rhetoric establish confidentially toned narrative sentences, which are characterized by rhetorical questions, direct address to the reader, satirical antitheses and repetitions, thereby thematizing a string of pressing socioeconomic issues pertaining to contemporary colour communities in Australia. "Silence can mean / death, / if you accept and obey / without question," Moreton warns her people in the poem with self-explanatory title "Poverty is silence" (47). Written in a direct manner, which gains poignancy by bleak metaphors and ironic subtleties of the statements, Moreton's poems not only disconcert and puzzle the more familiar representations of Aboriginal experience; by documenting the tyranny of oppression and abuse, arrogance of power, poverty and wilful destruction of Indigenous peoples, they also exact readers' confrontation with their own thoughts and require active participation through personal or collective responses.

Moreton's moral outrage is best evidenced in the poems that lay bare the widespread "racialised gendered violence that often informed the colonizing mission" (Brewster 2017, 252). Bringing her whole sensibility to bear upon her writing, Moreton piles detail on detail until the whole throbbing picture or experience emerges. In the poem "Womankindness," the lyrical persona strongly defies the

imposed status of a powerless victim and is adamant in her decision to never be “the misinformed, / menial, / meek, / dutiful courtesan again;” rather, she “will rejoice in her Womankindness” (2000, 51). This poem is also formally unique by commanding attention with the opening series of rhythmical repetitions of lines (as in oral delivery) to establish a sense of growing determination to repudiate the ongoing assumptions about “the static lines of demarcation between empowered and disempowered cultures” (Suleri 112). As Igor Maver has observed, contemporary Aboriginal poetry is characterised by “oral and colloquial elements of the Aboriginal tradition, [...] reconnect[ing] the contemporary Aboriginality with traditional aboriginal mythology and orality” (20):

She is trying to get out  
 She is trying to get out  
 She is trying to get out  
 This woman inside of me  
 This woman inside of me  
 This woman inside of me  
 She is ready to come out  
 She is ready to come out  
 This woman inside of me  
 This woman inside of me. (Moreton 2000, 50)

Moreton's poem “Mr. Slave Mentality” also seeks to reverse various forms of patriarchal domination. In this imaginary encounter between a black female speaker and a white man, the former makes an emphatic statement that nothing can make her be a white man's “brown sugar” again. As Brewster and Sue Kossew have suggested, the black woman's refusal “to be part of sexualised transaction” can be seen as an “escape from the colonial ‘slave’ economy in a history that has made Aboriginal women's bodies commodities and vehicles for sex and labour” (2019, 114):

Because money bought the slaves  
 that cut the sugar cane field,  
 and money killed the black men and women  
 who sweeten a nation's tea,  
 but money won't buy a little sugar  
 like me. (Moreton 2000, 6)

Like several other black Australian authors who have shed light on the erroneous and historically entrenched representations, Moreton seeks to establish Aboriginal women as “subjects in direct opposition to the identities inscribed to them in colonial ideology” (Attwell 3). The poem “Truganini or piccaninny” is a good example. In line with today's conviction that violence is not limited to the physical abuse but

also includes “the perceived threat’ of violence that emanates from and is embedded in power relationships” and “the negative characterisation of victim identity and politics” (Bessel 12-13), Moreton energetically opposes the enduring assumptions of Aboriginal women’s allegedly promiscuous behaviour and availability, formed on the basis of frontier stereotypes. Through a distinctly one-sided conversation, characterised by the blending of long and short unrhymed lines, the inbuilt phonetic imperative and the enunciative ‘I,’ the female persona asserts and refashions her black subjectivity by employing the rhetorical strategy of argumentation, indictment and advocacy. The poem’s passionate intensity culminates in the last line, composed of a string of monosyllabic imperatives. The overall effect of this strategy is that of self-regard and agency: “You have the ability to say / Woman, / and make it sound like / Whore. / I am not a whore. But / I / Am / A / Black / Woman. / So / Black, Nigger, Coon, Djin, Truganini or Piccaninny, / how I identify / Is! Up! To! Me!” (54).

A similarly assertive response to insidious gender estimations is provided in the poem “Objectify my sex,” uttering Moreton’s outright disapproval with men’s assumption about their unreserved entitlement to the Aboriginal woman’s body already in the poem’s title. The poem opens with the declaration “[b]ecause I place / my feet / on the street / does not mean that I am / available” (2004, 8) and proceeds in true Moreton fashion, compiling a catalogue of evidence to illustrate and reject the patterns of manhood that “vandalise” a black woman’s body. “This definition of manhood has failed me” (9), the speaker brazenly decries the idea of imperial ownership and the settler’s desire to maintain the brutal exploitative nature of relationship with Aboriginal women.

Moreton is among those women voices who critically reflect on both the frontier abuse of Aboriginal women and girls as well as their abuse by Aboriginal men, the so-called “black on black violence.”<sup>4</sup> Rooks notes that “colonised men take on the behaviours and attitudes of their male colonisers” and act in collusion to further oppress colonised women and enforce the structures of patriarchy (52). According to Alison Whittaker and Nicole Watson, the implications of past injustices are well seen in Australia’s legal system: not only has it contributed to the stereotyping of Aboriginal women, but it is still far from being race and gender neutral (183). In her 2019 article “Law Stories and Life Stories: Aboriginal Women, the Law and Australian Society,” Behrendt contends that colonial perceptions about Aboriginal women’s alleged sexual promiscuity have lowered the standards applied when determining whether allegations about sexual assaults are justified. The scholar draws attention to the 2006 gang rape of a ten-year-old Aboriginal girl and the court’s decision that

4 Moreton uses this phrase in the interview with Estelle Castro-Koshy to refer to the abuse that Aboriginal women experience by Aboriginal men. <https://www.austlit.edu.au/interviewLisaBellar>

"the girl involved was not forced but probably agreed to have sex with the men of the gang (qtd. in Rooks 51).

In the wake of such despicable attitudes towards Aboriginal women and girls, it is therefore necessary to expose how "law reproduces race and racism" and challenge dominant narratives that "normalise the status quo" (Whittaker and Watson 183). For Moreton, writing is the space that provides the site of resistance for those who have not been able to speak for themselves. She forcefully responds to colonial legacies, mobilizing her activist language to unsettle the manifestations of patriarchal domination and reconstruct meaningful models of kinship and community. In so doing, Moreton is likened to Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who has reminded us that there is "no cultural liberation without women's liberation" (Petersen 254). Her epistolary poem "Dear Siss" is among those that interrogate the oppression and sexual abuse Aboriginal women have been exposed to within their own community. Imbued with frankness and intimacy, the poem not only testifies to black women's exclusion from definitions of modernity, thus vividly illustrating the historian Patrick Wolfe's claim that "colonised populations continue to be racialised in specific ways that mark out and reproduce the unequal relationships into which Europeans have co-opted these populations" (67–68). It is also a powerful forward-looking statement of black women's resilience and struggle, anticipating change. As Moreton closes the poem, despite having "no job, no reason, no true life" and being "raped [...] by [their] own cultural brothers" (Moreton 2000, 10), they will challenge their status of doubly colonised and "make a difference for someone following—not just signatures in the sand to be erased effortlessly by an indifferent wind" (11).

In the poem "Pretty little china dolls," Moreton fervently denounces child sexual abuse, another instance of what Louis Nowra describes as "contradiction between women's rights and Indigenous rights" (64). A young female narrator lays bare the origin of acute anger and resentment she feels upon meeting an old male. Forced to silence and secrecy, the narrator had to endure the man's lust whenever he wished to find "pleasure in revealing his only right to manhood" (2000, 17). The girl's little dolls displayed "in a row [...] upon her dresser" were the only witnesses to this insidious act, so two decades later, "nobody knows / why she is so rude / to the old man / down the road" and "turns her head / as she passes by" (18).

A history of violent victimisation of black women and children is also affectively presented in Moreton's poem "Raggedy Anne." In the opening lines, the female lyrical subject reveals that, as a child, she was taught not to dissuade the "open arms" of "any male member of the family" or a "dear family friend"; rather, she was expected to let herself to his animalistic instincts and pretend to like his abhorrent 'play.'

The young  
vulnerable female  
should go forth and be bounced  
upon his strategically positioned,  
child entertaining,  
child penetrating  
knee  
and pretend to like it. (Moreton 2000, 61)

The narrative tone suddenly takes an unexpected turn, juxtaposing “no” and “yes,” “I will” and “I won’t,” “I do” and “I don’t,” each word or phrase foregrounded on a single line to make the indictment of men’s lustful hanger and disgusting behaviour even more emphatic: “I was never heard, / for being a child meant having no rights to choose, / to say / Yes / I will / or / No / I won’t / or / Yes / I do / or / No / I don’t” (62–63). The poem closes with the speaker’s lament that, unlike a man, who can quickly “pay homage to his conscience” and “redeem his innocence,” a woman is “sentenced to a lifetime of never being able to forget / for his Crime” (64).

Without quoting from other poems, it can be seen that Moreton relies heavily on her Aboriginality in terms of both reconnecting with traditional texture, diction and rhythm, and responding to the colonial legacies. Articulating discourses of “conscious antagonists,” as Edward Said refers to those who, “compelled by the system to play subordinate or imprisoning roles within it” react by “disrupting” it (335), her verse serves as a counter-reading of Australian historical and cultural memory. In particular, it explores, impacts and constitutes Aboriginal women’s struggle to “regain a self-determined, political, cultural and personal identity” (Rooks 49).

## BELLEAR’S CONDEMNATION OF RACIALISED AND GENDERED VIOLENCE

The dynamics that have kept Aboriginal women in servitude and were accountable for the enduring stereotypes are also strongly contested by Lisa Bellear, a Goernpul woman of the Noonuccal people of Stradbroke Island. As introduced by Anita Heiss and Peter Minter, Bellear was not only a “notably political poet” but also a photographer, academic and social commentator actively engaged with Indigenous affairs (179). By her death in 2006, she had published the poetry collection *Dreaming in Urban Areas* (1996) and co-authored the theatrical work *The Dirty Mile: A History of Indigenous Fitzroy* (2006). Posthumously, the collection *Aboriginal Country* (2018) was published, edited by Jen Jewel Brown and described by the reviewer Estelle Castro-Koshy as “an ambassador of change.” Bellear’s poems

have been widely published in journals and included in several anthologies, such as Heiss and Minter's *Anthology of Australian Aboriginal Literature*, Nicholas Jose's *Macquarie Pen Anthology of Australian Literature* (2009) and Louise Craig's *Perseverance Poets' Collection 1991–1992*.

A number of Bellear's poems are concerned with the topic of how the colonial rhetoric continues to preclude the productive cross-cultural relationality. One of them is "Poor Pretty Polly," which affectively discloses how the colonial notions of Aboriginal women as "easy sexual sport" (Behrendt 2005, 250) continue to impact the assumptions about their sexual promiscuity. The speaker of the poem relates how the black girl who is found dead at the edge of the road is denied any sense of gravity or significance by callous bystanders. Rather, and neglecting the history of abuse alluded to in the second stanza ("Curse the mother she never knew / curse the whiteman who raped her"), they attribute the girl's death to her allegedly intense sensuality. The poem is a strong condemnation of the practice of blaming Aboriginal women for sexual activity into which they were forced:

Poor poor pretty Polly, lies silent  
in an inner suburban gutter.  
"What a sweetie," "such a shame,"  
"so pretty and now she's dead."  
Some say of a broken heart, others  
snigger "she gave too much." (Bellear 2018, 30)

Another perennial issue discussed in Bellear's poems is the multi-generational and societal impact of government legislation that led to the forced removal of more than a hundred thousand children from their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families between 1885 and 1970. The issue of Stolen Generation and the "maternal trope" – the figure of the suffering mother and child (Brewster and Kosssew 160), is movingly contextualised in the poem "Ruby was never seen again," which reads as an embittered voicing of trauma and the feeling of loss experienced by a mother, when her child was stolen from her after "three long years of hiding from the tentacles of institutionalised racism" (2018, 29). Bellear makes visible not only the government violence, but also how that violence was enacted at different levels of society, by "the bullyman, welfare, local school-teacher-informant," who "would not relent till Ruby was removed" (2018, 29). The closing lines, in which the mother wonders "what their life could've been / like without this government sanctioned cruelty" (29), can be read as an interruption in traditional interpretations of colonial power, poignantly evoking a feeling of guilt and remorse in non-Indigenous readers and creating a space for what Sara Suleri calls the "intimacy" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (113).

By giving voice to the silenced, the kidnapped and the stolen, Bellear's poetry performs a powerful protest against the colonisers' practice of not only taking someone else's land by force but also imposing the system that provides them with "unearned privilege and conferred dominance" (Dyer 9). In Brewster's words, Bellear makes whiteness visible to white people by defamiliarizing it (2007, 210). However, she does not speak only on behalf of other women who were compelled to silence or found their stories of violence too shameful to reveal; several Bellear's poems spring from her own acutely felt personal experiences of sexual abuse by her adoptive white father. Such is the poem "A Suitcase Full of Mould," in which the persona reveals how desperately she is trying to forget what happened to her after being separated from her Indigenous relatives: "Forget forget forget / as much as I try / I cannot" (2018, 47). The poem is centrally about the issue of breaking the enforced silence surrounding the sexual abuse.<sup>5</sup> Unlike in essays, in which Bellear writes about her trauma of being sexually and psychologically abused in expository language, in the poem, the abuse is only obliquely hinted at. Rather than with graphic rendition of abuse, intensive readers' attention is assured with intentional repetitions, such as gemination ("forget, forget, forget") or anaphora:

Imagine a bonding process of  
23 years of lies,  
Of 23 years of guilt  
Of being estranged  
Of trying to let go ...  
Of wanting to but ... (Bellear 2018, 47)

The strategy of deploying a more subtle rhetoric allows Bellear to illuminate the affective impact of abuse, that is, the ways in which trauma "becomes sedimented psychically and bodily" (Brewster and Kossew 104).

## OBJECTING TO THE NOTION OF UNIVERSAL FEMINISM

In the poem "They said I could be a feminist," Leane reminds us that the price of the notion of universal feminism is often paid by Indigenous women and those belonging to marginalised communities. Similarly, Bellear was cognisant of the dangers inherent in interpreting women as a "singular monolithic subject" (Mohanthy 262), the misconception apparent in some recent Western feminist discourses. The absurdity of viewing Indigenous woman's experience in the white

5 Bellear also writes about the importance of breaking silence in her essay "Healing Through Poetry."

context of the feminist movement is particularly poignantly addressed in Belleair's poem "Women's liberation." Written as a multi-voiced monologue, the poem satirises the feminist movement that is predominately preoccupied with white middle-class concerns and too easily ignores historically specific material reality and the heterogeneity of women's goals and interests. From the very beginning of the poem, the notion of a unified female subject is treated with sharp irony and ridicule:

Talk to me about the feminist movement,  
The gubba middle class  
Hetero sexual revolution  
Way back in the seventies  
When men wore tweed jackets with  
Leather elbows, and the women, well  
I don't remember or maybe I just don't care  
Or can't relate. (Belleair 1996, 6)

The opening Indigenous woman's voice, unrelentingly mocking white women's concerns that seem particularly trivial in the face of widely differing anxieties and worries of black women, constantly switches with a white woman's voice to produce a blending of subjectivity. The white woman's voice is associated with various brand names and activities that testify to her economic advantage, obtained through the racialised nature of social policy in Australia. Preoccupied with her own needs, the white woman has no knowledge about the socio-political urgencies of her black counterparts and pays scant regard to the social structures that prevent them from having access to privileges and opportunities:

Yes, I'm for the women's movement  
I want to be free and wear dunlop tennis shoes.  
And indigenous women, well surely, the liberation  
of white women includes all women regardless ...  
It doesn't, well that's not for me to deal with." ((Belleair 1996, 7)

The confession, "I don't even know if I'm capable / of understanding / Aborigines in Victoria? / Aboriginal women, here, I've never seen one" (7), clearly contrasts white women's perception of Indigenous women with the way how they represent and understand themselves. The poem's strategy with a shifting subject position of the speaker additionally foregrounds the view about the fundamental complexities that inform the lives of women of different races, classes and cultures, and challenges the feminist discourse that elides this distinction. Belleair's representation of the feminist movement as predominately focused on white middle-class

concerns is in line with the critique of whiteness in Western feminist discourse in Moreton-Robinson's ground-breaking study *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* (2000), which reads:

What is evident from the relations between white feminists and Indigenous women is that our respective subject positions speak out of different cultures, epistemologies, experiences, histories and material conditions which separate our politics and analyses.  
[...] White women come to feminism which already formed subjectivities linked to different histories, privileges, power and oppression. They are socially situated subjects who are located in power relations where whiteness remains invisible, natural, normal and unmarked. (Moreton-Robinson 182–183)

In several other poems, Bellel illustrates the fact that whiteness dominates from the position of power and privilege as an invisible norm and unchallenged practice, whereas black people continue to be relegated to the position of 'Other.' In the poem "Taxi," Bellel writes, "Splashed by a passing cab, and another and another / there's rules you see; / don't stop for / black women, accelerate / past black men" / [...] the poor people of colour / are at the mercy of even taxi drivers" (1996, 70). However, as a whole, Bellel's poetic world is not imbued with pessimism. Particularly the poems "Woman of the Dreaming" and "Chops n' Things" end on an optimistic tone, pointing to the nurturing bond between Aboriginal women and their ancestors as the force that can reinscribe traditional notions of Aboriginal culture and identity. The closing lines in the former read,

Woman of the dreaming  
find your soul  
and peace and love and  
connect with our ancestors  
and our land  
will begin to smile again (Bellel 1996, 11),

whereas "Chops n' Things" closes with the imperative: "Keep on dreaming / keep on believing" (1996, 8). Clearly, in both poems, the central emphasis is on the spiritual, transgenerational role of Aboriginal women: they are seen as "gatherers and keepers" of the country's histories and knowledge (Leane 2017, 245), the transmitters of the haunting stories of genocidal horror and the advocates of change.

Harkin comments that Indigenous Australians “write to create, to survive and to revolutionise; [they] write to haunt and [they] ache because [they] refuse to leave the past alone” (quoted in Kilner and Minter 2014, n. p.). This observation surely applies to Bellear and her poetic oeuvre. Like many other forms of Indigenous aesthetics in (post)colonial Australia, Bellear’s poetry represents what Leane refers to as a “rite of passage back into [Indigenous] history and country” (2017, 250), reporting on and deconstructing the enduring impact of frontier disenfranchisement. Inspiring, lucid and confronting, Bellear’s poetry is a haunting account of colonial violence against Aboriginal people and Aboriginal women, in particular, and a testimony to their physical and mental strength.

## CONCLUSION

Several postcolonial theorists have drawn attention to the historical construction of a Eurocentric world – that is, to the way that Europe has established its dominance through historical narrativity. In their view, the postcolonial task is not only to “contest the message of history” as embedded in a single representation of the past, but also to engage the medium of narrativity itself to re-write the rhetoric that has established European cultures as superior and all others as necessarily inferior (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 356). This task has been undertaken by many Indigenous Australian authors; by intervening in the authoritative rhetoric of those for whom history was an instrument of control of subject peoples, they continue to “empower themselves and take control of the past, present and future,” as Native American playwright William S. Yellow Robe has noted for his people (qtd. in Pulitano 19).

Focused on the poetry of Moreton and Bellear, the article has demonstrated that Aboriginal women’s poetry represents an important site for the renegotiation of asymmetrical power relations in Australia. Deploying the language of an eyewitness quality and the style that assures the tonal and visual acuity of writing, this poetry questions the foundations of white supremacy and confronts the racialised and patriarchal notions of gender. In their effort to reinscribe Aboriginal women’s subjectivity and sexuality, Aboriginal women poets are supported by their male counterparts as well as many progressive Australian settlers, who “examine their own complicity in maintaining power and privilege” (Slater 2019, xiv). Without embracing the myth of universality of the human condition, that is, ignoring the multiplicity of cultural realities and material specificities of postcolonial societies, it is probably safe to claim that Aboriginal women’s poetry explores themes of wider relatability and speak to the myriad of women around the world who are still yearning to be heard and recognised.

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## Redefiniranje ženske subjektivitete v avstralski staroselski poeziji

Članek se ukvarja s poezijo Romaine Moreton in Lise Bellear. Osredinjen na pesmi, ki razkrivajo nasilje nad aboriginskimi ženskami in deklicami, raziskuje, kako njuna naracija avstralskega zgodovinskega in kulturnega spomina destabilizira kontinuum kolonialne strukture moči in identitetnih konstruktov, ki so nastali na osnovi rasističnega in misoginističnega kolonialnega etosa.

**Ključne besede:** avstralska staroselska poezija protesta, Romaine Moreton, Lisa Bellear, evropocentrizem, rasno in spolno zaznamovano nasilje



# A Structuralist Appreciation of Angela Carter's "The Snow Child" Glimpsed through a Feminist Awareness

*Emre Say*

## Abstract

Structuralism can be defined as a literary critical theory aiming at the exploration, excavation and/or establishment of structural networks in a way as to relate the individual literary work or elements in a literary work to the assumably 'engulfing' system or state of existence which that particular literary work is considered to emanate from. Originating in prominent Swiss linguist Saussure's studies, structuralism tends to treat a literary text as language and endeavours to uncover the whole 'system' or at least available elements of the system embedded in that work. Accordingly, the following article handles the deciphering of structuralist streaks in Angela Carter's short story "The Snow Child" which can be deemed as a defiance of sexist attitude infusing fairy tale genre. In this respect, in order to come up with a thoroughly structuralist evaluation of "The Snow Child"; similarities, binary oppositions, symbols as well as conventional codes of expectations displayed in the story bear great significance since their being exposed to an analytical eye enables the elucidation of underlying structure the story both embodies and at the same time challenges.

**Keywords:** Structuralism, System, Saussure, Angela Carter, Fairy Tale, Patriarchy

## INTRODUCTION

Predicated on Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's principal assertion residing in the assumption that there exists a relationship between *la langue*, which literally means language and can be maintained to correspond to linguistic system in a wider sense, and *la parole*, which means individual word, structuralists contend that "codes, signs, and rules govern all human social and cultural practices, including communication whether that communication is the language of fashion, sports, education, friendships, or literature" (Bressler 109). In a way as to confirm and emphasize the essential, distinctive characteristic of structuralism which is postulated to be a consistent connection between language as a prevailing linguistic structure and single words or expressions by Bressler in *Literary Criticism*, in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* the word *relationship* is posited as a most appropriate expression to encapsulate the primary principle which structuralism consists in: "Reducing the highly complex idea to a phrase, we would say that structuralism is the study of relationships" (Guerin 282).

The indispensable system of relationship mentioned in the paragraph above that is presumed to govern the interaction between language and individual words - which can be adjudged to assume the role of a social institution particularly considered with respect to its pertinent discursive and rhetorical consequences extending to the dimension of exerting influence on the framing of social relationships outlining civic life, politics, and codes of law - can accordingly be projected on the practice of literary criticism primarily with a view to exploring the existent relationship between a system of literature and individual works of literature. Grounded on the assumption that there exists a prevalent network of conventions undetachably entrenched in this substantial structure of literature that presides over the reader's perception and interpretation of a literary work in an arguably coercive manner, structuralists contend that the reader who is closely acquainted with this system of conventions is hence necessarily conditioned to elaborate on the assessment of literary works by tracing to figure out indications and meanings manifested or communicated through this set of conventions. As can be deduced from this assertion underscoring the system and justifying the accuracy of a critical scrutiny regarding a literary text in relation to its consistency with that almost rigid set of conventions, structuralism aims to mould literary criticism into a strict pattern that exhibits a steadfast, restrictive commitment to review a literary work with respect to the degree of its comparability with the system in a way as to disregard peculiar characteristics of a literary work and thus trample on its uniqueness. Namely, structuralists mainly equate the structure of literature with that of linguistics and thereby incorporate a poignant flavour of objective, scientific discipline into literary criticism that

adduces to prioritize objectivity over subjectivity as well as the system over an individual work:

Since an individual work can express only those values and beliefs of the system of which it is a part, structuralists emphasize the system (langue) whereby texts relate to each other, not an examination of an isolated text (parole). They believe that a study of the system of rules that govern literary interpretation becomes the critic's primary task.

(Bressler 109)

Likewise, in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, where Robert Scholes's explication of structuralism in his book *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* is referenced, structuralism's 'ossified' commitment to the austere forged system of conventions is emphasized: "In such a system, 'Every literary unit from the individual sentence to the whole order of words can be seen in relation to the concept of system,' and the study of works, genres, and the whole of literature can be made in this structural and relational way" (Guerin 286).

As to the practical application of structuralism to literary criticism, structuralists aim to attain a sharply-chiselled categorization of characters and events highlighted by certain conventions. In pursuit of meanings implied and/or communicated in a literary work, structuralists conduct a close reading of the text so as to enable them to concentrate their attention on the 'excavation' for bringing into light discernible similar elements and stark binary oppositions that await to be grubbed out. Besides, structuralists focus on the disclosure of accustomed symbolic ciphers as well as conventional codes of expectations which are supposed to enable the critic to construct a firm relationship between an individual work and the commanding, engulfing system of language.

## **"THE SNOW CHILD": THE 'PATRO'-STRUCTURALIST ONTOLOGY OF THE STORY**

Angela Carter's short story "The Snow Child", which can be reckoned as a reversal of and challenge to the fairy tale genre mainly on account of its frustrating conclusion marked by a revolting incident of corpse rape, provides a suitable example for the application of structuralist approach as it features a considerable number of parallelisms, binary oppositions, symbols, and conventional codes of expectations that allow the critic or reader to carry out a structuralist examination of the text.

To commence with the exploration of similarities unfolded in "The Snow Child"; of the three major characters depicted in the story involving the Count, the Countess, and the Snow Child; parallelisms between the Countess and the

Snow Child as well as the Countess and the Count can be drawn. As to the similarities between the Countess and the Snow Child, the chief common striking feature shared by them is their gender: Both are female. Relatedly, in congruity with accustomed gender role patterns imposed by patriarchal social codes, both the Countess and the Snow Child are delineated in a submissive position to the Count in their relationship with him who represents oppressive patriarchal authority in the story. No matter how subservient a position the Snow Child is portrayed in in her relation with the Countess - who can be argued to stand for terrible mother archetype -, the compliant attitude of the Countess and the Snow Child in their conduct with the Count is undeniable. Another striking similarity which can be detected by an attentive eye and is indicative and further confirmative of patriarchal domination permeating the story consists in that they become naked and then get dressed up in the course of plot - particularly should the Snow Child be taken into consideration as she comes into existence stark-naked, whereas, the Countess's clothes slip away from her body gradually - in a way as to serve to the pleasure of piercing-penetrating heterosexual male gaze. As to the main likeness worth mentioning between the Count and the Countess, it can firmly be asserted that they are depicted in a domineering position to the obsequious Snow Child - as most evidently illustrated at the close of the story when the Count gruesomely rapes the Snow Child's corpse -, accompanied by a pungent notion of superciliousness as clearly exemplified in scornful commands imposed by the Countess on the Snow Child throughout the story which eventually lead up to her miserable, heartrending death.

Binary oppositions broached in the story are even easier traceable than similarities discussed in the paragraph above since they are predicated on a strictly drawn, boldly etched hierarchical-patriarchal order topped by the Count and vertically downwards followed by the Countess and the Snow Child respectively. The Count who can be identified with ruthless, austere, oppressive father image; the Countess who can be associated with infertile, covetous, terrible mother figure belligerently envious of the attractive, young girl as epitomized in the depiction of Snow White's stepmother; and the Snow Child who can be postulated to roughly correspond to the pitiable, enviable, procreant young-girl-type shimmering with exquisite beauty and stereotypically doomed to be marred by her merciless stepmother despite the physical contradiction engendered by her vampirella-like appearance as outlined through her chalk-white complexion, cherry-red lips, and raven-black hair; can be pitted against one another based on sexual, dispositional, and hierarchically irreconcilable discrepancies. To begin with the comparison of the Count to the Countess, the Count as an austere, domineering husband figure is endowed with callous, masculine 'potence' since he is privileged with the exertion of his unquestionable authority over the Countess as demonstrated in

the Count's refusal of sinisterly-schemed, tricky tasks the Countess demands the Snow Child to carry out in order to discard her. In her relation to the Count, the Countess is portrayed to have internalized the assumption of a passive, submissive role as enforced by patriarchal society on the female. As to their attitudes towards the Snow Child, the Count and the Countess differ from each other absolutely. The Count displays a possessive, rather than protective, attitude towards the Snow Child. Namely, his ostentatiously protective attitude observable in his resolute objection to the tasks imposed on the Snow Child by his wife indeed pinpoints his domineering, unfavourably possessive conduct towards the Snow Child rather than being a reliable manifestation of his sensitivity and affirmative protectiveness that should not exceed to the excess of exerting domination. As can be deduced from this assertion, the Count treats the Snow Child as an object or disposable, governable commodity at his disposal. In this respect, one can contend that binary opposition highlighting the relationship between the Count and the Snow Child is self-evident since their relationship is characterized by active domination on the part of the Count and the passive submission on the part of the Snow Child. On the other hand, the Countess assumes rather a hostile attitude towards the Snow Child since she considers her a rival who is gifted with the capability of alluring the Count. In this respect, the Countess fiercely envies her and endeavours to eliminate her by devising sinister schemes which eventually lead to the Snow Child's death. She gives oppressive orders to the Snow Child and expects her to execute them servilely. Once again, it can be maintained that the binary opposition between the Countess and the Snow Child is accentuated through the display of active dominance-passive submission balance(!) on the part of the Countess and the Snow Child respectively as previously mentioned to highlight the essence of relationship between the Count and the Snow Child.

In "The Snow Child" the elaboration of symbolism mainly revolves around colour symbolism since white, black, and red assert themselves as highly considerable symbols imbued with convincing meanings and evocations. In the story the white colour can most appropriately be identified with the Snow Child both in physical and spiritual terms since white is the colour of the Snow Child's complexion which is indicative of her purity and innocence. Nonetheless, considered with reference to its unfavourable connotations, white can also be adjudged to stand for death as it adumbrates the Snow Child's death at the end of the story. Apart from this, white is illustrated as the most preponderant colour of the setting - i.e. engulfing winter atmosphere and snow-coating dying the environment in sheer white - which is indicative of spiritual sterility and desert-like barrenness. This sense of emptiness or hollowness can a little far-fetchedly be associated with lack of fertility on the part of the Countess and portending death on the part of the Snow Child, as well. The black colour, the stark opposite of white, customarily

stands for evil, affliction, misfortune, destruction, and death. Just as white can persuasively be identified with the Snow Child, black can readily be associated with the Countess due to the fact that her furcoat, boots, and horse are made conspicuous through their dazzlingly foreboding blackness which can be assessed as an evident manifestation of the Countess's malevolence. The Snow Child's hair, another blatantly black-dyed object deployed in the story, can be reckoned as a token of lurking affliction awaiting her. Besides, the raven which is an innately coal-black animal can be deemed as a grim harbinger of misfortune, destruction, and death awaiting the Snow Child. In a way as to confirm this interpretation regarding the symbolical connotation of the raven, it is worth mentioning that at the end of the story one of the three remnants of the Snow Child's rapidly vanishing corpse which puzzlingly wanes into a state of utter physical annihilation is a raven feather in addition to a red rose and a bloodstain coagulated on the snowy ground. In this respect, raven's feather can be treated as an ominous token of fatal ill-luck that has eventually doomed her to death as subtly foreshadowed through her black hair identical to the raven's feather. Red looms as another noticeable colour in the story as it appears in the Snow Child's lips as well as the clotted bloodstain and the rose which are the remnants of the Snow Child's faded existence. The Snow Child's red lips which are an incarnation of the Count's one of three wishes about the physical qualities of the Snow Child who miraculously comes into existence out of nowhere, can be considered an obvious representation of passion and lechery on the part of the Count as well as enticing female beauty on the part of the Snow Child. Congealed bloodstain as a remnant of the Snow Child's corpse that dumbfoundingly dissolves into a state of non-existence swiftly after being exposed to the Count's heinous rape following her death can be regarded as an indication of violence exerted on her as well as chastity violated through rape. As to the red rose which is another remnant of the deplorable girl, one can comment that it marks out her naivety and particularly fragility that is predestined to wither away upon blossoming in such a 'snowy' landscape just like the freshly budding roses striving to pop up their heads in the snow-coated bush which turns out to be the girl's deathbed. Besides, it would be conjecturable to regard the rose as a broken-heart-type of unreturned affection, impudently infringed dignity, persistent innocence, and solemn grief.

As to the codes of expectations, another topic that should be taken into consideration while conducting a structuralist analysis of a literary text, a reversal of conventions peculiar to the fairy tale genre can distinctly be observed in "The Snow Child". To begin with the title, Carter's choice of "The Snow Child" as the title of her story can be reckoned as an obvious attempt to make a reference to "The Snow White", which counts among the foremost canonical examples of the fairy tale genre. Thus, from a structuralist point of view, a connection is established

between the individual work that stands for *la parole* and the encompassing heritage of literary works that represents *la langue*, i.e. the system, which is the primary concern of structuralist criticism. The story commences with a well-worn pattern of making three wishes as the Count concisely summarizes the main physical qualities of his desired daughter/girl in the three wishes he articulates in a manner appertaining to fairy tales. Another convention employed by Carter is the emphasis placed on the blatant dichotomy between the *innocent girl* and *femme fatale* archetypes through the characterization of the Snow Child and the Countess respectively as discussed earlier in relation to binary oppositions. However, from this point onwards, Carter assumes a perceptibly dissident tone as the story begins to resonate with a praiseworthy feminist sensitivity divulging the inherently sexist frame of mind on which fairy tales rest indeed through the depiction of the Count as a peculiar representative of abusive, oppressive, possessive patriarchal stance armed with a menacing phallus. Carter accentuates the overwhelming, 'suffocating' authority exerted by patriarchally-conditioned, 'brawling' man on the patriarchally-conditioned, submissive, 'mewing' woman who is expected to internalize subservience to men by delineating desire, potency, and possession as the basic governing instincts with respect to relations between men and women. Thereby, she shakes the attentive reader back to reality and demystifies the ostensibly idealized gender relationships in fairy tales at the end of which all distressing conflicts appear to be reconciled and villains seem to be inflicted with due punishment in a pleasing manner which indeed amounts to nothing except a gaudy display of sheer superficiality in a way as to underscore the culpability of fairy tales. In "The Snow White" the process of demystification is attained through the reversal of certain, crucial conventions peculiar to fairy tales among which poetic justice can be acknowledged as by far the most significant one. The story is concluded with an exceedingly, though necessarily, exacerbated dreary ending - in order to underline the righteously feminist concern of the author - in which not even a single trace of poetic justice is traceable as the Count is portrayed to rape the Snow Child's corpse in a way as to shed light on the boundless brutality and perplexing perversity of male heterosexuality which can be decreed as the most palpably rotten, brazenly phallic envoy of the male's oppression of the female in a reactionary, sexist society conditioned by patriarchy. Besides, the Countess, who conventionally corresponds to the terrible mother figure - depicted as a stock character in almost each and every fairy tale in a way as to evidence the incorrigibly gender-biased notion enveloping fairy tales -, manages to shun punishment which again illustrates the complete lack of poetic justice in the story. Bitter cruelty and pungent indifference that mark the ending of the story 'bite' the reader just like the rose that pricks the Snow Child and triggers off her abrupt death. In addition to this mainstream of reasoning basically concentrating on the portrayal

of callous sexist attitudes and the lack of poetic justice imparting a poignant sense of injustice around which the reversal of conventions - namely, conventions which artificially mystify and sanctify fairy tales with a hardly penetrable, tawdry shield of innocence - are gathered, deficiency of a happy marriage solidly resting on mutual sensitivity and understanding neither at the beginning nor at the end of the story can be noted as an auxiliary manifestation pinpointing the reversal of fairy tale conventions in "The Snow Child". To put in a nutshell, in the story codes of expectations appertaining to fairy tales, particularly considered with respect to poetic justice's absence and overwhelming display of preponderant violence, are shattered into splinters in order to achieve demystification and hence illuminate the innately and irreversibly sexist stance covertly communicated by dint of ostensibly 'innocent'(!) aura fairy tales are 'supposed' to be suffused with.

## CONCLUSION

Concludingly, as is intended to be discussed and illustrated in this article through a structuralist scrutiny of Angela Carter's laudably nonconforming short story "The Snow Child" presenting a righteously strong criticism of sexism indoctrinated through coaxed conventions of 'innocent' fairy tale genre - following a theoretical introduction regarding structuralism -, in order to be able to render a satisfying application of structuralism to literary criticism, the critic or reader needs to focus on and diligently grub out for similarities and binary oppositions embedded in a text that await to be disclosed. Moreover, other crucial subjects that the structuralist critic needs to focus on can concisely be summarized as symbolism, i.e. the handling of symbols, and the treatment of codes of expectations which assume an indispensably essential role in the revelation of relationship between an individual literary work and the encompassing system or structure of literature as epitomized in the relationship between *la parole*, which means an individual word or expression, and *la langue*, which corresponds to the inclusive linguistic system in which single words and expressions find their meanings.

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## Strukturalistična interpretacija kratke zgodbe "Snežni otrok" Angele Carter z vidika feminizma

Strukturalizem lahko definiramo kot literarno kritiško teorijo, ki je usmerjena v raziskavo strukturnih povezav na način, ki bi posamezno literarno delo ali njegove elemente povezal s sistemom ali stanje iz katerega naj bi le-ta izviral. Kratka zgodba Angele Carter je obravnavana v omenjenem smislu.

**Ključne besede:** strukturalizem, sistem, Saussure, Angela Carter, pravljica, patriarhalnost



# Language Maps from Africa to Europe: Multilingualism, Colonialism and New Approaches to Geographical Linguistics

*Naeema Al Hosani*

## Abstract

Language maps, which reflect linguistic pluralism, multilingualism and the spread of languages across countries and empires were part of an evolving human history. Historically, language came under the impact of geography, political conflicts and colonization. Due to these factors, languages penetrate borders or ended up in isolation or even in extinction. In this context, the paper investigates selected language maps of many African, Asian, European and South American countries in order to underline the connections between language, politics, immigration, war and other related elements. The paper argues that current language maps in some geographical regions are similar to the political maps of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because colonial languages continued to exist in these countries even after the departure of the colonizers. Further, the paper explores the spread of a variety of languages and their penetration in some countries, which constituted a great part of the European Union, in order to examine the impact of geo-politics on the changing status of language maps in Europe.

**Keywords:** language maps, geography, multilingualism, colonization, hybridity, environment, culture

## INTRODUCTION

The emergence of language was a miracle by all standards, and its development in the form of many vernaculars and dialects was conclusive evidence of human development and creativity. The human race is divided into more than five thousand groups, each of which speaks a different language and does not understand any of the languages of the others except through learning and practice. Abram de Swaan argues that “the human species is divided into more than five thousand groups each of which speaks a different language and does not understand any of the others. With this multitude of languages, humankind has brought upon itself a great confusion of tongues” (1) Due to the abundance of languages, humanity has brought upon itself a great deal of linguistic confusion and division. However, the human race as a whole remained interconnected, since this linguistic division was transcended by those who speak more than one language. Thereupon, bilingual groups ensured communication between the communities speaking different languages.

The links of multilingualism between language groups did not appear randomly, but on the contrary, they forged a powerful, effective and amazing network of communication linking directly or indirectly between the six billion people of the Earth. The current global system of language constitutes an innovative model of links between language groups at a time when it is increasingly believed that all living languages belong to a common ancestry and that they likely evolved in the wake of the evolutionary path of present-day humans from a common genetic line during about one hundred and twenty thousand years.

At the present time, and in light of the progress of genetic studies, comparative linguistics and ancient archeology, a successive and growing body of evidence has emerged that proves this common origin of languages. Even if evidence proves one day that the human race and its languages came from multiple and scattered origins, there is no doubt that human groups at present constitute a single interdependent whole, and that their languages together constitute an interlocking group that constitutes one dimension of the world order at the present time. Currently, there are five or six thousand languages spoken on the earth, and the number cannot be checked to the desired degree, as languages are sometimes not arithmetic. Obviously, languages are like clouds and it is not easy for anyone to tell where one cloud begins and where another ends, although most clouds, like most languages, are clearly distinguished through the clear spaces between each other.

The best way to visualize the evolution of universal language groups is through a series of global language maps.<sup>1</sup> It is quite possible in the prehistoric stages that

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1 Apparently, maps most likely utilize polygons to show the approximate boundaries of the language groups.

from time to time, during the spread of human species across different continents that small groups of people separated from the main group, crossed mountains and seas to settle finally in remote areas far from any neighboring population. There, in their isolation, and in the absence of any written texts, their languages changed relatively quickly, reaching the stage of obscurity in relation to their original languages over a considerable period that took many years and tens of generations. Then the confrontations between these human groups and the frictions between the emerging languages resulted in new linguistic fusions.

Accordingly, an imaginary map of the distribution of prehistoric languages may provide linguistic areas in the form of small circles that soon expanded and elongated in light of the spread and migration of linguistic groups across the new lands, extending to their maximum limits. Later it may happen that a separate circle heralded the emergence of a new language in different locations. Moreover, there is absolutely no contradiction between the hypothesis of the development of all languages from one absolute origin and the existence of innumerable languages which are completely incomprehensible to each other, since human species have been scattered across all continents.

There is no doubt that early distribution of human languages was much more fragmented than in the current global language system.<sup>2</sup> Despite this fragmentation, it is possible to argue that in early times great numbers of people in adjacent areas traded and intermarried among themselves, and some learned the languages of the neighboring communities. These language circles, no matter how small, should have produced an intertwining of the most densely populated areas. Wherever people settled and began cultivating the land, it was inevitable that they developed language/s of communication shared by the population of the adjacent villages. These early tongues which encircled the neighboring regions were used as connecting languages reflecting the logical coherence of the distribution of languages at ancient times.

## LANGUAGE MAPS: A HISTORICAL APPROACH

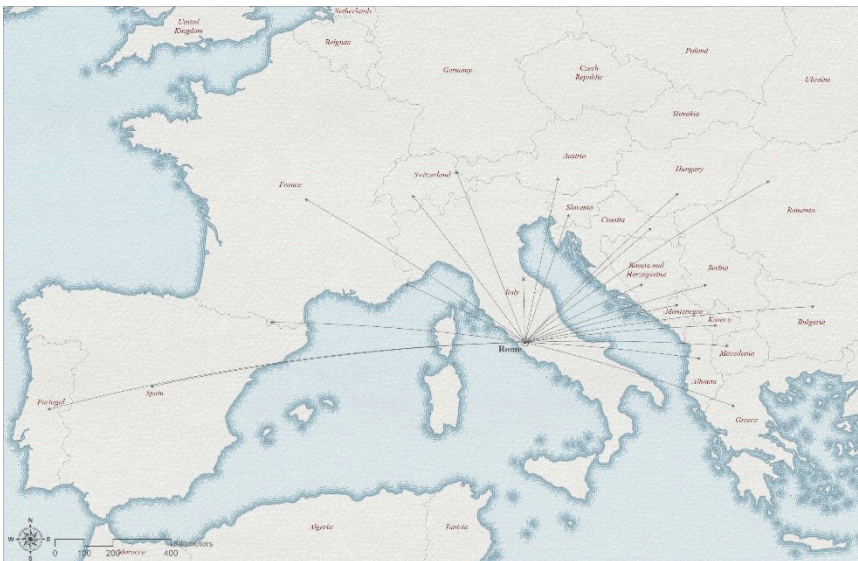
There was not much knowledge about the emergence of languages in early times. However, conquering groups and invading armies imposed their languages and religions in the areas they captured. In other words, the languages of the conquerors were used as means of subjugation and trade. Therefore, the languages of the conquerors emerged as a means of communication imposed upon the conquered societies. Bilingual speakers who simultaneously spoke the peripheral/submerged

2 See: Swaan de Abram. *Words of the World: The Global Language System*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001.

languages of the defeated communities and the wide-spreading language/s of the victors played an important role as facilitators in the transfer of languages on both sides. Further, the languages of the invaders were used to proliferate Christianity and force their religion/s on the colonized peoples in different parts of the world, particularly in Africa.

Unequivocally, it was difficult to draw maps for the language communities in early ages. Nevertheless, language maps became more apparent after the emergence of great world empires, which existed in the Western Hemisphere of the globe such as the Roman empire. At the very least, it can be argued that there were three imperial languages that spread worldwide in ancient times and followed three different trajectories. The first of these languages according to George Coulter, was Latin, which originated in Rome and spread on all the European coasts of the Mediterranean covering the southern half of Europe, while its impact diminished as it headed north towards German and the Celtic lands (76) as indicated in (figure1) below. Latin was a spoken and written language used in carrying out diplomatic missions and in the dissemination of new knowledge and technology throughout the territories conquered by the Roman empire at that time. With the passage of time the Latin language became a tool for Christian expansion around the world. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Latin continued to be used for more than fifteen centuries as the central European language.

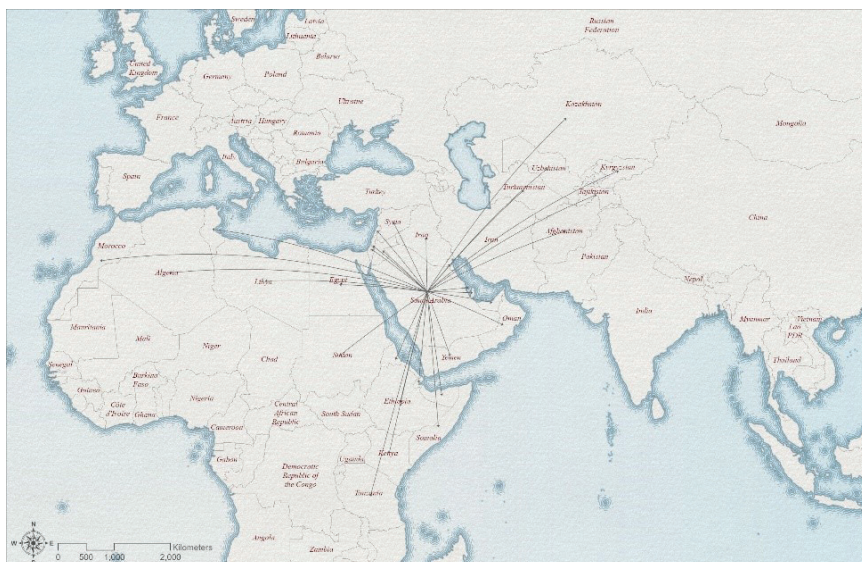
Figure 1



Despite the large number of language groups within the Christian European landscape, Latin came under the control of a small group of individuals, usually men of the priesthood, who learned it as the language of the Church and were able to communicate with all their counterparts throughout the European continent. They acted as translators and mediators in connecting their communities to the continental network. Latin did not encounter any significant competition as a language of education and long-ranging communication until the emergence of the Renaissance, when the communication network was greatly weakened, due to the decrease in the number of speakers who mastered the language. However, Latin remained in use with regard to scientific studies, law and religion until the nineteenth century. Hence, Europe through Latin, its first central language, had already established a coherent, even if loose, linguistic system for more than two thousand years. The language map of this era highlighted the central presence of the Latin language, which extended from Rome with lines that get lighter and less dense as the language permeated the continent.

Apart from Latin, Chinese, according to Roger Woodard, was the second central language in that era. Chinese adopted a pre-classical version of the Han language as a long-ranging communication tongue, spoken and written by clergymen and scholars across the Chinese territories. Han was used in the royal court as the language of government and administration. Likewise, educated people and clergymen, in South Asia, used Sanskrit for the same purposes, and the language map of the Indian subcontinent was characterized by a variety of languages used by different population groups. In the past, Latin, Chinese, and Sanskrit were used by priests and court men. Nevertheless, these classical languages were useless to ordinary people such as tavern owners and merchants, as well as peasants and soldiers. Later, these central classical languages spawned vernacular editions and versions in their territories and areas of expansion. However, they remained the languages of communication, far-reaching and widespread, in the fields of administration, diplomacy, religion, science, literature and commerce. In the areas located in the heart of the Afro-Eurasian steppe, a fourth language - Arabic - spread over a period of time descending from the Arabian Peninsula and extending its lines of expansion across North Africa to the Southern tip of Spain. It also spread through the East African coast and Central Asia as demonstrated in (figure 2) below.

Figure 2



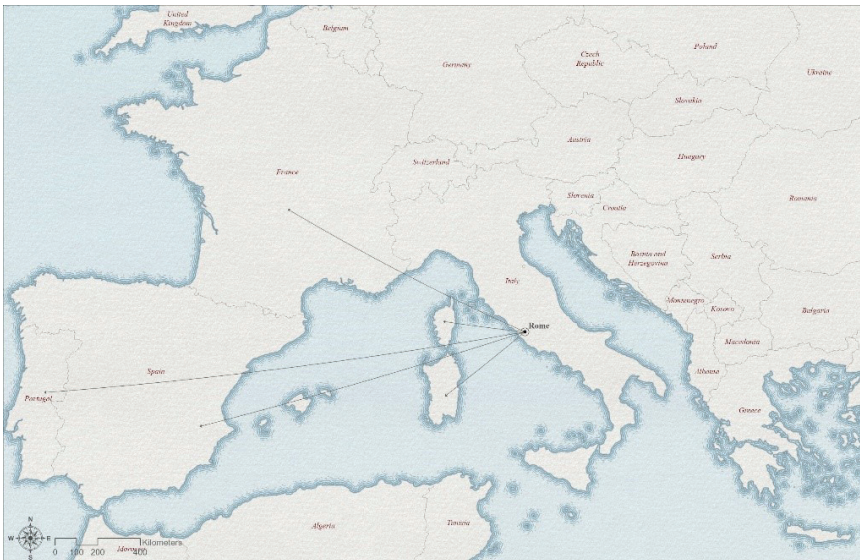
It is obvious that classical languages, originated in the areas of major religions, such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Confucianism and Buddhism, dominated the language maps in ancient times<sup>3</sup>. The networks of central languages were vast, but nonetheless very weak, because very few people were able to assimilate them, not to mention the scarcity of those who were able to read and write in these communities. After the passage of years and with the emergence of the modern era around the year 1500 AD, the long-ranging linguistic communication model of the past began to change significantly. On the one hand, the colloquial versions that branched off from the major classical languages have dominated the scene. Poets, writers, and scholars were able to generate eloquent versions of these vernacular sub-languages. Consequently, these sub-languages were increasingly used in trade, science, law and administration. In the West, these sub-languages were also used in religion and royal offices. In Europe, and among many vernaculars and sub-languages derived from Latin, Italian became a literary language in the early fourteenth century.

Later, Italian became the language of the educated, courtiers, politicians, scholars and the military in an amazing time. Starting from the prosperous Italian mega-cities, the Italian language extended to include all parts of southwestern Europe as a language of diplomatic and educational communication as clarified

3 See: Coulter H. George. *How Dead Languages Work*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press 2020.

in (figure 3) below. The same applies to other vernaculars derived from Latin such as English, French, Spanish and Portuguese, which later became the major European national languages. They spread beyond the boundaries of their own regions, enhanced by the wide increase in the circulation of literature written in these languages and printed by the modern printing tools at that time. These languages were also widely used at the royal courts and in courtrooms, in parliaments and in schools and academies.

Figure 3



Moreover, Alastair Pennycook demonstrates that the new national European languages crossed the seas with the explorers and invaders to Africa, Asia and America (69). In the colonies, they established their footholds near the mouths of rivers or on islands close to the shore. Therefore, these languages began to expand in remote continents as languages of government and trade and as a means of imposing Christianity on other peoples. Concurrently, Arabic reached its zenith as a global language. However, the language of the Qur'an remained in its pure classical form because Islamic scholars considered any deviation from this form a sign of religious violation. Accordingly, it did not happen that the vernacular sub-languages derived from Classical Arabic developed to the level of distinct and recognized languages, as was the case for the languages descended from the Han languages, Sanskrit and Latin.

In the same vein, it is worth noting that when the Ming emperors stopped sea trade and exploration in the early sixteenth century, the Chinese maritime

expansion ended forever. Consequently, the spread of the Chinese language was restricted from expansion overseas; however, it continued to spread across a large area of land in Asia. Similarly in India, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Mughal kings extended their rule to the south, at a time when the vernacular languages - (Prakrits in the north and Dravidian languages in the south) - had established themselves in their own regions according to Thomas Trautmann (37). Nevertheless, one of the vernacular languages (Hindi), which was in force in the province of Delhi, has finally become the language of communication in the Mughal kingdom. In a similar scenario, the Russians subjected to their rule a large part of the regions - known today as Russia - in the seventeenth century and laid the basis for their expansion towards the East, which continued for centuries until the annexation of Siberia and most of Central Asia. Through this vast scale of territories, Russian became the central language and schools in the newly conquered lands used it as a first foreign language.

In continuation of the above-mentioned argument, scholars considered the modern era as a time of expansion and imposition of European vernaculars across the globe. Portuguese, Spanish and English languages shared among themselves dominance over the western half of the world. Further, English became the dominant language on the Australian continent and French dominated - next to Arabic - in North Africa, and Russian ruled all North Asia. Beyond sub-Saharan Africa and in most of Southeast Asia, English, French and Portuguese spread through colonial conquest and were increasingly used as the languages of administration, commerce, higher education, and long-distance communication, but they failed to exclude local languages from the scene. This was partly due to the apparent small number of European immigrants to those countries at that time. Nevertheless, in most of the former colonies, European languages continued to play the main role in daily circulation and usage. Even after the departure of colonists, they are still playing a significant role half a century after the independence of these countries.

There is no sign of the end of this global presence of European languages across other continents. According to David Crystal, English has increased its presence and prominence as a language that occupies a central and supreme position almost everywhere on Earth (48). Explicitly, the map of the current global system of languages appears as a mosaic reflecting the political maps of the past, including the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. This map illustrates to what extent political realities determined the emergence of language groups, as well as how they continued to exist for so long after their political basis had disappeared. As such, Spanish and Portuguese settled in the southern part of the Western Hemisphere, whereas English and French proliferated in North America as shown in (figure 4) below.

Figure 4



Although the majority of the countries in the South American continent were independent of the mother European countries from the end of the eighteenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century, English, Spanish and Portuguese remained prevalent there. Similarly, and at the end of the nineteenth century, all Western European powers alike divided most of Africa among themselves. According to G. T Childs, Germany lost its African colonies in the aftermath of World War I (112). More than six decades after the independence of the African peoples, the languages of the former colonizers, English, French and Portuguese are still circulating in all of Africa, and we hardly notice a big difference between the current map of languages and the political map in 1920 for example as reflected in (figure 5) below.

Figure 5



Webb and Kembo argue that in Africa, the language map was more complicated than other continents (26). Nowhere else in the world has there been greater linguistic diversity than sub-Saharan Africa, where there are thousands of oral and written languages. With the beginning of the Portuguese voyages to the west coast of Africa, which lasted for four centuries, Europeans controlled the communities on the shores of islands or near the mouths of rivers. Through communication, carried out from a distance, simplified jargon and African dialects hybridized by European languages came into existence. The first of these hybrid dialects came through contact with the Portuguese, then came the local African versions of English and French according to H.M. Batibo (75).

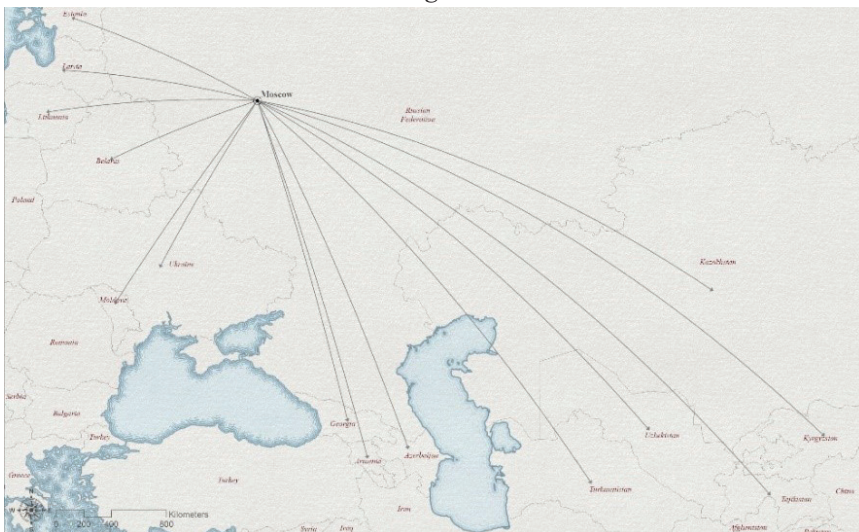
Throughout history, the colonial narrative about the differences between the languages of the neighboring communities in Africa aimed to dominate them according to the „divide and rule“ system. The local chiefs also wished to maintain these differences in order to strengthen and support their local tribal authorities. After the European conquest of Africa at the end of the nineteenth century, especially in the aftermath of the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, the Western powers began to explore and exploit the heart of the African continent and build roads across the savannah and rainforests starting from their bases on the coast. In this context, and according to T. Odlin, the workers from local villages had no option but to develop a hybrid language as a means of communication with their European masters and the local workers from other communities who do not master their indigenous languages (123). In addition to this hybrid labour language, there were other linking languages, brought

by the indigenous African merchants and traders including Hausa, Igbo, Soninke and Swahili. Moreover, Fardon and Furniss argue that the languages of the warring kingdoms, such as the language of the Wolf people or the language of the Fon people, became part of the language map of Africa (94). In a related context, the Fon people used to buy weapons from European merchants in exchange for ivory, gold and slaves and then they used European-made weapons to extend their control over their neighbors in the adjacent villages who speak different languages.

## MAP OF EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

The current distribution of languages in Europe was impacted by military conquests. Compared to the political map a century ago, the map of European languages similarly has not changed in a radical way. The central languages in many European countries are compatible with the political borders of those countries although a more detailed map may reveal some inconsistencies and contradictions in each country. However, a violent outburst and disruption of borders appeared in the twentieth century due to military conflicts. The German language spread with the Nazi invaders, and retreated after their defeat. During the cold war era, Russian language spread in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, including East-ern Germany and Poland, however, it disappeared after the collapse of the Berlin wall. Russian is the official language of Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Further, Russian is an unofficial lingua franca in Ukraine and many former Soviet countries such as Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajik-istan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as demonstrated in (Figure 6) below.

Figure 6



Alexander Kent, in his investigation of “the stylistic diversity in European 1:50 000 state topographic maps, explores the extent to which national conditions, such as socio-economic, cultural, and demographic characteristics, are intrinsically expressed in their symbolization of the national landscape” (14). He signifies that European languages in particular are stable and strong languages as a result of the long process of language standardization that lasted for years at the national level. This strength, in addition to the continuous support from each country separately, prevented the emergence of new linguistic jargon or hybrid languages. However, these well-established national languages were jeopardized by the spread of English, the prestigious international language, which invaded their borders. Definitely, the national language of any European country had to coexist with English as a second language and a world language of high standing. Available statistics enabled researchers to calculate a quality standard or a measure of communicative value for all relevant European languages.

More than 80% of secondary school students learned English, less than 40% learned French and less than 20% learn German, and less than 10% learned Spanish, and these statistics in turn provided access to scholars to predict the course of the European language group. In the post-nation-state era, there were four levels of language communication within the European Union countries and each of them required a different language system.

The first level was associated with the local communication within each of the member states where the mother tongue was adopted as the official language spoken by the majority of the population throughout the country while the state defended and protected its national language by all means. However, these official central languages faced many challenges from the sub-languages and minority languages, which spread within the territories of the member states of the Union. They also confronted dangers coming from outside the borders from the expansionist transnational languages, particularly English.

The second level included transnational communication between citizens of the European Union countries. Within this level, various languages competed to extend their sovereignty over the member states of the EU as languages of communication in many different fields. English was placed at the top of this level of communication. However, English had to enter into a state of linguistic competition with French in southern Europe and with German in Central Europe after the disappearance of the Russian language from these regions. The two former linguistic levels include, respectively, the local communities and civil societies within the EU member states, as well as the ability to cross the linguistic borders of the countries of the Union.

The other two levels - of language communication - were limited to European institutions and organizations. For example, the third level related to public

official communications and included the institutions of the European Parliament and the European Council of Ministers – in its official sessions – and the European Commission – in its external contacts. The third level also related to the institutions of the European Union, where the founding treaty of the EU Union stated that all the languages of the member states are official languages and stipulated the necessity of publishing all decisions and decrees in all the languages of the member states because of their impact on the legal legislation in these countries. This principle established the formal and legal basis for the language system within the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers of the Union, the external correspondence and publications of the Organization of European States. However, the linguistic preference of the EU member states was finally implemented on the basis of the rate or standard of the quality value „communicative value“ for each language, which was determined through a secret periodic ballot to prevent a decision from changing the status quo.

The fourth level of language communication is limited to internal official consultations of administrative nature and informal purposes such as personal correspondence and daily conversations. It is also concerned with internal communications between European institutions/EU Union officials and in the corridors of the European Parliament. But when it comes to daily consultations and messages between officials or representatives, French and English are the main working languages. This issue has repeatedly raised some questions about the language methods and policies used in the countries of the Union, especially after language experts have changed their positions, particularly the advocates of unifying the language of communication in the institutions of the Union. This group played a significant role in defending the rights of less important languages and calling for the use of local languages. Nevertheless, most of the arguments they made were false, because they all preferred to speak English or French according to language experts such as Abram De Swaan. However, Alice Leal claims that “no official decision was taken to adopt English as the EU’s working language, procedural language or *lingua franca* – 23 other languages are classed as working languages and, informally, English, French and German are procedural languages. In fact, the EU has continuously spoken against the adoption of a *lingua franca*, since officially raising the status of a single language would constitute a breach of its own legislation” (3).

The languages of the European Union include 450 million speakers, therefore, their number is smaller than speakers of other languages. Moreover, the economic output of the EU countries is less than that of other countries like China, and the total number of living European languages in circulation is less than that of Asia or Africa. However, the European Union, in terms of multilingualism, comes first in the world with a great number of languages.

The reason behind EU multilingualism (the ability of people in all EU countries to speak several languages at the same time) is due to the emergence of the European Union as an integrated and interconnected political and economic entity. Fifteen official languages are currently recognized in the European Union, and a similar number of languages will be added to them in the coming years.

Concerning the linguistic entanglements within the European languages, it is obvious that this group is similar in its complexities with its counterparts in India or South Africa and it is probably more intertwined and complex. The language issue was a top priority in the EU Union because of its implications for the integration among the European member states. The EU countries found it difficult to agree on a unified language for the EU Union while it was easy for them to reach a consensus regarding a common currency for all member states. The inability of the EU member states to take a decisive decision on establishing an official language for all member states may lead to complications and unknown developments. The failure of the EU countries to take a decision regarding the unification of the languages of this political and economic block may result in negative consequences. In fact, there is no unified or specific language policy for the European Parliament, its administrative body, or civil society organizations within the European Union. It is obvious that all the languages of the member states are considered official languages and are recognized within the societies included in the European Union.

In her study of the changing relations between language, power and territory in Europe throughout the process of European integration, Virginie Mamadouh explains that, initially, the EU-recognized languages were very limited, then the number increased to fifteen, and after a decade the number of EU official languages reached twenty or more (91). When the European Union was established, French was the official language used in the Union's administrative bodies and organizations. In the aftermath of World War II, the Germans and Italians did not insist that German and Italian be equal to French, and the number of Dutch and Flemish speakers in Europe did not enable them to claim any advantages that might seem unconvincing. The treaties and procedures governing the language system in the countries of the Union that were agreed upon in the past were still in force to this day, with the exception of some accidental modifications. With the increase in the number of EU member states, population and budget, there are further complications in vision and methodology resulting from the political, demographic and linguistic expansion of the European Union. Until recently, there were no signs of reaching an end to the EU expansion, even after Britain's exit from the Union months ago.

## MULTILINGUALISM AND HYBRIDITY OF LANGUAGES IN ASIA

As an imperialistic power, Japan expanded - through colonial conquest - during the last century from Manchuria to New Guinea. Like the languages of other invaders, the Japanese language almost completely disappeared after the defeat of Japan in the Second World War. The same concept applies to Indonesia, one notable exception, whose independence resulted into the complete disappearance of Dutch, the language of the colonizer. Instead, Malay spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Muhammad Ridwan states that "from earliest recorded times Malay was, and still is, the native tongue of the people who live on both sides of the Straits of Malacca that separate Sumatra from the Malay Peninsula. (73) On the other hand, the linguistic groups of China, India, the Philippines, Thailand, and Malaysia have remained largely identical to their political patterns, which existed a century ago. Moreover, English language replaced French language in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the wake of the wars that broke out there in the twentieth-century.

In Indonesia, the language map includes many interconnections, overlaps and complications. In addition to Malay and Javanese, there was a third language that sought to impose its control on the Indonesian archipelago, which was the Dutch language. Dutch was used in all parts of the country for a period of time, but later disappeared after the independence of Indonesia. It was obvious that Dutch, a language of limited importance in other countries of the world, was spoken only by the local elite in Indonesia. Therefore, Dutch was erased by the stroke of a pen under the Japanese occupation of the country during World War II, and from it subsequently vanished without a trace.

At first glance, it seemed that the withdrawal of the Dutch language from the Indonesian linguistic scene was a logical and reasonable due to local and international considerations. Nevertheless, the disappearance of Dutch from Indonesia after more than three centuries of Dutch presence in the country and more than a century of intensive colonization revealed many discrepancies and unanswered question marks. While Dutch was spoken by few elites in Indonesia Spanish, Portuguese, French and English had acquired large numbers of speakers in the colonies of Africa and Asia as shown in (figure 7) below.

Figure 7



Ironically, the anti-colonial elites in Africa and Asia continued to communicate with each other in the language of the colonizers even after their countries gained their independence. Moreover, the national authors who advocated socialism continued to write in the languages of the colonizers. In a similar context, the advocates of the Indonesian patriotic movement adhered to the language of the colonizer, and the national leaders, without exception, learned Dutch and spoke it among themselves after the departure of the Dutch. Dutch became used inside the communities of the elite and in the corridors of politics, but it lost its functions among the public and outside the elite circles after the spread of the national language (Bahasa Indonesia). Apparently, Indonesia is a great exception in the model of the post-colonial language groups according to Alisjahbana (76). The Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) is a unique case that is difficult to compare with other similar indigenous languages that competed with colonial languages. Therefore, the Indonesian language system should be illustrated in order to understand the peculiar condition of the linguistic landscape in the country.

In the form of an arc with a length of 5100 km, the Indonesian archipelago extends from the Malaysian Peninsula in the west and the Philippine Islands in the north to the Australian subcontinent in the east. It has been called the „Emerald Belt“ and it is made up of about 13,000 islands, of which 6,000 are inhabited, and together they cover about 2 million square kilometers. The only common factor linking the peoples who inhabited these islands was their common history under the Dutch colonial hegemony. This colonial heritage constituted the past that distinguished them from neighboring societies.

Since ancient times, Java, which includes 60% of the population of the archipelago, was the political and economic center of the East Indies under Dutch occupation, which was later known as Indonesia. In the area that appeared in the form of an arc extending around this center, there was a large group of people who spoke multiple languages, amounting to more than five hundred languages: that is, one tenth of the number of known languages in the world, including 300 languages whose number of speakers exceeded one hundred thousand speakers, belonging to a family of Austronesian languages (the languages of Australia, Indonesia and the oceanic islands).

There are two hundred other languages in the archipelago divided into two groups according to J. N Sneddon (52). The number of speakers of the languages of the first group is less than a thousand speakers based on the 1990 census, when the population of Indonesia reached 180 million.<sup>4</sup> The languages of this group belong to seven different language families, while the second group includes fourteen languages, each with more than one million indigenous speakers.

More than 40% of Indonesians over 4 years old speak Javanese as their first language and most of them live in the eastern part of Java, which includes two-thirds of the population in addition to the inhabitants of the southern tip of the island of Sumatra. Moreover, the **Sundanese language** is spoken by approximately 36 million people according to the 2010 census and is the second most widely spoken regional language in Indonesia and it spreads in the western part of Java. Moreover, Madura, the language of the western island of Madura, is spoken by about 7 million people. There are five other languages: Batak, Minankbawe, Pali, Bengin, and Bengali, each of which is spoken by 3 million people as shown in (figure 8) below.

Figure 8



4 By the end of the last century, the population reached 225 million.

Other Indonesian communities speak the Malay language in its updated version (Bahasa Indonesia) as their original language, and most of them live in areas where Bahasa has spread as an indigenous language for many centuries, especially in the eastern part of Sumatra and the adjacent islands and coastal areas of the island of Kalimantan (Borneo) in addition to the very important Jakarta region, where the Malay vernacular has spread for centuries and has become a dominant language in cinema and films. When Indonesians were asked whether Bahasa Indonesia is a first or second language, more than 130 million answered that it is their first language. They represent about 83% of Indonesians over four years old. Linguists believe that caution should be taken in dealing with these statistics due to the sensitivity of this issue, as there may be a tendency on the part of the population to answer “yes” to emphasize national unity and belonging, but this may not be consistent with the linguistic facts on the ground.

A closer look at the population survey statistics revealed the existence of essential facts, among which was that the percentage of the number of participants who said that they can speak Bahasa Indonesia has increased steadily in all regions of the archipelago. On the eve of World War II, about 15% of Indonesians spoke some version of Malay either as a mother tongue or as a second language. It appeared that the demographic changes and demographic mobility as a result of the Japanese occupation, in addition to the successive wars of liberation against the Dutch and economic migrations since then, have contributed to the spread of the Indonesian language (Bahasa Indonesia) as a popular and elegant language. With the establishment of the Republic and the beginning of the construction of its educational institutions, the scene changed in favor of the national language (Bahasa Indonesia).

During the first three years of primary school, youngsters study the main language of the region to which they belong, or Bahasa Indonesia, if there are many secondary languages spoken locally. From the fourth year onwards and throughout the educational system the language of instruction becomes Indonesian (Bahasa). This explains, according to M. Marhum (28), the amazing speed of the spread of national Indonesian language across the archipelago after independence. Education and knowledge of the Indonesian national language has spread more in urban than in rural areas, among men more than females, and among adults (over 12 years old) more than the older generations. Due to the rapid increase in the number of students, Indonesian (Bahasa) has become the first language learned by youngsters, although parents prefer to use different local languages at home. But when parents want to encourage their children to acquire Bahasa, they communicate with them in the same language even though they speak another native language. In fact, the number of native Bahasa speakers has increased from less than 15 million in 1980 to more than 24 million in 1990, a rate of increase of more than 60% over ten years, as reflected in (figure 9) below.

Figure 9



By deducting the general population growth rate (about 22%), there is an indication of an increase of more than a quarter in one decade. However, the number of native speakers of Indonesian (Bahasa) as a mother tongue did not approach the number of native speakers of Javanese as a mother tongue. The number of speakers of Indonesian (as a mother tongue) is hardly close to the number of speakers of „Sundanese language, approximately 36 million people according to the 2010 census. The national movement rejected from the beginning the use of Dutch or Javanese as the official national language in place of (Bahasa Indonesia), a derivative of Malay, which is now spoken by almost all citizens of the archipelago (as a second language) even if it is not their mother tongue but rather the language they learned in school. Moreover, one of the versions of the Malay language is the national language of Malaysia and Brunei, and in these two countries English is used as the second official language. Since independence, the importance of Indonesian (Bahasa) has grown because it is the official language of instruction throughout the educational system, with English being a foreign language rather than a second language. At the present time, Malay, in its various versions, competes with English in the local use and in the academic field. Additionally, Malay in the (Bahasa Indonesia) version is closely related to the Austronesian language groups in the Southeast Asian region, which inevitably adds to its communicative value as demonstrated in (figure 10) below.

Figure 10



Austronesian languages are the languages spread in the countries and islands located in the ocean regions from Madagascar in the west to the far east of the globe and includes countries such as Taiwan, the Indonesian Archipelago and the Malay-speaking countries, as well as the Philippines, Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean. The Indonesian language group is one of the small wonders of the post-colonial world dominated by Western languages as the most widespread means of communication in the former colonies. The Indonesians have successfully managed to preserve one of their local languages as a language of communication, which is the national Indonesian tongue (Bahasa Indonesia). It is in fact a revised version of the Malay language. But what is surprising in the Indonesian language scene is that the Indonesian people have sacrificed the wide-spreading Javanese language as an official national means of communication for the public interest of the country. In their efforts to combat the hegemony of colonial languages, the people of Indonesia supported one of their local languages. In other words, the people of the country ignored the Javanese language, although it is one of the indigenous languages and is the mother tongue of nearly half of the citizens. It was the dominant language in the centers of power in political circles and economic transactions. It was also the official language of religious and literary inheritance, in addition to being the language of the court in the millennium. For very realistic reasons, from the point of view of Indonesians and the majority of „Austronesian“ language experts, Javanese has been removed and replaced with an updated version of Malay (the language of the Malay people) as the official national language.

## LANGUAGE MAPS IN INDONESIA AND INDIA IN THE POST-COLONIAL ERA

In an important essay on Indonesian languages, H. Steinhauer clarifies that “nobody knows how many languages are spoken in the world today, but it is estimated that one-tenth of them are spoken in Indonesia (755). Experts have taken the Indonesian linguistic experience as a model that can be applied by approach to the linguistic scene in India, Kenya and the Philippines, where Hindustani, Swahili and Filipino have been adopted as the national languages of those countries, respectively. However, none of those countries succeeded in adopting the Indonesian model or applying it on the ground, despite the compatibility of this proposal with the aspirations of the nationalist movements in those three countries (India, Kenya, and the Philippines). Undoubtedly, there are common aspects in the linguistic landscape between Indonesia and India, and there is a similarity between the Javanese language in Indonesia and the Hindi language in India, in addition to the similarity between the role played by the Malay language (in Indonesia) and the Hindustani language (in India) during the colonial era, regardless of the fact that the differences between Malay and Javanese are much greater than the differences between Hindustani and Hindi.

In the same context, a good number of major languages are spread in both India and Indonesia, but India is characterized by the abundance and diversity of the number of speakers of each of these languages. In essence, the similarities are formed in the history and trajectory of the two language groups in India and Indonesia, the Hindustani language was adopted as the unified language of the country in 1925 upon the approval of the Indian Congress Party. In 1928, the Indonesian National Youth Party adopted the Malay language as the language of the national movement, ignoring the Javanese language. The Hindu national movement in India sought to impose a new edition of the Hindi language after purifying it from other linguistic impurities, but the concerned parties rejected this proposal. The Dravidian-speaking ethnolinguistic groups have also blocked the expansion of the Hindi language through the expansion of English language learning. Contrary to what happened in India, the Javanese people and other Javanese-speaking groups in Indonesia accepted the Malay language with open arms, while the Dutch language (the language of the colonizer) was completely excluded.

Paradoxically, what happened in Indonesia regarding the Indonesian national language (Bahasa Indonesia) was a dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the man hoped it would come true in his country. The same dream also haunted the imagination of most national leaders in the post-colonial states that gained independence,

those who dreamed that their national languages would become symbols of their young, emerging countries. But this dream, which captured the imagination of the national leadership as a whole, was only once or twice embodied on the ground. The adoption of Bahasa Indonesia as a national language, which permeated the islands of the archipelago was an unprecedented case in the annals of comparative sociolinguistics focusing on the study of universal languages. This seems familiar to the Indonesian inhabitants of the islands of the archipelago, who were familiar with the linguistic diversity of their country. Researchers were surprised because the speakers of Javanese language raised the white flag and left the field for the Malay language in its revised version “Bahasa Indonesia” voluntarily because the conflict between them would lead inevitably to the dominance of a European colonial language over the local linguistic scene.

Moreover, some Indonesians considered Javanese as an ambiguous language, difficult to understand, and completely unsuitable for the requirements of contemporary life. Javanese has two linguistic versions, one used by the high-class people called „Krama“ and another low-level version called „Njoku“. In more formal encounters, people, unless they have an intimate relationship, tend to use the upper version of Javanese with its flowing vocabulary derived from ancient Sanskrit origins and its past-scented styles. When the elite classes address people from the lower classes, the speech is in the lower version of Javanese while the mob must respond to their masters using a simplified version of the higher version of Javanese.

What made matters worse is that the Javanese language contains a good number of discourse forms that deepen the differences and widen the gap in the relations between people in the diverse communities of the country. In contrast to what happened to Javanese, Malay has turned into a language for trade and tourism for more than a thousand years, as it became the language of travelers, merchants, sailors and people passing through the islands of the archipelago. Through the Malay language, Islam came with its message to the country. Further, Malay was the language used by Portuguese missionaries and priests, and after them, the Dutch priests who evangelized the local population and invited them to Christianity.

Although Malay is the original language of the eastern parts of the island of Sumatra and coastal areas of the province of Kalimantan, this language does not represent any specific Indonesian creed, religion or ethnic group. On the other hand, the people of the country see Javanese as a language associated in their minds with the linguistic dominance that the island of Java exercised over the archipelago. In light of the previous context, the national movement adopted Malay in its version, „Bahasa Indonesia“, as the official language of the country, after the submission of the representatives of the Javanese-speaking sects.

Various ethnic groups have expressed their willingness to sacrifice their ethnic glories and linguistic heritage for the sake of national unity, which has become an urgent necessity, and this applies to the Javanese speakers in the first place. Javanese student communities in the Netherlands during the 1920s attempted to revive the Javanese language and heritage, but later joined their comrades from the „East Indies“ in their quest for a comprehensive Indonesian national renaissance. Similar to what was done by the pioneer patriots throughout the Indonesian islands, the supporters of the patriotic movement of the people of the island of Java welcomed the spread of the language of „Bahasa Indonesia“ and expressed their happiness for this development. The collective sacrifice of Javanese interests and their tolerance can be justified as a trait of generosity and it seemed that they chose to sacrifice a chess piece (the language) while playing in order to win the game in the end as they gave up their language in order to take over the entire Indonesian empire. The Javanese people later succeeded in tightening and consolidating their hold on the entire Indonesian archipelago.

The unrelenting efforts and attempts made by the Dutch to stir up unrest and spread the spirit of separatism and schisms in the country during the late 1940s resulted in some failed rebellion attempts against the Javanese who remained in power throughout the reign of Suharto, who controlled the country for half a century. East Timor was a unique case because it was not completely under the control of the Dutch Empire, but joined the republic when the Portuguese colonizer left in 1975. As for New Guinea, which was part of the colonial Dutch Empire, it refused to integrate with Indonesia after the Dutch withdrew from it in 1965, but it failed in its efforts which did not last long. New Guinea is divided into two administrative parts: its western half comprises the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua (collectively, formerly called Irian Jaya); and its eastern half comprises the major part of Papua New Guinea, an independent country since 1975. Many years ago, secessionist movements spread in many Indonesian islands, and the ruling regime sought at once to pacify the rebels in order to preserve the cohesion of the republic. Java was able to dominate matters without objection after the Javanese accepted to spread a language that was not their language throughout the country. While Javanese leaders, with their foresight and wisdom, were able to reach a formula of understanding with others. Unlike the Javanese people, regional elites who experienced the same conditions in the newly independent countries such as India and Kenya failed to deal with the linguistic situation with the same tolerance and generosity.

## CONCLUSION

### **The Impact of languages on Environment, Culture and Human Societies**

Discussing the boundaries of Indian languages, superintendent George Abraham Grierson (1851–1941) revealed: “Indian languages gradually merge into each other and are not separated by hard and fast boundary lines. When such boundaries are spoken of, or are shown on the map, they must always be understood as conventional methods of showing definitely a state of things which is in its essence indefinite. It must be remembered that on each side of the conventional line there is a border tract of greater or less extent, the language of which may be classed at will with one or other. Here we often find that two different observers report different conditions as existing in one and the same area, and both may be right. (30)

The paper not only touches swiftly upon the linguistic situation in India but also traces potential conflicts, interconnections and entanglements between local and colonial languages in different continents illustrating the peculiar situation in Indonesia, where different ethnic communities abandoned their differences and selected one of their local vernaculars to be the national language of the nation. The paper also revealed that the current language maps of many African, Asian and Soutcan countries are similar to the political maps of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because colonial languages continued to exist in these countries even after the departure of the colonizers. Further, the paper explores the spread of a variety of languages and their penetration in some countries, which constituted a great part of the European Union in order to investigate the impact of geo-politics on the changing status of language maps in Europe.

There is no doubt that the emergence and development of languages during more than one hundred and twenty thousand years was a miracle by all standards and an evidence of the evolutionary process of the human race descending from a common genetic lineage. Human languages, like their native speakers, belong to a common origin. Through a creative mechanism, far from petrified dogmatic arguments, this article partly traces the map of some contemporary human languages, stressing that English is the focus of the contemporary global linguistic system, as it holds the reins of other linguistic groups and revolves in its orbit other languages that form the basic global linguistic system in addition to innumerable languages, sub-languages, vernaculars and dialect, which spread through population expansion and migrations over the course of thousands of years.

In this context, the paper argues that in ancient time there were wide-spreading languages such as Latin, Chinese, Italian and Arabic. Moreover, central language groups around the world include European, Indian, Indonesian, South African, West and East African languages. The paper also demonstrated that languages sometimes spread by armed conquest of ancient agricultural societies, power of military regimes, missionary campaigns, wars, colonialism, and trade. Languages also penetrated across huge spaces of land when empires rose and collapsed with their demise. As vehicles for social mobility, ancient languages such as Latin, Chinese, and Sanskrit have influenced education, journalism, literature, art, science, politics, and economics. Due to a multiplicity of social, economic, and political circumstances, several communities of people were forced to migrate to a new language and abandon their original tongue.

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## Jezikovni zemljevidi od Afrike do Evrope: večjezičnost, kolonializem in novi pristopi k geografski lingvistiki

Jezikovni zemljevidi, ki odražajo jezikovni pluralizem, večjezičnost in razširitev jezikov po deželah in imperijah so bili del človeške zgodovine. Zgodovinsko gledano je jezik vselej prišel pod vpliv geografije, političnih konfliktov ter kolonizacije.

**Ključne besede:** jezikovni zemljevidi, geografija, večjezičnost, kolonizacija, hibridnost, okolje, kultura

# Le texte littéraire dans l'enseignement d'une langue étrangère : une espèce menacée?

*Meta Lah*

## Résumé

Dans le présent article, nous présentons en préambule la place du texte littéraire dans l'histoire de l'enseignement des langues pour passer ensuite à des arguments en faveur de l'utilisation des textes littéraires en classe de langue. Dans la partie empirique, nous essayons d'abord de déterminer la place de la littérature dans quatre manuels de FLE. Ensuite, nous présentons les résultats des entretiens semi-dirigés que nous avons effectués avec six enseignantes slovènes tout en leur demandant leurs avis sur la littérature dans l'enseignement des langues. Nous terminons en évoquant la question des textes adaptés, souvent utilisés en classe de langue étrangère.

**Mots-clés** : classe de langue, texte littéraire, manuels de FLE, pratiques enseignantes.

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Au cours de l'histoire de l'enseignement/apprentissage des langues étrangères et selon les différentes méthodologies, la littérature a été plus ou moins présente dans l'enseignement du Français langue étrangère : « la littérature a connu de façon cyclique, des phases d'abondance et de disette, entre sacralisation et désacralisation » (Morel, 2012 : 141). Le texte littéraire, même s'il est actuellement moins présent dans les classes de langue, a bien sa place dans l'enseignement, et ce pour plusieurs raisons. Nous ne saurions le résumer mieux que Proscolli (2009 : 131) : « En tant que document authentique, le texte littéraire se prête à l'étude de ses divers aspects socioculturels. En tant que forme de communication, il représente un *stimulus* de réflexion sur la communication humaine. En tant que document polyvalent, il suscite une réflexion sur les modes de fonctionnements discursifs et textuels et se prête à la découverte de la complexité des plans énonciatifs. En tant que document écrit, il contribue de manière appréciable à la diversité des discours utilisés en classe de langue par la perception des spécificités de l'écriture et des invariants des types de texte et des genres. »

Dans le présent article, nous allons d'abord présenter la place occupée par le texte littéraire dans l'histoire de l'enseignement des langues, en nous focalisant surtout sur la situation actuelle avec le Cadre européen commun de référence pour les langues (2001) et son Volume complémentaire (2018). Nous allons ensuite essayer de présenter des arguments pour l'utilisation des textes littéraires dans la classe de langue.

Dans la partie empirique, nous nous proposons de répondre à deux questions de recherche :

- quelle est la place de la littérature dans les manuels de FLE ?
- quelle est la place accordée au texte littéraire par les enseignant·es slovènes ?

Pour terminer, nous allons aussi évoquer la question des textes adaptés qui sont beaucoup utilisés en classe de langue étrangère.

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## LA PLACE DE LA LITTÉRATURE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT DES LANGUES

Dans la méthodologie traditionnelle basée sur l'apprentissage des langues anciennes, le texte littéraire est considéré comme le support le plus important, son but principal étant la traduction des textes littéraires : « C'est un travail minutieux sur les textes comme matériau qu'il faut analyser pas à pas de manière exhaustive et détaillée pour arriver à la traduction la plus précise et la plus fidèle possible » (Godard 2015 : 15). Gardant sa place de support privilégié, la littérature « couronnait l'apprentissage de la langue jusqu'à la décennie 1950 » (Cuq et Gruca 2002 : 374). C'est la méthodologie structuro-globale audio-visuelle qui a finalement « banni la littérature de l'enseignement des langues vivantes et a donc évincé le texte littéraire des supports d'apprentissage pour représenter la parole en situation » (ibid., 375). Le texte littéraire a été réintroduit dans les classes de FLE avec l'approche communicative, dans les années 1980. Dans cette approche, il fait partie des documents authentiques, « participant à l'acquisition de l'écrit au même titre que les produits médiatiques et fonctionnels, le texte littéraire n'a cependant pas été pris en compte dans ses spécificités propres, qu'elles soient linguistiques, textuelles ou culturelles : si l'on s'en tient à l'analyse des méthodes, le texte littéraire est exploité pour développer la compréhension des écrits et généralement dans une perspective globale. » (Gruca 2009 : 167). Selon Morel (2012 : 141) cette réapparition « se réalise de manière confuse. Avec l'arasement de tous les types de textes au même statut de textes, la littérature est un document authentique comme les autres. »

Dans le Cadre européen de référence pour les langues (2001), la littérature est peu présente, même si les auteurs mentionnent ses atouts : « Les littératures nationale et étrangère apportent une contribution majeure au patrimoine culturel européen que le Conseil de l'Europe voit comme une ressource commune inappréciable qu'il faut protéger et développer. Les études littéraires ont de nombreuses finalités éducatives, intellectuelles, morales et affectives, linguistiques et culturelles et pas seulement esthétiques. » (CECR 2001 : 47). Dans les grilles, la littérature apparaît à partir du niveau B2, donc aux niveaux supérieurs ; prenons comme exemple la grille pour l'auto-évaluation (ibid., 27) :

- Je peux comprendre un texte littéraire contemporain en prose. (niveau B2)
- Je peux comprendre des textes factuels ou littéraires longs et complexes et en apprécier les différences de style. (niveau C1)
- Je peux lire sans effort tout type de texte, même abstrait ou complexe quant au fond ou à la forme, par exemple un manuel, un article spécialisé ou une œuvre littéraire. (niveau C2)

Le Volume complémentaire du CECR (2018, 53) apporte trois nouvelles échelles qui traitent de la littérature, toutes les trois apparaissent dans la catégorie Médiation :

- lire comme activité de loisir (uniquement pour le processus de réception ; les descripteurs proviennent d'autres ensembles de descripteurs du CECR), les descripteurs sont proposés à partir du niveau A1;
- exprimer une réaction personnelle à l'égard de textes créatifs (moins intellectuel, niveaux inférieurs), avec les descripteurs à partir du niveau A1,
- analyser et formuler des critiques littéraires (plus intellectuel, niveaux supérieurs), avec les descripteurs à partir du niveau A2.

Même si les activités sont décrites comme « plus ou moins intellectuelles » et cela de façon un peu maladroite, le fait d'inclure ces descripteurs dans le CECR laisse espérer qu'il existe un consensus sur la place que le texte littéraire devrait avoir dans l'enseignement des langues.

## POURQUOI UTILISER LA LITTÉRATURE EN CLASSE DE LANGUE ?

Il y a plusieurs raisons en faveur de l'utilisation de la littérature en classe de langue. Sarkar (2018 : 39) en mentionne trois : la littérature sert de modèle culturel, de modèle de langage et de modèle de croissance personnelle. Calafato et Paran (2019 : 29) soulignent surtout le critère de l'authenticité : « L'utilisation de la littérature comme ressource d'apprentissage des langues est censée apporter de nombreux avantages. Les enseignants peuvent l'utiliser pour introduire un sujet de discussion intéressant et authentique dans la classe (...) favorisant ainsi le désir d'apprendre une langue d'une manière qui ne peut être obtenue avec des manuels scolaires. »

Les textes littéraires se distinguent des autres documents authentiques qu'on peut utiliser en classe ; ils offrent une possibilité d'interprétation : « (...) contrairement aux documents fonctionnels et médiatiques qui livrent généralement un message qui se donne à voir dans sa transparence, le texte littéraire, par son discours marqué, livre les possibilités d'une lecture plurielle et sollicite la coopération du lecteur pour partager ou pour construire son sens : la lecture littéraire se construit, elle est un jeu de construction (Picard 1986). Certes, des documents authentiques peuvent présenter cette caractéristique. La publicité, par exemple, offre de nombreux aspects littéraires et certains slogans peuvent ressembler à de véritables petits poèmes. Mais la littérature condense ces phénomènes langagiers et construit à partir d'eux un univers fictionnel qui se réfère à lui-même tout en se référant à une multitude d'autres textes, hors de l'accidentel, mais toujours dans l'éventuel. » (Gruca 2009 : 172)

Lire des textes bien écrits est sans doute une bonne manière d'apprendre une langue étrangère, d'observer des structures et de mémoriser le lexique. Gruca dit que le texte littéraire est un « laboratoire de langue » où « des variations linguistiques (...) se déclinent à tous les niveaux : mot, syntaxe, structure, phonétique, etc. ». En lisant, on devient un meilleur lecteur, un des objectifs est aussi de « développer une réelle compétence lectorale qui dépasse l'approche globale, permet de construire du sens et est susceptible de fournir des outils d'analyse pour conduire à l'autonomie quel que soit le support envisagé » (Gruca 2009 : 172).

On ne peut pas négliger la culture de la langue cible véhiculée par chaque texte lu : « Outre ses aspects langagiers, le texte littéraire véhicule une culture qui, par essence, est métisse et métissée et cet aspect devrait redynamiser son exploitation dans les manuels de langue à l'heure où le concept de littérature-monde s'impose et où l'interculturel est prôné et revendiqué par tous » (Gruca 2009 : 174). Calafato et Gudim (2020 : 2) rappellent les descripteurs du Volume complémentaire du CECR dans lesquels la note interculturelle est mise en valeur : « Cet accent, mis sur le développement de la compétence communicative interculturelle des apprenants, y compris leur capacité à produire un langage authentique, a conduit à un regain d'intérêt pour la littérature en tant que ressource linguistique en raison de son rôle de réservoir d'authenticité, de connaissances pluriculturelles et de contenu engageant. » En ce qui concerne le côté (inter)culturel, le monde francophone a sans doute beaucoup à offrir à un lecteur étranger : « À ce titre, la littérature francophone, par-delà des aspects historiques, politiques ou économiques parfois très ambigus, reconnus ou récusés, est, par excellence, le domaine du partage et du dialogue des cultures » (Gruca, 2009 : 168).

Finalement, selon nos expériences, la littérature peut aussi servir à procurer un moment de détente et d'évasion dans le parcours parfois très (trop) organisé et planifié d'une classe de langue étrangère. Pour reprendre Gruca (2009 : 174), le texte littéraire offre « plus que tout autre support, un espace d'interprétation, si ce n'est de méditation ou de rêverie. »

## **LA PLACE DU TEXTE LITTÉRAIRE DANS LES MANUELS DE FLE**

Skela (2014 : 131) constate que, dans les manuels d'anglais langue étrangère, les textes littéraires sont beaucoup plus présents dans des manuels anciens que dans ceux qui appartiennent à l'approche communicative. Selon lui, la littérature y « reste périphérique ». Les manuels d'anglais modernes contiennent « des bouts de littérature, mais c'est encore loin d'un programme littéraire cohérent » (ibid.).

Pour examiner la place de la littérature dans les manuels de FLE, nous avons analysé quatre manuels de niveau A1, destinés à un public de grands adolescents/adultes :

- *Le nouveau sans frontières*, paru chez CLE International en 2002, livre de l'élève et cahier d'activités ;
- *Saison*, paru chez Didier en 2014, méthode de français et cahier d'activités ;
- *Entre nous*, paru en 2015 aux Éditions Maison des langues, tout en un ;
- *Cosmopolite*, paru chez Hachette en 2017, méthode de français et cahier d'activités.

Parmi les méthodes analysées il y a trois manuels récents, publiés en 2014, 2015 et 2017, par différentes maisons d'édition. Nous avons aussi inclus *Le nouveau sans frontières* qui est paru en 1988 chez CLE International et est donc un manuel appartenant à l'approche communicative. L'édition analysée date de 2002.

En feuilletant les manuels, nous nous sommes très rapidement rendu compte que, dans les manuels récents, il y a très peu de textes littéraires en tant que tels et que, par contre, il y a plus de textes traitant du monde littéraire (biographies des auteurs, couvertures des livres, etc.). Pour cela, nous avons classé les documents trouvés en deux catégories : textes littéraires et textes fabriqués parlant de littérature<sup>2</sup>. Nous avons aussi évalué les exercices ou activités, proposées en accompagnement de chaque texte.

*Le nouveau sans frontières* (première édition en 1988)

| Texte(s) littéraire(s)                                        | Texte(s) fabriqué(s) | Type d'activité               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Louis Aragon : <i>Persiennes</i> (C/ex, p.11)                 |                      | Prononciation - intonation    |
| Alain Bosquet : <i>Les mois de l'année</i> (C/ex, p.21)       |                      | Compréhension écrite          |
| René Hague : <i>Dessert</i> (C/ex, p.21)                      |                      | Sans consigne                 |
| Guillaume Apollinaire : <i>Voyage à Paris</i> (C/ex, p.36)    |                      | Sans consigne                 |
| Maurice Carême : <i>Ronde</i> (C/ex, p.43)                    |                      | Sans consigne                 |
| Verlaine : <i>Le ciel est par-dessus le toit</i> (C/ex, p.50) |                      | Ludique : Illustrer le poème. |

2 Nous empruntons cette formulation d'Estelle Riquois (2009).

| Texte(s) littéraire(s)                                                                                                            | Texte(s) fabriqué(s) | Type d'activité                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jacques Prévert : <i>L'addition</i> (C/ex, p.58)                                                                                  |                      | Sans consigne                                                    |
| Paul Éluard : <i>Liberté</i> (extrait) (C/ex, p.64)                                                                               |                      | Sans consigne                                                    |
| Jacques Prévert : <i>L'accent grave</i> (C/ex, p.75)                                                                              |                      | Sans consigne                                                    |
| Jacques Prévert : <i>Pour faire le portrait d'un oiseau</i> (C/ex, p.92)                                                          |                      | Sans consigne                                                    |
| Jules Verne : <i>Les 500 millions de la Bégum</i> , André Breton : <i>Nadja</i> , La Bruyère : <i>Les caractères</i> (C/ex, p.97) |                      | Objectif linguistique : lexique de la description d'une personne |
| Paul Éluard : <i>L'amoureuse</i> (C/ex, p.101)                                                                                    |                      | Objectif linguistique : les parties du corps.                    |
| Prévert : <i>Déjeuner du matin</i> (C/ex, p.109)                                                                                  |                      | Ludique : Misez la scène. Production écrite                      |
| Éluard : <i>Couvre-feu</i> (C/ex, p.117)                                                                                          |                      | Compréhension écrite                                             |
| Dan Greenburg : <i>Le manuel du parfait petit masochiste</i> (C/ex, p.124)                                                        |                      | Sans consigne                                                    |
| Prévert : <i>Chanson pour vous</i> (C/ex, p.137)                                                                                  |                      | Objectif linguistique : lexique du paysage et du climat          |
| Clancier : <i>Le roi de l'île</i> (C/ex, p.146)                                                                                   |                      | Écriture créative                                                |
| Apollinaire : <i>Le pont Mirabeau</i> (C/ex, p.155)                                                                               |                      | Objectif linguistique : lexique du temps                         |

### Saison (2014)

| Texte(s) littéraire(s)                                                 | Texte(s) fabriqué(s) | Type d'activité                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Michel Monnereau : <i>Le soleil oiseleur</i> (extrait p.30)            |                      | Pas de consigne explicite, illustration de « Demander poliment »                         |
| Vincent Remède : <i>Jus de chaussettes</i> (extrait <sup>3</sup> p.50) |                      | Compréhension écrite<br>Objectif linguistique : lexique de la description d'une personne |

3 Il s'agit d'un texte pédagogique, Collection Mondes en VF, éd. Didier.

| Texte(s) littéraire(s)                             | Texte(s) fabriqué(s)                                                                                                                                                                | Type d'activité                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                    | Présentation de 8 auteurs francophones : Pascale Kramer, Joël Dicker, Andrée Chedid, Gilles Archambault, Nicolas Ancion, Leïla Sebbar, Antonine Maillet, Lyonel Trouillot, Kim Thuy | Compréhension écrite<br>Objectif culturel : les écrivains francophones, les prix littéraires, l'Académie française |
| Nicolas Bouvier : <i>L'œil du voyageur</i> (p.160) |                                                                                                                                                                                     | Compréhension écrite                                                                                               |
|                                                    | Biographie : Olympe de Gouges (p.180)                                                                                                                                               | Compréhension écrite<br>Objectif grammatical : les verbes au passé                                                 |

*Entre nous* (2015)

| Texte(s) littéraire(s) | Texte(s) fabriqué(s)                | Type d'activité                                            |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| /                      | Biographie : Amélie Nothomb (p.115) | Production écrite : rédiger la biographie au passé composé |

*Cosmopolite* (2017)

| Texte(s) littéraire(s)                                                                                                                                                     | Texte(s) fabriqué(s)                                                                                   | Type d'activité                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                            | Couvertures des livres de : Andreï Makine, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Ahmadou Kourouma, Alain Mabanckou (p.91) | Objectif culturel : s'informer sur les auteurs étrangers qui écrivent en français |
| Extraits : J.Uyterlinde : <i>Cette femme qui dit être ma mère</i> , F. Beigbeder : <i>Un roman français</i> , P. Leconte : <i>Les femmes aux cheveux courts</i> (P. 98-99) |                                                                                                        | Objectif lexical : description physique                                           |
| /                                                                                                                                                                          | Biographies : Ahmadou Kourouma, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Andreï Makine (p.96-97)                             | Objectif linguistique : les formes du passé composé                               |
| /                                                                                                                                                                          | Biographie : Amin Maalouf (p.107)                                                                      | Compréhension écrite                                                              |
| Daniel Frère : <i>Carnet d'un toubab en Afrique</i> (extrait p.120-121)                                                                                                    | /                                                                                                      | Compréhension écrite.<br>Objectif linguistique : le lexique des sensations        |

| Texte(s) littéraire(s)                                                              | Texte(s) fabriqué(s)                                                                                                                                                               | Type d'activité                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                     | Couvertures des livres : M. Larnaude : <i>Notre désir est sans remède</i> , A. Mouton : <i>Le metteur en scène polonais</i> , I. Monin : <i>Les gens dans l'enveloppe</i> (P. 132) | Compréhension orale et écrite.<br>Communication : faire des achats.<br>Expression orale : discussion sur les habitudes de lecture.<br>Objectif culturel : Les Français et les livres. |
| Les débuts de romans (premières phrases) <sup>4</sup><br>(C/ac <sup>5</sup> , p.64) | /                                                                                                                                                                                  | Objectif grammatical : les verbes au passé composé                                                                                                                                    |
| /                                                                                   | Biographie : Dai Sijie (C/ac, p.65)                                                                                                                                                | Compréhension orale                                                                                                                                                                   |
| /                                                                                   | Présentation d'un personnage de livre : Anne Miller, <i>Une femme à la redresse</i> (C/ac, 66)                                                                                     | Compréhension orale                                                                                                                                                                   |
| /                                                                                   | Biographie : Alain Mabanckou (C/ac, p.72)                                                                                                                                          | Production écrite : rédiger la biographie de l'écrivain                                                                                                                               |
| /                                                                                   | Présentation de Nancy Huston (C/ac, p.73)                                                                                                                                          | Compréhension orale<br>Production orale                                                                                                                                               |

La différence entre les manuels contemporains et *Le nouveau sans frontières* qui était l'un des manuels les plus utilisés de l'approche communicative, résulte des quatre tableaux. Dans les manuels contemporains, le texte littéraire est pratiquement absent : les extraits de prose apparaissent deux fois dans *Cosmopolite*, trois fois dans *Saison* (un des trois extraits provient d'un livre écrit à des fins pédagogiques) et n'apparaissent pas dans *Entre nous*. Il y a, par contre, 18 textes dans le cahier d'exercices du *Nouveau sans frontières*.

Dans les manuels contemporains, les textes pour lesquels nous utilisons la dénomination « fabriqués » et qui parlent de littérature sont plus nombreux, surtout dans *Cosmopolite*. À l'aide de différents documents (couvertures des livres, extraits, biographies), les auteurs présentent surtout les écrivains francophones, ce qui est sans doute positif, ouvre aux apprenants de nouvelles perspectives et les munit de nouvelles connaissances.

Dans *Le nouveau sans frontières*, nous ne trouvons pas de textes fabriqués qui parleraient de la littérature. Les textes authentiques sont plus nombreux, il s'agit

4 Duras : *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, Camus : *L'Étranger*, Proust : *Du côté de chez Swann*, de Gaulle : *Mémoires de guerre*, Blixen : *La Femme africaine*, Murphy : *Les Filles sauvages*, Duras : *L'Amant*.

5 Nous utilisons l'abréviation C/ac pour le cahier d'activités et C/ex pour le cahier d'exercices. Le changement de nom est le reflet de l'évolution des méthodes d'enseignement. *Entre nous* apparaît sous la forme de « Tout en un » et n'a pas de cahier d'activités séparé.

surtout de poèmes. L'auteur le plus présent est Prévert avec 5 poèmes, suivent Éluard (3 poèmes dont 1 extrait), Apollinaire (2 poèmes), puis Aragon, Bosquet, Hague, Carême, Verlaine et Clancier, avec un poème chacun. Les extraits de prose sont moins utilisés : y apparaissent trois extraits très courts de Verne, Breton et La Bruyère et un extrait de Greenburg, traduit de l'anglais.

Nous pouvons aussi observer un changement concernant les activités proposées en accompagnement des textes littéraires et fabriqués. Dans les manuels contemporains, les objectifs sont visibles et les activités plus ciblées : les textes sont présentés comme déclencheurs pour la compréhension ou la production et très souvent aussi pour traiter de la grammaire ou du lexique. Les objectifs culturels sont parfois annoncés (p. ex. s'informer sur les auteurs étrangers qui écrivent en français) et parfois implicites, mais toujours présents. Les auteurs francophones sont présentés dans les trois manuels analysés. Si Cuq et Gruca ont constaté en 2002 que dans les manuels, il y avait un « oubli quasi généralisé de la littérature francophone » (2002 : 379), nous pouvons voir qu'il y a une évolution et que les écrivains francophones sont présentés, il y manque cependant leurs textes.

Dans *Le nouveau sans frontières*, les textes littéraires apparaissent dans le cahier d'exercices, à la fin de chaque unité. Dans presque la moitié des cas, ils ne sont pas accompagnés d'une consigne et c'est donc à l'enseignant d'inventer une activité, de les lire tout simplement – ou de les ignorer.

Les résultats de ce survol sont en partie comparables à ceux de Skela (2014 : 131) qui a analysé les manuels d'anglais. Dans son analyse, il s'est avéré que les textes littéraires étaient les plus présents dans le manuel le plus ancien, datant de 1950. Ils sont moins nombreux mais toujours présents dans les manuels appartenant à la méthode audio-orale, où ils apparaissent surtout dans le troisième volume, destiné aux apprenants ayant déjà un bon niveau de langue. Cuq et Gruca (2002 : 379) constatent la même chose. Selon eux, il y a le « chaos à l'intérieur d'une même série méthodologique : généralement absent dans les deux premiers livres, le texte littéraire fait brutalement son apparition dans le livre 3 ». Quant à la série des manuels les plus récents, Headway, publiés pour la première fois en 1996 (8 ans après la parution du *Nouveau sans frontières*), Skela dit qu'il contient des « bouts de textes littéraires mais que cela est très loin d'un programme cohérent » (Skela 2014 : 131).

Dans les textes fabriqués qui figurent dans les trois manuels français récents, les auteurs présentent presque uniquement les écrivains francophones et par cela mènent les apprenants à découvrir la littérature francophone. Nous nous demandons pourtant pourquoi ils se contentent de la présentation des auteurs et ne proposent pas leurs textes. Une des raisons possibles est la présumée difficulté de la langue. Defays et al. (2014 : 28) la mentionnent à la première place parmi les raisons possibles du rejet de textes littéraires : « la difficulté de la langue dans les

textes littéraires par rapport au niveau de la classe, à sa composition sociologique, au type d'enseignement qu'elle implique, aux motivations des apprenants qui la composent et, selon leur profil, à l'intérêt qu'ils manifestent à approcher la littérature ». Pourtant, comme le dit Gruca (2009 : 175) : « Le texte littéraire paraît souvent difficile, mais la difficulté peut être un atout si l'on éveille la curiosité et la motivation. » Nous ajoutons encore qu'il est possible de trouver des textes authentiques vraiment simples à comprendre. Prenons, à titre d'exemple, le poème de Jacques Roubaud, *Quand je pense*, que les apprenants de FLE pourraient comprendre après quelques heures d'apprentissage.

L'autre raison possible pourrait être les droits d'auteur (mentionné aussi par Calafato et Gudim 2020 : 14) qui sont aujourd'hui beaucoup plus respectés qu'ils ne l'étaient au moment de la parution du *Nouveau sans frontières*.

Cette analyse a des limites et est à compléter par l'analyse de tous les niveaux d'un certain manuel. Nous nous sommes limités au premier livre de chaque méthode, en accord avec les nouveaux descripteurs du Volume complémentaire du CECR (2018) qui introduisent la littérature au niveau A1.

## ANALYSE DE LA SITUATION DANS LES LYCÉES : ENTRETIENS AVEC LES ENSEIGNANTES DE FRANÇAIS

Dans la partie précédente, nous avons vu que, dans les manuels récents, les textes littéraires n'apparaissent presque pas. Pour vérifier ce qui se passe dans les classes, nous avons opté pour une méthode qualitative : les entretiens semi-dirigés avec les enseignantes de français. Les entretiens ont été effectués au mois de mai 2022, via la plateforme Zoom, enregistrés avec la permission des participantes puis transcrits.

5 enseignantes travaillent dans des lycées à Ljubljana, une en dehors de la ville. La plus jeune enseigne depuis moins de 10 ans, toutes les autres depuis plus de 10 ans. Il s'agit donc d'enseignantes expérimentées. Pour garder leur anonymat, nous ne pouvons pas révéler plus d'informations. Nous allons citer leurs réponses en utilisant les chiffres de E1<sup>6</sup> à E6.

Les questions posées étaient les suivantes – nous les avons complétées avec des sous-questions si cela s'est avéré nécessaire :

- Utilisez-vous des textes littéraires dans vos classes ? Si oui, combien de fois les utilisez-vous, avec quels niveaux ? Quels sont vos objectifs ?
- Quelle est la réaction des élèves ?

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6 E pour enseignante.

- Motivez-vous vos élèves à lire en français ? Si oui, comment ?
- Combien lisez-vous en français ? Comment choisissez-vous vos lectures ?

Avec les deux premiers jeux de questions nous visons à découvrir à quel point la littérature est présente dans les classes slovènes, comment elle est traitée et acceptée. Les deux dernières questions sont destinées à mesurer la motivation des élèves et des enseignantes. Selon Applegate et al. (2004 : 555), l'enseignant influence beaucoup les habitudes de ses élèves. La motivation pour la lecture est beaucoup plus grande et devient intrinsèque dans les classes où l'enseignant sert de modèle et lit. Les enseignants qui lisent vont plus probablement proposer des activités motivantes, par exemple, les cercles de lecture et les discussions qui suscitent un engagement des élèves.

Parmi les six enseignantes, trois utilisent les textes littéraires à tous les niveaux. Toutes les trois aimeraient les utiliser plus souvent. Une des enseignantes interrogées (E4) utilise les textes authentiques avec les élèves de terminale mais pas toujours : « Si je vois que c'est trop difficile pour eux, que la motivation va baisser, je renonce ». E5 dit qu'elle essaie de les utiliser mais ses élèves sont trop faibles pour les apprécier et elle a trop peu de temps qu'elle consacre plutôt à l'enseignement des bases.

Certaines enseignantes trouvent les textes littéraires peu utiles. E4 n'a pratiquement pas recours à la littérature ; elle est d'avis que dans la vie, les élèves auront plus besoin de savoirs pratiques, par exemple, acheter un billet de train, et qu'après avoir fini leurs études secondaires, ils ne vont pas lire de textes littéraires en français.

Deux des enseignantes (E1 et E3) mentionnent le concours de lecture<sup>7</sup> qui, dans leurs lycées respectifs, est obligatoire pour la 2<sup>ème</sup> et la 3<sup>ème</sup> année. Les textes proposés ne sont pas authentiques, cependant les deux enseignantes les trouvent utiles ; en lisant, les élèves s'habituent à la lecture de textes plus longs.

Parmi les auteurs, elles mentionnent Prévert, Camus, Saint-Exupéry (*Le petit prince*). Elles utilisent aussi les livres destinés aux enfants, p. ex. les livres de Bernard Friot<sup>8</sup> et *Le petit Nicolas*. Certaines travaillent avec les professeurs de langue maternelle et préparent des cours interdisciplinaires ; E1 mentionne les poèmes de Prévert et un extrait de Proust, E6 *Chanson d'automne* de Verlaine.

Les objectifs posés sont souvent linguistiques : la grammaire (E1, E5 : *Déjeuner du matin* de Prévert pour découvrir le passé composé), le lexique (E5 : *Le petit prince*). Les textes littéraires sont aussi utilisés comme déclencheurs pour

7 Bralna značka, le concours de lecture est préparé par une maison d'édition.

8 Bernard Friot est venu en Slovénie il y a quelques années et a visité plusieurs lycées ; c'est sans doute pour cela que les enseignantes le connaissent.

l'expression orale - E5 ajoute que parfois, après la lecture, ils discutent en langue maternelle et qu'elle trouve cela tout à fait approprié - et l'écriture créative. E2 propose parfois à ses élèves d'apprendre certains poèmes par coeur.

E3 et E6 utilisent les textes littéraires pour augmenter, chez les élèves, la confiance en eux et pour motiver : « Cette année, j'ai voulu prouver aux filles de la terminale qu'elles étaient capables de lire en français. J'ai retapé les deux premières pages de *L'Étranger*. Je l'ai apporté, nous l'avons lu et à la fin, je leur ai dit : Vous venez de lire un texte, écrit pour de vrais Français. Elles m'ont regardée, surprises : Est-ce si simple ? » Pareillement, E6 a préparé les extraits de quatre auteur·es contemporain·es : David Foenkinos, Sylvain Tesson, David Diop et Fatima Daas. Elle a apporté ces textes en classe sans consigne précise ; son objectif était de montrer aux élèves qu'ils sont capables de lire un texte authentique.

Les enseignantes travaillent séparément avec les élèves de terminale qui se préparent au baccalauréat au niveau supérieur ; il y a un roman et plusieurs poèmes à lire.

Les réactions des élèves sont généralement positives (E1, E2, E3), parfois mixtes (E5, E6). Selon E4, apporter un texte littéraire ne provoquerait qu'un stress supplémentaire. E6 ajoute que parfois il faut trouver d'autres moyens pour les motiver à la lecture : trouver une vidéo, regarder un extrait de film, adapté d'un roman.

Quatre des enseignantes interviewées motivent leurs élèves à lire en français, E1, E3 et E6 mentionnent le concours de lecture. E3 ajoute : « Les élèves lisent très peu, même en langue maternelle. Parfois je leur dis que moi non plus, je n'aimais pas lire au lycée parce que toute la lecture était obligatoire. J'ai commencé à apprécier la lecture à la faculté. » E2 partage son avis : « Mes élèves ne sont pas de grands lecteurs. À la fin de l'année, je leur prépare une liste de livres, bandes dessinées et films que sinon, ils ne connaîtraient pas. Certains lisent, d'autres pas. »

En ce qui concerne leurs habitudes de lecture en français, E1 et E6 disent qu'elles lisent chaque jour, au moins un peu. E2 avoue lire peu en français, par manque de temps ; elle préfère écouter des podcasts auxquels elle est abonnée. E3 dit qu'à cause de la fatigue et plus de travail après le confinement, elle a lu très peu cette année. Elle ajoute cependant : « Je dis très souvent aux élèves que la lecture est le meilleur moyen pour apprendre une langue. C'est l'avantage, à part le plaisir, bien sûr. » E5 lit uniquement en français, pour garder le contact avec la langue. Elle va à la bibliothèque et elle choisit les livres en consultant la quatrième de couverture. E6 lit constamment, elle a toujours des livres, empruntés de la médiathèque de l'Institut français. Elle dit : « Je ne choisis pas, je me laisse conseiller. De cette manière je lis aussi des livres que je ne choiserais jamais moi-même. »

## CONCLUSION

L'analyse des manuels et les entretiens avec les enseignantes de français nous montrent que le texte littéraire est relativement peu présent dans les classes slovènes. Les textes sont pratiquement absents dans les manuels, où nous trouvons cependant de nombreux textes fabriqués sur la littérature et surtout sur la littérature francophone. Cela peut sans doute intéresser les apprenants et leur ouvrir de nouveaux horizons. Ce qui est dommage, c'est que les textes manquent. Nous ne pouvons qu'être d'accord avec Gruca (2009: 168) : « La place et les fonctions du littéraire en classe de langue mériteraient un peu plus de cohérence et de cohésion pour s'insérer, comme il se doit, dans la dynamique de l'apprentissage : instaurer quelque peu un équilibre entre écrits fonctionnels et écrits fictionnels permettrait, par ailleurs, de prendre en charge un certain nombre d'éléments constitutifs de la langue-culture étrangère, qui participent pleinement à l'acquisition d'une compétence de communication, objectif majeur de tout enseignement/apprentissage de langues. »

Toutes les enseignantes incluses dans notre recherche, sauf une, utilisent des textes littéraires ; elles disent cependant qu'elles en utilisent trop peu. À part les programmes trop chargés par d'autres contenus et le manque de temps, elles trouvent les textes littéraires souvent trop difficiles et parfois peu utiles. Deux des interviewées mentionnent pourtant que pour les apprenants, c'est motivant de lire en langue cible et que cela augmente leur motivation pour l'apprentissage de la langue étrangère. Ce point de vue est confirmé par Daskalovska et Dimovska (2012 : 1186) qui citent Ur : « Les textes donnent également la satisfaction de savoir qu'on lit de la littérature dans sa forme originale. »

Enfin, nous aimerions attirer l'attention sur la question des textes écrits à des fins pédagogiques ou adaptés. Pendant les entretiens, il s'est avéré à plusieurs reprises que les enseignantes ne font pas une distinction entre les textes littéraires et les textes adaptés ou pédagogiques. Il est vrai qu'en lisant des livres pour le concours de lecture<sup>9</sup>, les apprenants s'entraînent à la lecture de textes plus longs, mais ne serait-il pas possible de trouver des textes authentiques ? Calafato et Paran (2019 : 2) reprennent Walther (2007) et Scott et Hamilton (2007) qui suggèrent que « les apprenants devraient être exposés à la littérature dès le début afin qu'ils puissent comprendre le fonctionnement de la langue cible, ainsi que développer leurs capacités de réflexion critique et leur capacité à interpréter le contenu textuel ». Cuq et Gruca s'insurgent : « Paradoxalement, tout se passe donc comme si la fréquentation des textes des grands auteurs ne pouvait se mériter qu'après une longue fréquentation de textes fabriqués à des fins linguistiques et pédagogiques.

9 On y trouve des textes, écrits spécialement pour les apprenants étrangers et des textes adaptés.

Cependant, pour faire face à certaines critiques, notamment celles concernant la place de l'écrit et l'absence d'enseignement culturel, et pour respecter le principe sacro-saint de la progression, de nombreuses oeuvres littéraires ont été réécrites ... selon les données du Français fondamental 1 et 2 ! Qu'il s'agisse d'une utilisation commerciale abusive de bases scientifiques ou non, il n'en demeure pas moins que ces adaptations, mises en place pour permettre un accès à la culture sous la méthodologie audiovisuelle, ont connu un rayonnement notoire en France comme à l'étranger, alors qu'elles reposent sur une pratique bien discutable : de nombreux étudiants ont cru lire les classiques du patrimoine français (Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, etc.) en 800 ou 1200 ou 1500 mots avec toutes les conséquences linguistiques que cela implique. » (Cuq et Gruca 2002 : 375). Rot Gabrovec (2001 : 122) conclut : « Du point de vue du contact culturel, il est peut-être même préférable de proposer la traduction d'un texte qu'un texte adapté appauvri. »

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## Književno besedilo pri pouku tujega jezika – ogrožena vrsta?

V članku najprej orišem mesto književnih besedil v zgodovini poučevanja jezikov, nadaljujem s predstavitvijo argumentov, ki govorijo v prid uporabi teh besedil pri pouku tujega jezika. Empirični del je sestavljen iz dveh delov: v prvem analiziram književna besedila v štirih učbenikih francoščine, v drugem delu pa predstavljam rezultate polstrukturiranih intervjujev s šestimi profesorici francoščine na slovenskih srednjih šolah. Odgovarjale so na vprašanja o rabi književnosti pri pouku jezika. V zadnjem delu se posvetim še vprašanju pri pouku pogosto uporabljenih prirejenih besedil.

**Ključne besede:** poučevanje jezika, književno besedilo, učbeniki za francoščino kot tuji jezik, mnenja učiteljev



# Ontological Metaphors for Moral Concepts in the Bible: Introduction

*Eldar Veremchuk*

## Abstract

The article reveals the peculiarities of ontological mappings involving ethical concepts in the text of the Bible. The paper hypothesizes that ethical concepts as abstract phenomena are understood as physical entities and living beings, therefore there must be corresponding metaphorical projections, which underlie their conceptualization. The metaphor is viewed from two perspectives: within the classical and conceptual metaphor theories. From the perspective of the classical theory, metaphor is a literary expressive means, part of figurative language, which consists in using one word instead of the other for the sake of drawing attention or attaining poetic or elevated style. From the conceptual perspective, metaphor is a way humans perceive and conceptualize the objective reality by means of understanding complex abstract ideas or phenomena on the basis of some simple concrete things from the central life experience. This is carried out by means of projection of the source domain features onto the target domain, the latter being more complex than the former. Ontological metaphoric transferences with the target ethical concepts, which are found in the Bible involve two superordinate source domains: PERSON and THING. The extension of these two primary metaphors, which make up the central mapping is represented by a number of hyponymic domains, each of which is discussed separately. Besides the extension, the article pays special attention to the elaboration of metaphors, which involves the extension of the conceptual zone and projection of other source domain features, different from the central ones. The research infers the conclusion that the use of cross-domain mappings plays an important role in conveying ontological and deontological messages since such type of narrative helps to deliver the essential message to the broader audience most

efficiently as the more complex moral implications expressed in this way are conceived through simpler ideas and notions.

**Keywords:** elaboration of metaphor, extension of metaphor, mapping, source domain, target domain

## INTRODUCTION

Moral concepts form the basis of any developed society since they underlie principles of interpersonal relations, which are imprinted in the human outlook and codified in legal norms. Therefore, research into their objectivization by language means gives better insight into their mental conceptualization, which is revealed in cross-domain mappings. Material for the research was context samples, which contained moral concepts as target domains for metaphorical projections retrieved from the Bible (New International Version). The choice of the Bible as a source of material for analysis is stipulated by the fact that it codifies the moral doctrine of the most widespread religion in the world – Christianity. Just as for any religion, one of the most salient tasks of Christianity are prescriptive and imperative regulations of social relations. The purpose of the paper is to examine ontological mappings involving moral concepts as target domains in the text of the Bible. The object of investigation is the metaphorical conceptual projections involving moral concepts. The paper hypothesizes that ethical values as abstract phenomena are understood as physical entities. Therefore, their conceptualization is realized through metaphoric cross-domain mappings, where material things act as source domains, the properties of which are mapped upon abstract concepts. This is confirmed by the text of the Bible, where one can find an extensive number of mapping instances.

It's worth mentioning that there exists a wide number of researches focused on metaphor studies and their quantity is constantly increasing, which can be illustrated by partly ironical Booth's (1979: 49) opinion that there will be more students of metaphor than humans by the year 2039. Currently, there also exists an impressive number of works dedicated to the research of Biblical metaphors. Among them one can distinguish studies: 1) focused on the particular Biblical book, like Isaian metaphors (Nielsen, 1989; Doyle, 2000; Dille, 2004); Jeremiah (Bourguet, 1987); Hosea (Nwaoru, 1999; Eidevall, 1996), etc; 2) surveys aiming at specific source and target domains among the latest researches include Brueggemann (2008), Cruz (2016), Spencer (2017), Lam (2016), Zimran (2018); 3) researches dealing with metaphors of gender and marriage: Haddox (2016); Sherwood (2018); Smit (2017). A far more exhaustive list is given in Lancaster (2021).

However, having searched the online compendium of Biblical metaphors ([biblicalmetaphor.com](http://biblicalmetaphor.com)) we concluded that among such a copious variety of research on the given topic there aren't any studies, dedicated to the analysis of moral concepts, like DUTY, CONSCIENCE, HONOUR, DIGNITY, PRIDE, acting as target domains in conceptual projections. Moreover, all the mentioned researches study Biblical metaphors exclusively in the literary sense, in which the metaphor is defined as a "novel or poetic linguistic expression, where one or more words for a concept are used outside of its normal conventional meaning to express a similar concept" (Lakoff 1993: 202). However, the metaphor is not just a stylistic device of a language but rather a matter of thought and reason. From this perspective, the language metaphor is secondary in relation to the conceptual metaphor (mapping), which is primary, as it sanctions the use of source domain language and inference patterns for target domain concepts (Lakoff, 1993: 208). Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to view the Bible metaphors not only from a linguistic perspective and treat them merely as a stylistic expressive means but also from a conceptual viewpoint. The mappings are conventional by their nature, that is they are a fixed part of the human conceptual system; therefore, such a twofold approach will cast light upon both issues: how metaphoric language contributes to the delivery of the Biblical ethical messages and how ethical concepts, which bear this message are codified in the human mind. The article has the following structure: an introduction, a brief overview of classical and conceptual metaphor theories, an analysis of cross-domain mappings with the ethical concepts, a delimitation of the range of metaphor for ethical concepts and conclusions.

## CLASSICAL VS CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY

The classical metaphor theory is rooted in the realm of literary studies, particularly in rhetoric and poetics, originally being based on the views of Aristotle and Cicero. Aristotle (1995) identifies metaphor as the substitution of one word or phrase for another in order to elevate the style. Cicero (1942) described metaphor as essential for theology, being one of its most efficient rhetorical devices. But as it was mentioned in the Introduction, metaphor can be viewed not merely as a literary means, realizing stylistic and rhetorical purposes, but as a cognitive mechanism for structuring experience and knowledge about the world. This view is based on the theory of conceptual metaphor (Kövecses, 2017a; Kövecses, 2017b; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which explains the mechanisms of features projection from one domain to another.

Such a dual interpretation of the term 'metaphor' (in the literary and cognitive senses) leads to the necessity to differentiate between some terms to avoid

ambiguity. Within the given paper the term ‘metaphor’ refers to the conceptual mapping, and the term ‘metaphorical expression’ is used to refer to an individual linguistic expression (like a *dead-end street*, for instance), which is sanctioned by the mapping and can be viewed as a stylistic device, serving rhetoric purposes in a given literary context.

Quite a clear distinction between literary and ontological metaphor is given in Cazeux (2007):

Within metaphor, a distinction can be drawn between mere and ontological metaphor; whereas the former simply associates a physical concept with a metaphysical one, the latter recognizes that all concepts resonate with possible transpositions and, as such, brings to the fore the world-making power of speaking. Furthermore, ontological metaphor structures experience as an openness to ...movement between concepts.

Within the Conceptual Metaphor Theory Lakoff & Johnson (1980) distinguish three types of metaphorical projections: ontological, structural, and orientational.

The given paper is focused on the ontological type of metaphor, which normally involves the projection of something concrete onto something abstract. According to Lakoff and Johnson:

Ontological metaphors are so natural and persuasive in our thought that they are usually taken as self-evident, direct descriptions of mental phenomena. (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

The ontological metaphorical transfer involves understanding one domain of experience (moral concept) in terms of an absolutely different domain of experience (PERSON or THING, for instance). More technically, the metaphor can be understood (in the mathematical sense) as a mapping from a source domain (like PERSON & THING) to a target domain (moral concept). The mapping is tightly structured. There are ontological correspondences, according to which the features of the target domains (moral concepts), like “giving orders”, etc. correspond systematically to the features of the source domains, like “judging”, “testifying”, “stumbling”, etc.

Summarizing, an ontological mapping is carried out between the two domains: the source and the target ones. The analyzed moral concepts act as the target domains, while the source domains are the concrete concepts, which map their features within the conceptual projections. The primary features of the target concept that overlap with the features of the source concept make up the area of central mapping, which enables a conceptual intersection that usually includes a very limited set of conceptual features. Such an overlap of features couples the source

and target domains that enables elaboration and extension of the central projection with further mappings of source domain features upon the target domain. All such mappings taken together constitute the cross-mapping zone, also known as the conceptual projection zone.

## THE CROSS-DOMAIN MAPPINGS

As it was mentioned, the aim of this paper is to highlight the Biblical cross-domain mappings and to analyze a range of metaphor used in the Bible to express moral concepts. Under the term ‘range of metaphor’ we understand a set of source domains, the features of which are transferred to the target concept (Kövecses, 2017a: 64). The conducted analysis has proven that the two main source domains are PERSON and OBJECT, which we will treat separately.

### The source domain PERSON

One of the instances of ontological metaphor is personification, in which human qualities are given to nonhuman entities. This type of metaphor is not only a very common literary device and stylistic expressive means, but also a very representative cognitive mechanism of conceptualization of the world. As Kövecses (2002) claims:

Personification makes use of one of the best source domains we have – ourselves. In personifying nonhumans as humans, we can begin to understand them a little better.

The personification of ethical categories proves the fact that being part of human consciousness and nature, they are subconsciously viewed as living beings that can, just like any person, carry out actions. This is because human deeds are often triggered by an inner drive, stipulated by the moral outlook. In this connection, the mapping ETHICAL CONCEPT is a PERSON is based on the central mapping: ethical values, like honour, duty, and conscience, are imperative by their nature and can prescribe certain actions, just like a human can give orders and commands. Therefore, the essential central mapping is represented by the feature the “ability to give commands and govern behaviour”, which both source and target domains share. Extension of central mapping constitutes a metaphoric conceptual space represented by the cognitive traits of the involved source domains: JUDGE, WITNESS, and WALKER, which are all hyponyms of the superordinate concept PERSON.

Firstly, let's consider the domain JUDGE:

*...the other man's conscience, I mean, not yours. For why should my freedom be **judged** by another's conscience? (1Co. 10:29)*

The ethical concept CONSCIENCE in this example is metaphorically represented as a judge, who can deliver a verdict. Thus, the mapping consists in the transference of the feature the "ability to judge" (as one of the human abilities) upon the ethical concept CONSCIENCE. The metaphor CONSCIENCE is a JUDGE evolves further, yielding more specific conceptual projections. In case the verdict of the judgement is negative conscience becomes "able to reproach":

*I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it; my **conscience will not reproach** me as long as I live. (Job 27:6)*

Along with the mentioned elaboration, one can find an extension of this metaphoric projection, which involves the domain DEFENDANT. The result of self-judgement can be condemnation, which leads to the transference of the defendant's feature "guilty" upon the moral concept CONSCIENCE:

*Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a **guilty conscience** and having our bodies washed with pure water. (He. 10:22)*

In this and previous examples one can find two opposing source domains: JUDGE and DEFENDANT. Such a combination makes it possible to more clearly convey the general Bible idea that conscience is an entity in the human soul that judges, brings out a verdict, and bears responsibility for the committed actions simultaneously.

The idea of being guilty is also conveyed through the elaboration of the primary source domain PERSON, which involves the transference of the feature the "ability to be scorched" upon the target domain CONSCIENCE:

*Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose **consciences have been seared** as with a hot iron. (1Ti. 4:2)*

As noted by Gibbs et al. (2004: 1190):

The poetic value and the communicative expressiveness of metaphoric language partly arise from its roots in people's ordinary, felt sensations of their bodies in action.

The provided above Biblical context (1Ti. 4:) exemplifies the realization of the embodiment principle. According to the central life experience searing destroys physical senses, so that scorched skin receptors or eyes cannot function properly. Using metaphor enables appealing to such knowledge, which underlies the understanding of Biblical context.

The analyzed metaphoric mappings have a cognitive nature, but along with this, they are not deprived of stylistic functions, which a metaphor normally performs. Saying that conscience is a judge, defendant or culprit evokes in the reader's mind an image of a corresponding person, who is able to carry out the corresponding typical activities, therefore, the deployment of the metaphoric language conveys the input message in a more concise, understandable, and clear way, compared to the descriptive, or declarative non-metaphoric narrative.

The next metaphoric transference is represented by the mapping MORAL CONCEPT is a WITNESS:

*Now, this is our boast: Our **conscience testifies** that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace. (2Co. 1:12)*

*And my **honesty will testify** for me in the future, whenever you check on the wages you have paid me. Any goat in my possession that is not peckled or spotted, or any lamb that is not dark-coloured, will be considered stolen. (Ge. 30:33)*

*...since they show that the **requirements of the law are written on their hearts**, their **consciences also bearing witness**, and their **thoughts now accusing**, now even **defending** them. (Ro. 2:15)*

This mapping is based on the transference of the trait the "ability to testify". Deployment of such a metaphoric expression is aligned with the superordinate source domain COURT, which also embraces the domains WITNESS and JUDGE.

The last quote also instantiates one more mapping: HEART, which is considered to be the core of personality, is viewed as a RECORD-BOOK, which stores the "inscriptions" of all person's virtues and misdeeds. Conceptual transference HEART is a RECORD BOOK is based on the mapping of the feature the "ability to be written on" upon the target domain.

The next metaphoric transference is "MORAL CONCEPT is a WALKING PERSON" which is an extension of the superordinate metaphor "MORAL CONCEPT is a PERSON".

Within this metaphoric projection, the central mapping is made up by the superordinate source domain feature the "ability to move", which is specified to the

different kinds of movement: the “ability to be driven back; to stumble; to stand; to enter; to come; to go”:

*So, **justice is driven back**, and **righteousness stands at a distance**; **truth has stumbled** in the streets, **honesty cannot enter**. (Is. 59:14)*

***Pride goes** before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall. (Pr. 16:18)*

*When **pride comes**, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom. (Pr. 11:2)*

The analysis of the wider context makes us claim that in the last two examples the verbs *come* and *go* express motion rather than a temporal succession of the events, like in the phrase “autumn comes after summer”, as the general sense of verses conveys the idea that ethical concept PRIDE has “companions” – destruction and disgrace.

The next transference is represented by the metaphoric extension “MORAL CONCEPT is a PART OF BODY”, within the framework of which the feature the “ability to be cut off” is mapped on the target concept:

*...and do not ever **cut off your kindness** from my family — not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David’s enemies from the face of the earth. (1Sa. 20:15)*

*Foreigners will occupy Ashdod, and I **will cut off the pride** of the Philistines. (Zec. 9:6)*

In the elaboration of these conceptual mappings we find the features the “ability to deceive”, the “ability to breed”, and the “ability to carry things”:

*The terror you inspire and the **pride** of your heart have **deceived** you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks, who occupy the heights of the hill. Though you build your nest as high as the eagle’s, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD. (Je. 49:16)*

*Pride only **breeds quarrels**, but wisdom is found in those who take advice. (Pr. 13:10)*

*My master will not have **on his conscience the staggering** burden of needless bloodshed or of having avenged himself. And when the LORD has brought my master success, remember your servant. (1Sa. 25:31)*

Summarizing, one should mention that all the aforementioned conceptual cross-domain transferences involve projections of the core human qualities upon the target moral concept.

## The source domain THING

The next big mapping is MORAL CATEGORY is a THING. The central mapping is represented by the quality the “ability to be possessed”, which is shared by both source and target concepts (one can possess a thing and a character trait). This central mapping is extended by the projection of the other qualities, peculiar to a physical object, upon ethical values. Primarily, it is the “ability to occupy a position in space”:

*Woe to that wreath, the pride of Ephraim's drunkards, to the fading flower, his glorious beauty, set on the head of a fertile valley — to that city, the **pride** of those **laid low by wine**! (Is. 28:1)*

*Is. 25:11 They will spread out their hands in it, as a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim. God will **bring down** their pride despite the cleverness of their hands. (Is. 25:11)*

The expressions *to lay low* and *to bring down* can be considered to be trite (or dead) metaphors, as they have a lexicographically registered meaning “to feel weak” and “to reduce” correspondently. But these expressions can also be treated as metaphoric since their inner form is constituted by the orientational metaphor – “high is big (or a lot)” and “low is little (and normally bad)”. The next examples also instantiate the transference within the orientational metaphor:

*Though his **pride reaches to the heavens** and his **head touches the clouds**... (Job 20:6)*

Another deployment of orientational metaphor in relation to moral concepts is treating them as a vertical landmark:

*Now since we are **under obligation** to the palace and it is not proper for us to see the king dishonoured, we are sending this message to inform the king... (Ezr. 4:14)*

*If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other **duty laid on him**. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married. (De. 24:5)*

In these mappings, we observe that ethical concepts such as OBLIGATION or DUTY are viewed as something which hangs over a person. This means that these concepts are ascribed with the feature the “ability to press”. Such a transference helps to convey the message that duty is something that cannot be ignored (so as a weight on the shoulders cannot be unnoticed) and is obligatory to carry out.

One more metaphoric projection is motivated by the conceptualization of moral concepts through the domain HEIGHT, which is a part of the domain VERTICAL LANDMARK:

*When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in **high honour**. (Ac. 19:17)*

The other projected feature of the source domain OBJECT is “fragility”, which, judging by the basic life experience, is one of the intrinsic traits of many physical things:

*I will cause your hordes to fall by the swords of mighty men – the most ruthless of all nations. They will **shatter the pride** of Egypt, and all her hordes will be overthrown. (Ez. 32:12)*

One of the hyponyms of the domain OBJECT is WEAPON, which projects its nucleus feature the “ability to strike” upon the target domain:

*Afterwards, David was **conscience-stricken** for having cut off a corner of his robe. (1Sa. 24:5)*

The other projected source domain feature is “clear”:

*Did he not say to me, ‘She is my sister,’ and didn’t she also say, He is my brother’? I have done this with **a clear conscience** and clean hands. (Ge. 20:5)*

The next feature mapped upon the target moral concept is the “ability to be driven away”:

*Terrors overwhelm me; **my dignity is driven away as by the wind**, my safety vanishes like a cloud. (Job 30:15)*

In these lines, DIGNITY is represented as an object rather than a living thing like in the example above, since in central life experience wind normally carries away things but not humans unless it is a hurricane, which is not the case within the mentioned context.

The next metaphoric projection is represented by the mapping MORAL CONCEPT is CLOTHES, which means that the corresponding feature – “ability to be worn” is transferred to the moral concept:

*I **put on righteousness as my clothing**; justice was my robe and my turban. (Job 29:14)*

*She is **clothed with strength and dignity**; she can laugh at the days to come (Pr. 31:25)*

This metaphoric projection along with the domain CLOTHES involves also the hyponymic domain ACCESSORY:

*Therefore, **pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.*** (Ps. 73:6)

The highlighted conceptual metaphoric mappings sanction the use of corresponding metaphoric expressions, which provides for the creation of a more vivid and ‘illustrated’ image that in its turn contributes to a clearer understanding and conceiving of the Bible implications.

## THE RANGE OF METAPHOR FOR THE ETHICAL CONCEPTS

The analyzed mappings represent conceptual metaphor space, the range of which is constituted by the corpus of source domains involved in the conceptual metaphoric projections. The generalized analysis of the source and target domain mappings is given in Table 1.

Table 1. The Biblical cross-domain mappings for target moral concepts

| The superordinate source domain | Source domain                             | Source domain feature                                           | Target domain                                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| PERSON                          | giving directions and governing behaviour |                                                                 |                                                       |
|                                 | JUDGE                                     | judging<br>reproaching                                          | CONSCIENCE                                            |
|                                 | DEFENDANT                                 | guilty<br>seared                                                | CONSCIENCE                                            |
|                                 | WITNESS                                   | testifying                                                      | CONSCIENCE<br>HONESTY                                 |
|                                 | WALKER                                    | being driven back; stumbling; standing; entering; coming; going | JUSTICE<br>RIGHTEOUSNESS<br>TRUTH<br>HONESTY<br>PRIDE |
|                                 | PART OF BODY                              | cutting off                                                     | KINDNESS                                              |
|                                 | TRAITOR                                   | deceiving                                                       | PRIDE                                                 |
|                                 | FARMER                                    | breeding                                                        | PRIDE                                                 |
|                                 | PORTER                                    | burden                                                          | CONSCIENCE                                            |

| The superordinate source domain | Source domain               | Source domain feature                                 | Target domain                                               |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| OBJECT                          | the ability to be possessed |                                                       |                                                             |
|                                 | RECORD BOOK                 | being written on                                      | HEART                                                       |
|                                 |                             | occupying position in space: lying low, bringing down | PRIDE                                                       |
|                                 | VERTICAL SCALE              | reaching heaven                                       | PRIDE                                                       |
|                                 | BURDEN                      | being under<br>being laid on                          | OBLIGATION<br>DUTY                                          |
|                                 | VERTICAL SCALE              | high                                                  | HONOUR                                                      |
|                                 | WEAPON                      | striking                                              | CONSCIENCE                                                  |
|                                 | CLEAN OBJECT                | clear                                                 | CONSCIENCE                                                  |
|                                 | LIGHT OBJECT                | being driven away                                     | DIGNITY                                                     |
|                                 | CLOTHES (ROBE, TURBAN)      | putting on                                            | RIGHTEOUSNESS<br>JUSTICE<br>STRENGTH<br>DIGNITY<br>VIOLENCE |
|                                 | ACCESSORY                   | wearing                                               | PRIDE                                                       |

## CONCLUSIONS

The central motifs of the Bible, as the main book of Christianity, are centred around the deontological and axiological parameters of interpersonal relations, which is why ethical concepts are at the core of its narrative. Since ethical concepts bear the highest level of abstraction, their actualization is carried out via extensive use of metaphorical expressions, which can be viewed from both classical and conceptual metaphor theories. Therefore, the deployed metaphors for the target ethical concepts are, on the one hand, stylistic expressive means, which are aimed at an elevation of style, and, on the other hand, cross-domain mappings, which describe ethical concepts within the framework of knowledge of concrete entities, like PERSON and THING, which are superordinate for a number of hyponymic extensions and elaborations. The use of cross-domain mappings plays an important role in conveying ontological and deontological messages since their source domains belong to basic well-known things, the awareness of which makes up the basic life experience. Such a metaphoric type of narrative helps to deliver the essential message to the masses in the most efficient way as the more complex moral implications expressed in cross-domain mappings are conceived through more simple ideas and notions.

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## Ontološke metafore za moralne koncepte v Bibliji

Članek razkriva posebnosti ontoloških preslikav, ki vključujejo etične pojme v svetopi-smemskem besedilu. Namen članka je opozoriti, da so etični pojmi kot abstraktni pojavi razumljeni kot fizične entitete in živa bitja, zato morajo obstajati ustrezne metaforične projekcije, na katerih temelji njihova konceptualizacija. Metafora je tako obravnavana z dveh vidikov: v okviru klasične in konceptualne teorije metafore. Z vidika klasične teorije je metafora literarno izrazno sredstvo, del figurativnega jezika, ki je sestavljen iz uporabe ene besede namesto druge zaradi pritegnitve pozornosti ali doseganja poetičnega ali označenega sloga. S konceptualnega vidika je metafora način, kako človek dojema in pojmuje objektivno resničnost s pomočjo razumevanja zapletenih abstraktnih idej ali pojavov na podlagi nekaterih konkretnih stvari iz osrednjih življenjskih izkušenj. To poteka s projekcijo značilnosti izvirne domene na ciljno domeno, pri čemer je slednja kompleksnejša od prve. Ontološke metaforične transference z etičnimi koncepti kot ciljnim domenami, ki jih najdemo v Svetem pismu, vključujejo dve nadrejeni izvorni domeni: Oseba in stvar. Razširitev teh dveh primarnih metafor, ki tvorita osrednje preslikave, predstavljajo številne hiponimične domene, od katerih je vsaka obravnavana posebej. Poleg razširitve je v članku posebna pozornost namenjena elaboraciji metafor, ki vključuje razširitev pojmovnega

območja in projekcijo drugih značilnosti izvornih domen ob osrednjih. Raziskava izpeljuje sklep, da ima uporaba meddomenskih preslikav pomembno vlogo pri posredovanju ontoloških in deontoloških sporočil, saj takšna vrsta pripovedi pripomore k najučinkovitejšemu posredovanju bistvenega sporočila širšemu občinstvu, saj so na ta način izražene kompleksnejše moralne implikacije pojmovane s preprostejšimi idejami in pojmi.

**Ključne besede:** elaboracija metafore, razširitev metafore, kartiranje, izvorno področje, ciljno področje



# The Vulnerability of Withdrawal: Between the Sentences of the Early Prose of Tao Lin

*Brian Willems*

## Abstract

In Tao Lin's early books *Eeeee Eee Eeee* (2007), *Bed* (2007), *Shoplifting from American Apparel* (2009), and *Richard Yates* (2010) vulnerability is linked to a lack of context. Passages and sentences are semantically removed enough from each other that a space of vulnerability opens in which the unexpected can happen. Using the work of Quentin Meillassoux, Judith Butler, Jacques Rancière, and Levi Bryant, among others, this sense of vulnerability is argued to be the primary experience of our lives, but we often forget it. Lin's work makes this primary vulnerability visible in the three works analyzed using three different techniques: incomplete information, withdrawn context, and a monstrous vulnerability. In this sense, the author makes his writing vulnerable to the very problems that it foregrounds.

**Keywords:** Tao Lin, vulnerability, incomplete information

## INCOMPLETE INFORMATION

The early novels of Tao Lin use three narrative techniques to represent vulnerability between both the reader and the text and the text and the world. The first technique is incomplete information, in which a vulnerability to making the wrong choice is caused by not having enough information about the situation. The second technique is a withdrawal from context, in which parts of the narrative world are “blocked off” to both the reader and characters, creating a sense of unease about what the world actually contains. And lastly, Lin interrogates a monstrous vulnerability, in which it is not the alien other which causes violence, but the most mundane among us. All three techniques are then used to argue for what Judith Butler calls “primary vulnerability” (2016, 12), meaning that vulnerability is the fundamental basis of our lives.

Tao Lin’s first novel *Eeeee Eee Eeee* (2007) is named after the onomatopoeic sounds that a dolphin makes. Although the story focuses on Andrew, who recently graduated from college and is now delivering Domino’s pizza, it is also sporadically populated by talking dolphins, moose, bears, hamsters, and aliens. One function of these creatures is to create a sense of vulnerability in the narrative through a feeling that what happens next is unexpected. Therefore, when no one seems shocked when a moose gives a pizza delivery driver a ten-dollar tip (Lin 2007b, 10), it opens the way for the narrative normalization of a number of bizarre events.<sup>1</sup> One effect of this normalization is to develop a text that is repeatedly interrupted by the unexpected. Another way through incomplete information.

Andrew’s first extended encounter with an interrupting animal happens with a bear that comes out of his co-worker Joanna’s house. After dropping Joanna off, Andrew sits in his car, daydreaming about his ex-girlfriend Sara. The bear that comes out of Joanna’s house is rather aggressive, trying to convince Andrew to follow him by offering him “free money” and a laptop (33). When Andrew hesitates, the bear attacks:

The bear has a twenty-dollar-bill and a blue blanket and holds them in front and walks to Andrew’s car and puts the blanket on Andrew’s head and rips off Andrew’s door and the top of Andrew’s car. The bear picks up Andrew and carries Andrew to the house he earlier pointed at and in the side yard sets down Andrew, who takes the blanket off his own head. The bear kneels, opens a secret passageway under a patch of grass, and points at a ladder that goes underground. Andrew goes to the ladder. “Do it,” the bear says. (33)

1 The word “bizarre” is not chosen haphazardly as some elements of Lin’s text fit into the absurdity of the genre of bizarro fiction (Burk 2009, 3).

The ladder leads to an underground passage that contains a moose in a nook, a city of dolphins and bears, as well as “a very tall statue of the current president of the United States” (35). However, this is just the beginning of an episode featuring dolphins with sledgehammers slapping Andrew’s face and the bear telling Andrew that the bear’s name is also Andrew, along with the Andrew-bear throwing a smoke bomb and then a dolphin appearing, after which the dolphin throws a smoke bomb and then the Andrew-bear comes back (36). These absurd story elements lie in contrast to what happens when Andrew leaves the hole and the bear. Back on the surface, Andrew seemingly forgets what happened to him and is back to obsessive-compulsively thinking about his life, about why Joanna seemed to get happier when she left his car, about if he should start a band with his friend Steve, about whether he should try and have a relationship with Joanna’s sister (whom he has never met), and about how he needs to go back to a Denny’s restaurant and apologize to a waitress he thinks hates him (41). The underground adventure with the bear has been forgotten. It has no impact on the rest of Andrew’s life. The interaction with the animal is just an interruption and Andrew’s otherwise normal existence continues unhindered afterward. The bear is a character who introduces change and absurdity. However, when Andrew is not interacting with such an animal, his life is a fairly predictable collection of worries about his work and love life. When Andrew does interact with such an animal, anything can happen. However, when such animals are out of the picture, life continues as normal.

In order to understand this narrative strategy, we will need to define what it is about this text that allows for the interruption of absurd elements in the story. But first, we should define the kind of “absurd” under discussion. The absurd animal elements are being described in the literary sense of the world, as developed by Martin Esslin, in which the absurd expresses “its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought” (Esslin 2001, 24). Still, this does not mean that the whole text needs to be irrational. For if Eugène Ionesco’s *Rhinoceros* (1959) is absurd because people turn into the animal during the play, it still retains meaning in that it is also about the misguided acceptance of National Socialism during the Second World War. While in *Eeeee Eee Eeee*, sense does not evolve into nonsense, but nonsense interrupts sense in an unexpected fashion. The intrusion of absurd elements in the novel can be described, loosely, as random. Not in the meaning that the elements themselves are randomly chosen, but rather that they randomly appear and disappear. It is the “randomness” of the appearance of absurd elements that will tie this novel

to a discussion of vulnerability, since when you do not know when something is coming, you are vulnerable to it all the time.<sup>2</sup>

In Aristotle's *On the Heavens* (350 BCE), a paradox is formulated that has been at the heart of thought on randomness. In this work, Aristotle is discussing why the earth apparently does not move as the rest of the celestial bodies of the heavens do. Citing Anaximander, Aristotle posits that the stasis of the earth arises from its "indifference," which he illustrates by comparing to someone who, though exceedingly hungry and thirsty, and both equally, yet being equidistant from food and drink, is therefore bound to stay where he is" (Aristotle [original] 1984, 486). The choice this person has to make between food and drink is random since the person is equally hungry and thirsty. Even though Aristotle is talking about physical states, his comment has set off a number of debates on the notion of total equilibrium in the face of multiple options, seen, for example, in the joy of freedom in making a choice free of consequence: "Who would not love, albeit just for a few seconds, to play at choosing, savouring the trill of balancing up options, the delights of these set-ups that elevate you and allow you to float free of all relations of force and all confrontation?" (Châtelet 2014, 56).

Following on from Aristotle, his description of the randomness of choice could be seen as an example of "incomplete information" (Taleb 2007, 197–198). Since a human can live without food for at least a week, and without water at most for a few days, then the choice between food and water is not equal: first go for the water, then the food. The choice of one or the other can only be thought of as random if you lack certain information about human biology.<sup>3</sup> Another approach to Aristotle's paradox seeks to separate randomness from chaos in the sense that randomness is totally removed from all probability (Meillassoux 2012, 132), while chaos features predictable properties that are so complex that they are difficult to calculate (Taleb 2007, 198) (hence chaos falls into the "incomplete information" group).

2 The separation between animal- and non-animal elements in the novel is essential. This differentiates Lin's novel from what, on the surface, might seem like a comparable text, Mykle Hansen's 2008 novel *HELP! A Bear is Eating Me!* In this story Marv Pushkin is trapped under his SUV and is slowly getting eaten by a bear. However, despite this absurd narrative position, the text is fairly run-of-the-mill as it goes back and forth in time explaining Pushkin's current predicament and the events that led him there. Even the end of the story, when Marv thinks that he is a bear and begins to bite people, does not move into the fantastic and anthropomorphic territory of Lin's work. More importantly, Hansen's the whole of novel exists on the same level of strangeness, while Lin's moves back-and-forth between the absurdity of the animal scenes and the normalization of these scenes in the rest of the text.

3 Steve Forte, a casino security expert, discusses the way that a lack of information about the physical characteristics of dice, cards, and slot machines leads gamblers to believe that they games they play are random (Forte 2014, 120–122).

The absurd episodes in Lin's novel at first do not seem to fall under the category of incomplete information. If the normalized, pre-animal interruption sections were to contain more information, they would not give a greater idea as to what would happen next. There is a cut, a separation, a removal from time between the two sections in the sense that there is nothing in the former that gives a hint to the latter (cf. Malabou 2012, 6). However, it will be seen that actually the novel is a case of incomplete information.

But to see why, first we need the counter argument. The citation above in connection to the second reading of randomness, meaning randomness as a removal from probability, was Quentin Meillassoux. The French philosopher's 1997 PhD thesis, *L'existence divine*, posits that, although there has never been and there is not a god, that does not mean a god cannot appear in the future. He makes this argument by stating that our world has undergone three fundamentally random changes, meaning that no hint of what happened before indicates what will happen next. These three random changes are the emergence of something from nothing at the beginning of the universe, the emergence of life out of non-life, and the emergence of human intelligence out of animal life (Meillassoux 2011, 189). The argument follows that another massive change could occur (but also could not), and that massive change could be the appearance of a god (although it could also be absolutely anything else) (192). Since nothing does not contain any hint of something, just as non-life has no features, no matter how small, of life in it, the emergence of something and of life are random events rather than examples of incomplete information since that they could in no way be predicted by what came before (cf. Willems 2017, 151-152).

In order to help decide whether the appearance of the absurd elements in *Eeeee Eee Eeee* are random or due to incomplete information, another book from Lin in which the appearance of absurdity functions differently is essential. Lin's short-story collection *Bed* (2007), published the same year as the novel *Eeeee Eee Eeee*, offers a variety of narrative techniques to incorporate the unexpected into a text, but none are as successful as in the novel because none create the same sense of unexpectedness, and hence, as argued below, of the vulnerability of the reader to what happens in the text. The first technique for incorporating the unexpected is metaphor. In the story "Love is the Indifferent God..." when Sean is asked to fast-forward through the previews of a movie on a VCR tape, he becomes sadly nostalgic, and "felt the tiniest sadness—the sadness of an ant, a mite, and a mosquito—stamping lightly against his heart, like a little rain" (Lin 2007a, 131). While this description is unexpected, it is relegated to the realm of metaphor, and therefore has no actual relation to the plot (his feeling of nostalgia might have an effect, but the ant, mite, and mosquito do not become characters). This is similar to the other main example in the text, that of dreams, which also introduce absurd

elements into the story. For example, in “Nine, Ten,” nine-year-old Jed and his friend LJ both dream of giant squids. In Jed’s dream, “he was a tiny shrimp, a krill. He floated in blackness and was confused. A giant squid went by slowly” (197). Still, the dreams these two have are inspired by an actual giant squid found on the beach, an odd event for sure, but nothing in the realm of what happens in Lin’s first novel in terms of strangeness and absurdity.

Help to decide between randomness and incomplete information is explicitly provided by a character near the end of *Eeeee Eee Eeee*. Andrew and his friend Shawn run into the current president (who is also an alien from a different galaxy) outside of a subway station and they all go to a sushi bar for something to eat. The president begins a long monologue, part of which can be used as a clue to the role of incomplete information in the novel:

how do you know if an action will increase or decrease net pain and suffering in the universe from? now until the end of time? You can’t know. Impossible. You don’t know if drawing your friend a picture will or will not cause fifty thousand years of suffering to ten million organisms on Alpha Centauri one billion years from now. So you create context. A common context is one’s life plus the next few generations, not including animals, plants, or inanimate objects, and only on Earth, with emphasis on one’s own country. So now you’ve made an assumption and also blocked out more than 99.9% of the universe, 99.9% of all life on Earth, and an infinite or unknown amount of time. You live a horribly distorted life. You don’t know anything. [...] You are stupid and boring. (194)

The president’s speech is not about the appearance of something totally new as described by Meillassoux (2011, 189). Even though the president is an alien from another galaxy, he is still from our universe, and not from a mystical, unknown plane. But the president is discussing how we have incomplete information about the universe around us, and how in fact we need the context of incomplete information in order to function. It is in this context that we should read the interruptions of absurdity in the novel. Talking bears are not the most important aspect of the story, however, which is why they have no bearing on the “normalized” parts of the novel. Rather, Lin’s book is about seeing other worlds that already exist around us, but are “blocked out” in order to create a context for understanding. When these worlds appear to us they might seem random and absurd, but this is really just born out of a blindness to 99.9% of the existing universe. *Eeeee Eee Eeee* is a novel that tries to remind us of that fact. It does so by creating a narrative that is vulnerable not to the randomness of a coming god or some other unforeseeable event, but rather to the epistemological limits of humans themselves. Or, as Andrew says elsewhere in the novel, “Everything was to be accepted. The world was here. Everything was here” (104).

## WITHDRAWN CONTEXT

The argument developed in the previous section is that a vulnerability to the world arises from incomplete information. Margrit Shildrick contrasts vulnerability to “the security of closure” (Shildrick 2002, 1), finding a porous fluidity in both bodily features such as the skin (102) and cultural agreements such as normativity (124). The figure that makes such disruption possible is the monster, since the appearance of monstrous figures insist on a binary difference between self and other that “should alert us to the instability of the categories that ground the normative human subject” (9). However, although Lin’s first novel is populated by talking bears, hamsters, and alien presidents, it is not a monster that disturbs the closed-off context of a subject, but rather the world. Jean-Michel Ganteau describes Shildrick’s work as delineating “an image of the self as ceaselessly interrupted by the event of the other, indefinitely open and refusing totalising effects of closure” (Ganteau 2018, 6). However, Lin’s novel does not feature a closure to the monstrous other, but rather a closure to the everyday, mundane world around us, which, as Lin’s alien president says, is 99.9% blocked out.

Another work of Lin’s, his novella *Shoplifting from American Apparel* (2009), functions as a stress-test for the ability to block out the world. However, the story is not populated by talking animals or anyone from another planet. Rather, the characters are vulnerable in their own world, and this vulnerability takes place between the sentences of the text rather than between one scene and another.

Sam is a young author who spends a great deal of time on Gmail chat and is not a great shoplifter. The story begins with “Sam woke around 3:30 p.m. and saw no emails from Sheila” (Lin 2009, 5). The most obvious semantic elements of this sentence are: Sam, waking up, 3:30 p.m., and no emails from Sheila. But the next sentence only connects to the main character, and nothing else. It goes: “He made a smoothie” (5). This combination of similarity (the main character appearing in both sentences) and difference (making a smoothie is not connected to anything in the previous sentence) might seem minor, but it is a consistent and defining characteristic of the style of the novella. This syntactic disconnection is related to vulnerability in that the context created by one sentence is challenged by what happens next. The reader is left to fill in the blanks between sentences, to guess at a world that lies outside of the context provided in the text. So when we get to the third sentence of the novella, “He lay on his bed and stared at his computer screen” (5), we do not know what happened to the smoothie. Was it consumed, abandoned, thrown out the window, put on a nightstand next to his bed to sit for the rest of the day, untouched? No clues are given. And the same happens again with the next sentence: “He showered and put on clothes and opened the Microsoft Word files of his poetry. He looked at his email” (5). No context is provided

about what happened between staring at his computer screen and taking a shower, just as a blank is drawn in the time between opening the poetry file and looking at his email. Did Sam work on his poetry for an hour, and then check his email, or is email a distraction from working on what Sam knows he should be working on? The events described are mundane, but what happens between the events is unknown.

Lin's narration provides a very tight focus, with the jolts between sentences undoing the "suture" of the reader's unconscious seemingly effortlessly putting the pieces of the story together. *Suture* is a concept of psychoanalysis which is often employed in film theory to describe how the spectator stitches together the disjointed nature of the images that flicker before their eyes (Heath 1981, 14; 78-80). Lin's novel attempts to make visible some of the features of suture by foregrounding the jump from one sentence to another rather than making it seamless. Lin foregrounds not, as Jacques Rancière states in a discussion of cinema, "the manifestations of the properties of a certain technical medium" (literature in this case), "but operations: relations between a whole and parts, between a visibility and a power of signification and affect associated with it; between expectations and what happens to meet them" (Rancière 2009, 3). Even so, perhaps the highlighting of the operations of moving from one sentence to the next is not just a cinematic element of Lin's work, but also a reflection of the digital age in which it was written and set. Espen Aarseth has described the "non-trivial" nature of navigating a digitally native text for the first time. With print, the conventions of starting at the top of a page and moving downward, as well as turning a page of a book, have been normalized. But in the digital world, navigation can become its own task, leading Aarseth to describe the effort of reading such literature as *ergodic*, coming from the Greek terms *ergon* and *hodos*, meaning both *work* and *path* respectively (Aarseth 1997, 1-2).<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, we perhaps do not need to stray so far from print literature to make sense of what is happening in Lin's story. In Stanley Fish's initial formulation of reader-response theory, meaning "*an analysis of the developing responses of the reader in relation to the words as they succeed one another in time*" (Fish 1970,

4 Lin's use of digital culture in his novels is one the reasons that Miriam Fernández-Santiago, in "Narrative Exhaustion and the Posthuman Narrative Self in Tao Lin's *Taipei*," connects the narrative strategies of his writing with posthumanism: "the only Paul that can be portrayed through the indirect free style used in the novel, are the diverse technological and biological symbioses taking place through Paul's narrative self-consciousness. [...] I interpret Lin's narrative strategies in *Taipei* as instanting a posthumanist aesthetics of exhaustion, targeting the humanist idea subscribed to transhumanism and the diverse narrative techniques through which this idea is both constructed and confirmed" (Fernández-Santiago 2019, 59). In an earlier work on Lin's novel *Taipei* (2013), an argument is developed regarding being hospitable toward the risks of the "full disclosure" demanded by our surveillance society (Willems 2016, esp. 236-238).

126-127, italics in original), he posits the notion of “progressive decertainizing” (124), in which the reader’s expectations of “the sentence’s future contours” (ibid.) are constantly challenged. Therefore, “The prose is continually opening, and then closing, on the possibility of verification in one direction or another” (125). Even so, while Fish is specifically interested in intra-sentence relations, Lin focuses on inter-sentence ones. What Lin shares with Fish, on the other hand, is an interest not so much in the question of “what does this sentence mean?” but rather in the performative question of “what does this sentence do?” (125). At this point we come back to Rancière’s “operations” which describe what happens “between expectations and what happens to meet them” (Rancière 2009, 3).<sup>5</sup> Much of the prose of *Shoplifting from American Apparel* is about setting up expectations and then refusing to meet them. Even so, this is not a minimalist approach in which “the absence of context can allow readers and viewers to imagine their own context” (Stephens 2020, 1), but rather one sentence suggesting a context that the next sentence decertaintizes. And just as the alien president explicitly laid out the narrative strategy of incomplete information at the end of *Eeeee Eee Eeee*, the final pages of *Shoplifting from American Apparel* have a similar function.

Sam and Audrey—the latter “a person. [...] who he had talked to on the internet” (Lin 2009, 76)—are sitting at a table outside of Sam’s friend Chris’ house. They have a short exchange that can be read as an explicit statement about the removal of context in the novel: “There was a thing on the table and Sam touched it. ‘What is this,’ he said. They touched the thing and looked at it” (94). The next sentence is Audrey asking “So you’re going back tomorrow?” (94). The thing on the table is never described, or mentioned again. This can be taken as a statement about context, about foregrounding how 99.9% of the world is always blocked out. Lin could easily tell us what the “thing” is that Sam and Audrey see on the table, but that would not change the fact that there is a whole world of other things, never mentioned or explained, that will always escape us both in literature and in life. In this way *Shoplifting from American Apparel* is a novella that takes incomplete information not so much as a theme, but as a mode of operation.

## JUST SAY IT, OR THE VULNERABILITY OF MONSTERS

*Eeeee Eee Eeee* was read as an illustration of the vulnerability of incomplete information which took place in the relation between passages describing absurdity and the normalized world. *Shoplifting from American Apparel* tightened the focus, creating a sense of precariousness decertainizing within the removal of context

5 Another approach would be through the communication theory of Niklas Luhmann. See Nika Radić’s “Niklas Luhmann: The Improbability of Communication” (2011).

between the sentences. The last novel taken into consideration in this essay, Lin's *Richard Yates* (2010), announces its narrative strategy in the title: the use of real-world people as characters, although the actions of these characters then have nothing to do with people they are named after. Using real-world people as characters functions as a removal of context, although not between sentences, but rather for the whole book. It shows how vulnerability is not located at any specific moments in the novel, but is rather an operator of the text as a whole. This operator will then be shown to be part of the novel's traumatic relationship to the author's real world.

Regarding the book's title, Richard Yates was an American novelist, most well-known for *Revolutionary Road* (1961), which was turned into a film starring Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio a few years before Lin's novel was published. Although Yates is mentioned a few times in the book, mainly because characters are reading him, his presence in no way warrants the novel being titled after him. His name is given as the title of the book, as its interpretive key, and despite the similarity in focus between it and Lin's novel on the trials and tribulations of a white, heterosexual couple, there is not much to learn about Lin's work from diving into its title.

And the use of real-world names does not stop there. On the first page of *Richard Yates*, we are introduced to the two main characters, Dakota Fanning and Haley Joel Osment. In the real-world, these are the names of two actors: Fanning made her film debut in Sean Penn's *I Am Sam* in 2001 and was more recently in Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (2009), while Haley Joel Osment is most well-known for his roles as a young boy in *Forrest Gump* (1994) and *The Sixth Sense* (1999). However, in Lin's novel, neither character has anything to do with their namesakes. Neither character is an actor. Their movies are never mentioned. And there is no mention of the similarities of their names with famous people in Hollywood. The real Dakota Fanning and Haley Joel Osment do not exist in the novel. While the specificity of their names, and the fact that both of them are referred to by their full names throughout (never Dakota and never Haley, unless another character calls them by their first name only), is a constant reminder that these real-world people exist, but that they are not the people of the novel. I argue that this scales up a sense of vulnerability from the sentence and passage to the novel as a whole.

In the final quote from *Shoplifting from American Apparel* above, the name of an object was not provided. This lack of a name indicates how 99.9% of the world is always withdrawn. In *Richard Yates*, the opposite operator is in effect. Names are given but they do not mean what they are supposed to mean. This is different than what happened in the novella. In that story, the store American Apparel appeared much as it did in real life: a trendy and ethical clothes retail outlet (although after

filing for bankruptcy in 2016, the brand has become an on-line only retailer). If this happened in *Richard Yates*, it would be like featuring American Apparel but its having no relation to the real-world store. It would not be trendy, it would not sell clothes, it would not be easy to shoplift from (usually anyway). In *Richard Yates*, names can function as what Slavoj Žižek calls ‘obscene postmodern objects,’ meaning that the novel is “displaying the object directly, allowing it to make visible its own indifference and arbitrary character” (Žižek 1999, 41). This arbitrariness is also a kind of vulnerability, a vulnerability of objects to their own meaning.

Put otherwise, *Richard Yates* foregrounds a *primary vulnerability*, a concept which can also be found in Judith Butler’s thinking about vulnerability and resistance. In “Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,” Butler shows how initially we think of vulnerability coming after resistance, as with demonstrators who gather together to resist a cause and then are vulnerable to police violence. Still, we can also think of vulnerability as coming first (Butler 2016, 12). The precariousness of job insecurity, disease, and racism, for example, index an initial vulnerability that can then lead to acts of resistance. In one sense, Butler is discussing the way that many people do not have the privilege to block off 99.9% of the world. The unpredictability of the world is much more obvious to some people than to others. This is also a key point of debate in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, although he clearly does not mean to universalize his position, Levi Bryant argues that the pandemic has destroyed the security of how “Crisis was always Elsewhere and always happened to Someone Else” (Bryant 2020). The inequality of vulnerability is also an issue both in Lin’s novel and in the real-world circumstances surrounding it.

On the back cover of *Richard Yates*, the novel is marketed thus: “What constitutes illicit sex for a generation with no rules?” The “illicit sex” refers to the statutory rape of the character Dakota by the character of Haley, since the former is 16 in the novel and the latter over 18 (he is seemingly in his twenties). The fact that this aspect of the novel makes it onto the back cover indicates that the theme of statutory rape is a major theme of the novel (which it is), and that it seemed to be a marketable transgression. The situation becomes more serious when it is learned that the events of the novel have a basis in fact, since in 2014, or four years after its publication, E.R. Kennedy, the basis of Dakota Fanning, accused Lin of both rape and plagiarism in a series of Twitter posts. No attempt is made to either apologize for Lin nor to recognize the apology he made.<sup>6</sup> However, the end of Claire Dederer’s 2017 article “What Do We Do with the Art of Monstrous Men?” can provide both a clue as to how to read both *Richard Yates* and its author, as well as to

6 The most comprehensive coverage on the issue, including screenshots of the now deleted Twitter-posts and Lin’s responses on Facebook, can be found in Jones (2014).

the role that vulnerability plays in this. The last sentences of Dederer's essay read, "What is to be done about monsters? Can and should we love their work? Are all ambitious artists monsters? Tiny voice: [Am I a monster?]" (Dederer 2017). Lin's novel at least in part addresses the self-questioning found in the brackets at the end of this passage, since the novel's main character, Haley, is shown to be manipulative, constantly worried about being arrested for statutory rape, who spends most of his time faulting Dakota for the same problems that he has, but will not admit. He is represented as a true monster.

In *Richard Yates*, one of the main issues that comes out in the many Gmail chats between Dakota and Haley is that Dakota is bulimic and lies about it. After learning that Dakota lied about eating health food when she really ate junk food, Haley asks her if she has lied about anything else:

She said she lied when she said she only threw up a few times. She had been throwing up almost every day but only once a day. Haley Joel Osment said to tell him everything she had lied about. She said she was afraid and embarrassed and that she felt bad. "It's okay," said Haley Joel Osment. "Just don't lie to me from now on." [...] Dakota Fanning said some more things she had lied about. Haley Joel Osment said she should tell him everything she had lied about so there wouldn't be any lies between them. He asked her to go through all their emails and Gmail chats and find all the lies and write them in one email to him. She said she would do that. He said she should eat and do whatever she wanted from now on and not worry about making him upset and not throw up even if she ate something bad.

"Okay," she said. "I won't throw up anymore." (Lin 2010, 154)

This happens about two-thirds of the way through the novel and is disruptive to the relationship they had built up to that point. Haley becomes scarily obsessive about Dakota's movements and actions, asking her repeatedly to account for every minute of her day, to which Dakota usually responds first with a lie, and then seemingly with the truth (although this truth can then be amended again). Haley is continually frustrated by the incomplete information he is getting about his partner.

At the same time, in the midst of this aggressive digging for the truth, Haley is unsurprisingly giving incomplete information himself, i.e., he is a liar. This is perhaps most vividly seen in a passage that takes place just shortly before the one quoted above. Haley is alone, looking at Dakota Fanning's browser history. Then he uses a different browser to masturbate to porn on her computer, erases that browser's history, and finally, when Dakota Fanning comes home, he attacks her for lying about her search history while never mentioning his own actions (151). At least in part, this scene is about the inequality of who gets to hide information

from whom. In a novel in which the names of real-world actors and a writer are torn away from their real-world context, this should come as no surprise. A Dakota Fanning who is not really Dakota Fanning is not limited by what happened in the real Dakota Fanning's lifetime. Lin's Dakota Fanning can be made to do anything, to be anyone; she is vulnerable to the anything that can happen all the time, although because of her name, there is a feeling that she should not. This tension is the effect of the novel-wide removal of context that the title indicates, and it is both one of the strengths of the novel as well as one of its most disturbing aspects.

## THE END

This essay uses the early novels of Tao Lin to connect an absence of context to the vulnerability of the reader to the text, as well as the text to the world. Part of the vulnerability of absence, as Patrick Brown has argued, is that "Whereas the presence of something can be described, discussed and therefore shared, the absence of something is profoundly felt but far more difficult to conceptualize or articulate" (Brown 2021, 131). One of the articulations of absence in Tao Lin takes place through incomplete information. In *Eeeee Eee Eeee*, incomplete information was seen as the reason for the unpredictable jump from normalized passages in the novel to absurd ones. In *Shoplifting from American Apparel*, a precarious decertianizing took place between the sentences, indicating a world beyond our understanding. *Richard Yates* then takes this one step further by removing context on a novel-wide scale. This is done by giving the main characters real-world names but otherwise totally different lives. This is not a removal of context between one passage and another, nor between one sentence and another, but rather a blanket-removal which touches every page. Since Dakota Fanning has nothing in common with the real Dakota Fanning (except for her name), there is no limit to what she can do. This effects not only the actual reader, but the characters too, since they never quite know what each other is doing, saying, or thinking. This is a representation of primary vulnerability, where vulnerability is the fundamental basis of our lives (Butler 2016, 12). Primary vulnerability is the basic state of being, but the fact is often forgotten. Lin's work helps us remember. However, this ability to forget vulnerability is not democratic; it is unevenly distributed. The work of Tao Lin both illustrates this inequality and is plagued by it. In this sense, through incomplete information, withdrawn context, and a monstrous vulnerability, his writings are vulnerable to the very operations that they foreground.

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## **Ranljivost umika: med stavki zgodnje proze Tao Lin**

V zgodnjih knjigah Tao Lin *Eeeee Eee Eeee* (2007), *Bed* (2007), *Shoplifting from American Apparel* (2009), and *Richard Yates* (2010) je ranljivost povezana s pomanjkanjem konteksta, saj so deli teksta in stavki semantično dovolj umaknjeni drug od drugega, da se odpre prostor ranljivosti v katerem se lahko zgodi karkoli.

**Ključne besede:** Tao Lin, ranljivost, nepopolna informacija

# Gender as the UnSaid: Exploring the Interstices in Edward Said's *Orientalism*

*Chantal Zabus*

## Abstract

This article explores the textual and geographical interstices in Edward Said's foundational text, *Orientalism* (1978; "Afterword" 1995) as well as some aspects of the post-Orientalist legacy. By focusing on the representation of women, sexual dissidents and gender outlaws as part of the "UnSaid," I aim to demonstrate that these interstitial spaces dissolve the Saidian East/West binaries.

**Keywords:** Edward Said, gender, orientalism, sexuality

In his 1995 “Afterword” to *Orientalism*, written some fifteen years after the book was first published, Said remarks that “it is now very strikingly no longer the case that the lesser peoples—formerly colonized, enslaved, suppressed—are silent or unaccounted for except by senior European or American males. There has been a revolution in the consciousness of women, minorities and marginals so powerful as to affect mainstream thinking world-wide” (Said, [1978] 2003, 350). Here Said takes stock of developments in the 1990s, in the specialized fields of identity politics and postcolonial theory, of which he was an “opponent” (Young, 23-43), and of third-wave feminisms. But he could not have anticipated two developments: first, that the women and the queer and transgender “marginals” were already finding their way in the interstices of the Orientalist writings under his textual scrutiny, and second, that the “post-Orientalist” approach, which lies “beyond East and West,”<sup>1</sup> was always already embedded in the nineteenth century, which is the essential time frame of *Orientalism*. I aim to explore these two intertwined proleptic interstices that help dissolve the East/West binary, dear to Said. Tellingly, Daniel Varisco’s chapter on “The Said and the Unsaid in Said’s *Magnus Opus Orientale*” (93-234) does not mention gender. And yet, gender and its avatars are part of the “UnSaid.”

## WOMANLY INTERSTICES

As a cautionary tale, one has to admit that “queerness” and “women” are mentioned in the original 1978 publication of *Orientalism* as if they were interrelated categories. If we consider Said’s interpretation of Flaubert’s conception of Egypt in his *Correspondance*, one sees that the categories “woman” and “women” are crucial to unfolding the “grotesque” or “queer” spectacle of the Orient:

To amuse the crowd, Mohamed Ali’s jester took a woman in a Cairo bazaar one day, set her on the counter of a shop, and coupled with her publicly while the shopkeeper calmly smoked his pipe.

And later, about a well-known marabout:

All the Moslem women came to see him and masturbated him—in the end he died of exhaustion—from morning to night it was a perpetual jacking-off.

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1 See, for instance, the subtitle to the volume edited by Sharmani Patricia Gabriel and Bernard Wilson (2021).

And again, later:

... sterile women who wanted children would run up, put themselves under the parabola of a *santon* [or ascetic priest's] urine and rub themselves with it.

(ed. Steegmuller, 1973, 44-45; qtd Said [1978] 2003, 103; Flaubert, *Correspondance*, 1973, 1, 542; my addition).

Said uses these three vignettes, involving the category “woman” as the alleged victim of a rape; the sexual slave to a religious authority; and the desperate infertile woman in order to foreground the voyeuristic detachment of the French observer—Flaubert—while the Orient is flaunting its perversity, as “a living tableau of *queerness*” (Said [1978] 2003, 103, my italics). Here Said equates “queer” with a “grotesque” and “bizarre jouissance” without, naturally, using the inclusive meaning that “queer” would acquire in the 1990s as a suspension of sexual identity (Halperin 1990, *passim*). More largely, Said is targeting Flaubert as an exoticizing witness of a depraved Orient, intimating that this Orient never existed or could only exist as an inherently inaccurate representation, a lie. However, how do we know it is a lie? As Robert J. C. Young astutely observes, “if Said denies that there is any actual Orient which could provide a true account of the Orient represented by Orientalism, how could he claim in any sense that the representation is false?” (Young, 130).

In the representational thrust of *Orientalism*, there is admittedly little room for women, let alone the larger issue of gender, if only through the lens of these seminal male Orientalists whom Said discusses, e.g. Balfour, Cromer, Renan, Gidden, de Gobineau, Humboldt, Burnouf, Remusat, Palmer, Weil, Dozy, Muir (Said, 99), or of the “textual children” of, for instance, Napoleon’s occupation of Egypt: all help demarcate East from West: “Europe is powerful and articulate; Asia is defeated and distant” (Said [1978] 2003, 57). Said continues: “the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined” (Said [1978] 2003, 63) and, one might add, all the actors are men on the theatrical stage of the Orient, whether the “Islamic Orient” or later, “the Asiatic East.” Said concludes that “the scope of Orientalism exactly matched the scope of empire” (Said 1978, 104). I would add that its scope also matched the scope of patriarchy so that a somewhat perverse conflation of orientalism, empire, and patriarchy is being crystallized.

Earlier in *Orientalism*, Said evokes Flaubert’s Egyptian courtesan, Kuchuk Hanem, whose name he conceives of as Egyptian but is actually Turkish—Kuçük Hanim meaning “Little Lady” (Somay 2014, 2) and who served as a model for the Oriental woman. Said writes: “she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence or history. He spoke for and represented her” (Said, 6). If

Said mentions the woman's lack of (self-)representation, which is also true of "the woman in a Cairo bazaar" in the above excerpt, he fails to mention her awkward positioning between imperialism outside and patriarchy inside. Even Europe, after all, was raped by Zeus. The Cairo woman's role as an agent is erased by both Said and Flaubert, and she looks like the desireless recipient of the "cruel joke" of Mohamed Ali's jester, the indifferent shopkeeper, and the invisible, detached European observer. But she could also be a secret sharer in the employ of patriarchy inside so that, in the Egyptian vignette, she could be part of the spectacle set up for her own mercantile benefit. The Cairene woman's apparent passivity, her alleged discursive silencing in Flaubert's account can be extended to a lot of male colonial (and sometimes even postcolonial) narratives, in which women seem to suffer from acute laryngectomy. But it is difficult to gauge the depth of her silencing because Flaubert has apparently seen and represented her but also because Said and, possibly, Flaubert missed out on her potential leverage within the interstices of Levantine patriarchy.

The closest Said comes to examining such womanly interstices is in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1994) when he discusses "the *geographical* notation, the theoretical mapping and charting of territory that underlies Western fiction" (Said, 1994, 69). Taking his cue from Raymond Williams, he provides the example of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814) to illustrate the dependency of the metropolitan center—"home"—upon "an overseas system of territorial control, economic exploitation, and a socio-cultural vision" (Said 1994, 69). Indeed, in "a contrapuntal reading," Said shows that Fanny Price, "the poor niece, the orphaned child from the outlying city of Portsmouth, the neglected, demure, and upright wallflower, becomes crucial to the Bertrams' economy, including Antigua" (Said 1994, 102). Fanny's domestic, small-scale movements between Portsmouth and Mansfield Park reflect the interdependency between Thomas Bertram's slave plantation in Antigua and the calisthenics of Mansfield Park, well before the official onset of "the age of empire" with the Berlin Conference (1884-1885).

Bismarck's Berlin Convention that launched the so-called Scramble for Africa lay but fifteen or so years after the opening of the Suez Canal in November 1869. The 168-kilometer-long Canal through the desert between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, linking East and West, is considered the brainchild of French diplomat and later engineer Vicomte Ferdinand de Lesseps (whose father Mathieu de Lesseps had come to Egypt with Napoleon for four years after the French evacuated it in 1801). In accounting for the Suez Canal as a "geopolitical project," Said emphasizes the tell-tale name of Lesseps's company: "la Compagnie universelle" (Said 1994, 90), which fulfilled a universalist mission echoed in an epic poem written by Henri de Bornier of *L'académie française*. Bornier evokes the

benefits that “the perfidious Chinese and the semi-naked Indian” might reap from contact with Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

On the English side, Rudyard Kipling, for whom “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” (Kipling, 1889), did more overtly participate in the Orientalist discourse, especially on Eastern spirituality but arguably that discourse was in turn “reappropriated by the Indian religious movements” that fueled Indian nationalism (Van der Weer 2001, 69). According to Said, Thomas Cook uses a more forward colonialist style. In *The Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser* of July 1, 1869, he was enthused about what he called “the formation of a line of water communication between Europe and the East ... the project of bringing more closely together the countries of the West and the East, and thus uniting the civilizations of different epochs” (Qtd Putney 1969, 141-142; qtd Said [1978] 2003, 88-89). “Therefore, the notion of ‘Oriental’,” Said concludes, “is an administrative or executive one, and it is subordinate to demographic, economic, and sociological factors. ... De Lesseps had melted away the Orient’s geographical identity by (almost literally) dragging the Orient into the West and finally dispelling the threat of Islam” (Said [1978] 2003, 92). In his allegation of “dragging the Orient into the West,” Said bypasses the African Continent when in fact the Suez Canal opened the portal to both India and Africa; and Egypt is part of the African Mashreq. Boehmer intuits that the “dark underside to the Canal’s magnificent modernity—one that arose from the instability of Egypt, ... found expression in a new genre of paranoid popular fiction” (Boehmer, 43).

Desecrated Egypt indeed returns with a vengeance in such popular fiction as Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*. This orientalist sensation novel was published in the same year—1897—as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, another fantasy about the East (but here of Eastern Europe), which it outsold. In *The Beetle*, a polymorphous Egyptian creature, bent on seeking revenge for the desecration of an Egyptian shrine, stalks a British politician, Paul Lessingham, through late-Victorian London. The creature, which hosts “a ghastly reminiscence of womanhood” (Marsh 2018, 29), literally mesmerizes its victims and makes them commit deeds of felony ranging from burglary to murder. Occasionally, the “vulpine” creature with a “rasping voice, with its *queer* foreign twang” (my emphasis) often causes “the strands of ... manhood to slip” (Marsh, 60, 35). It turns out that this fantastical creature metamorphoses into a “queer” “Mr. Arab,” a “doubtful ... he” by the end of the narrative. It culminates with the explosion of a Dongola site in the desert, presumably Dunqulah in Northern Sudan, as a result of which

2 “Oui, c’est pour l’univers ! Pour l’Asie et l’Europe, / pour ces climats lointains que la nuit enveloppe, / Pour le Chinois perfide et l’indien demi-nu ... Pour ceux à qui le Christ est encore inconnu.” In Beatty, 1956, 220, qtd Said 1994, 90.

the “bodies of neither men nor women but of creatures of monstrous growth” (Marsh, 360) were dismembered.

This tall tale may at first reinforce Edward Said’s intuition that “latent Orientalism ... was an exclusively male province. ... women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy” (Said 1978, 207); this may be so but with a queer twist. The male/female binary collapses upon closer inspection of the creature’s anatomy, for “the face is a man’s ... but the body ... is a woman’s” (Marsh, 182) and *his* capacity to escape dimorphism augurs transgenderism and the non-binary genderqueer parlance of the early twenty-first century. Also, Paul Lessingham’s fiancée Ms. Lindon, an opiated young woman who dares her father, is, once in contact with the beast, dressed by the creature into a young man’s garments and survives her ordeal after a prolonged period of aphasia whereas Lessingham, the eloquent politician, becomes “a hysterical woman” (Marsh, 324).

In Orientalist fashion, the long-nailed creature with magnetic eyes functions as the return of the repressed and boasts a past of nameless orgies and human sacrifices, especially those of “white Christian women” (Marsh, 331) while claiming to be “of the children of Isis” (Marsh, 85). The transgendered creature’s claim initiates in the text a tense scholarly debate between two gentlemen, the Dr. Jekyll-like scientist, Sydney Atherton, and Confidential Agent Augustus Champnell, about the Egyptian transmigration into *Scarabaeus Sacer*. The “transmigrations of Isis” (Marsh, 142) are part of Victorian and early twentieth-century England’s preoccupation with alternate belief-systems such as Buddhism, Rosicrucianism, and Zoroastrianism, to name but a few.<sup>3</sup> A mystical feminist, Helena Blavatsky, who had an interest in the Kabbalah, reincarnation, and paranormal phenomena, took a stab at Christianity, the Catholic Church, and the Inquisition in her two-volume *Isis Unveiled* (1877). The return of the trans-beetle and the transmigration of the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis therefore hint at the discomfort of occupied Egypt with the opening of the Suez Canal at its Northern end but also at the unprecedented bilateral flow of travelers, colonials, goods, and ideas. Instead of “melting away the Orient’s geographical identity,” as Said claimed, the Canal, collapsed the East/West divide by creating British colonial yet syncretic transnational identities for whom the East was also “home.”<sup>4</sup>

3 See Viswanathan, *Outside the Fold*, 1998.

4 For Anglo-Indian families, “the Suez Canal did not simply signify the East; sometimes in fact it signified ‘home’”(Boehmer, 46).

## SYNCRETISM, INTRA-ORIENTALISM, AND SELF-ORIENTALISM

In his book *The Lion and the Lotus* (2008), J. Jeffrey Franklin, suggests that Blavatsky may have titled her book, *Isis Unveiled*, thus because “late Victorians felt that Egyptian metempsychosis was more compatible with their own Christian history and beliefs than was either the Hindu or the Buddhist doctrine” (Franklin, 97). There was moreover a trend “to de-Orientalize reincarnation and karma by forcing them into alignment with the Western soul-theory” (Franklin, 104). In tracking East-West-East syncretic movements in Victorian England, Franklin concludes that the West experienced “a counter-invasion” of the East (Franklin, 208), possibly embodied by “the beetle,” although he does not say so. Victorian England’s interest in syncretism and in non-monotheistic belief-systems like Buddhism that would otherwise have sunk into oblivion dismantles the East/West Saidian binaries.

As a further caution to the Orientalist tale promoted by Said based on the East/West binary is that Easterners orientalized Africa, often glorifying British India as more civilized than the African Continent,<sup>5</sup> in what I would venture to call “intra-Orientalism.” This can be compared to the process whereby the colorful textiles that were exported from France to Tahiti, where they became a native dress, were depicted by French artists like Gauguin and others as exemplars of tropical exoticism. There is thus a type of connectivity between East and West that is absent from Said’s Orientalist project, as evidenced by the city of London at the heart of a nineteenth-century cross-continental network. As in a cameo, the Theosophical Society, to which W.B. Yeats and the afore-mentioned Helena Blavatsky belonged, was such a hub.

This counter-invasion of the East is more acutely felt when compounded by gender. In 1896, a young Indian student in London, Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949) published in *The Savoy*, one of the flagship magazines of the “naughty nineties,” a poem entitled “Indian Dancers.” The poem makes use of typical Orientalist ingredients such as opiates, tinkling feet, “jewel-girt arms,” “smiles ... like magical serpents,” “gem-tangled hair,” and “houri-like faces,” “houri” after the beautiful maiden awaiting the devout Muslim in paradise. The frontispiece to Naidu’s 1905 *The Golden Threshold* was introduced by Arthur Symons. Both Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse, one of the contributors to *The Yellow Book*, the infamous book which Harry Wotton recommended to Dorian Gray in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), encouraged the production of an Orient which was palatable to English

5 A case in point is the Indian N.L. Doss, who noted “the ‘funny’ aspect of veiled Egyptian women in Port Said, while at the same time conceding that Muslim women in Calcutta were as swathed” (Boehmer, 55).

poetic tastes. In “nativizing” the Orient and in exercising Indian agency in constructing the East, Naidu reverses the Saidian premise, whereby the East is passive and lasciviously submissive.

Closer to us, this self-Orientalism is commensurate with Australian novelist Christos Tsiolkas’s *Dead Europe* (2008), whose queer ethnic male protagonist morphs into a vampire with the suggestion, as Sneja Gunew (2017) put it, “that he is a figure of retribution preying on European imperial and colonial guilt” (Gunew, 29). This type of Draculesque counter-contamination, like Richard Marsh’s return of the trans-beetle, thereby deals a cruel blow to the idea of a benevolent cosmopolitanism whereas Dubrovskaja Ugresic’s *Nobody’s Home* (2007) exhibits an impulse toward “self-balkanizing” (Gunew, 38) in ways similar to Sarojini Naidu’s self-orientalization. Later in life Naidu was the first Indian woman to serve as President of the Indian National Congress (1925) and the first woman governor of any state in independent India, e.g. Uttar Pradesh in Northern India. In 1913, when she committed herself to the cause of an independent India, Rabindranath Tagore, who was lesser known than her, was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. This may have prompted the discomfited woman poet to further embrace politics, at the expense of her poetic career. She is, in some of these pictures of her in the service of India in 1913, masculinized and even queered.

## QUEERING AND TRANSGENDERING ORIENTALISM

In Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, there is no reference to what Leela Ghandi termed a “homoerotic dispensation” in her tracing the story of Late Victorian homosexual exceptionalism (Gandhi, 34) such as that which prevailed between the Indian poet Manmohan Gose and Oscar Wilde and his coterie. Said elides homosexuality, male or female homoeroticism, and how same-sex desire is entwined with Orientalism, the way in which Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* inevitably was. Edward Said has been notably taken to task for, in the words of Joseph Boone (1985), his “conspicuously heterosexual interpretive framework” (Boone, 89). In his *Homosexuality and Colonialism* (2003), Robert Aldrich amply makes up for that void by singling out authors like Thomas Mann in “The Transposed Heads” (1940) and William Beckford, who was bisexual and whose works were originally written in French: *The Episodes of Vathek* (1787) and *Histoire du Prince Ahmed* (1782). In Aldrich’s words, for these authors, “the fantastic East provided the scene for thinly disguised romances” (Aldrich 2003, 110). Aldrich also evokes Jacques d’Adelswärd-Fersen, denizen of Capri, (where he lived with his Ceylonese companion). Fersen wrote a poetry collection *Hei Hsiang* (1921), which consists of “odes to opium-smoking and ... [is] mixed with evocations of Oriental

boys" (Aldrich, 110). One poem relates to Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, thereby establishing a male homoerotic continuum between France, England, and the "Orient," here signified by Chinese ideograms and a lurking dragon in the cover image of Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen's *Hei Hsiang/Le parfum noir* (1921).

*Le Livre des Beaux*, published anonymously in Paris in 1909, was attributed to Pierre Loti, Pierre Louÿs, and André Gide—"all authors known for an interest in Levantine Love" (Aldrich, 111)—but appeared under the Arabic-sounding name of Fazil Bey. These forty-three sketches present young men hailing from an ever-expanding "Orient," from Morocco to China, along with what Aldrich called "a catalogue of sodomitical specialties" (Aldrich, 111). By the outset of the twentieth century, Oriental exoticism and anal intercourse were inexorably skewed together in the European ethnographic imaginary.<sup>6</sup>

Conversely, in the Arab Muslim world, some thinkers like the Palestinian, Jordanian-born Joseph Massad in *Desiring Arabs* (2007) lament the discursive transformation of practitioners of what he calls "same-sex contact" in the Arab-Muslim world into subjects who identify as homosexual or gay, following the hegemonic pull of the Gay International, "where all same-sex desire must lead to the romantic ethos of coupling" (Massad, 345). He has further politicized Islamicate "same-sex contact" as a form of resistance to Westoxification, a term (from *gharbzadegi* in Persian) coined by Iranian secular intellectual Jalal al-e Ahmad, or what we could also call Occidentosis. Massad's non-identitarian idea of "same-sex contact" in the Arab Muslim world has been denounced by various critics.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Massad dedicates *Desiring Arabs* to his mentor and friend Edward Said about whom he wrote in his Acknowledgments that "it was not entirely clear to [him] what [Said] thought of the project" (Massad 2007, xiii).

Closer to us and to return to the idea of self-orientalism, the American, Australia-based scholar of Indian ancestry, Rahul Gairola, explains in a vignette:

a part of me enjoyed being exoticized in the gay club scene of D.C., for it was that index of desire that made me attractive to the predominantly white males. Being fetishized by white gays as 'Aladdin,' 'almond-shaped-eyed,' and 'cabana boy' in some sense empowered me by inducting me into a racist community that nonetheless offered shelter from the constrictions of straight life. Conversely, I enjoyed passing for straight in the South Asian American communities that my parents frequented when the racism of D.C.'s gay community made it clear that people of color had no place in the racially narcissistic and bourgeois echelons of Dupont Circle [a popular residential

6 See Bleys, *Geography of Perversion*, 1995 and Zabus, *Out in Africa*, 2013.

7 For more detail, see Zabus, Introduction to *The Future of Postcolonial Studies* (2015), 1-16.

neighborhood of Washington, D.C.] In both cases, I toggled between identity categories and communities to negotiate the yet shaky relations between Asian American and minority studies with queer identities. (Gairola, 30; my addition)

This vignette, appropriately titled “Queering Orientalism,” is part of a guest issue on *Orientalism and the Legacy of Edward Said* (2005). Yet Said and his legatees failed to account for these homoerotic affective communities and their interstitial practices or for the contemporary self-orientalization of some of its queer subjects.

English journalist Jan Morris, previously known as James Morris, a foreign correspondent for the *London Times*, wrote her autobiography, *Conundrum* in 1974 (new ed. 2004). It has been read as an “Orientalist” travelogue (e.g. Halberstam, 1998, 169) in that Morris undertakes an allegedly colonial journey from England to Morocco and undergoes surgery in Dr. Burou’s famed Clinique du Parc 13 Rue du Capitaine de La Pébie (now renamed Rue Mélouia) in Casablanca. By conjuring up what Marjorie Garber cunningly termed “the Chic of Araby” (Garber 1991, 223), the Maghreb and part of the Mashreq were confirmed as partaking of a (dis-)orienting Orient for the former transsexual traveler who goes “out there,” loses his or her sex-at-birth and returns “home” in order to be trans-morphed into the “hominess” of the targeted gender.

Jean-Pierre Pruvot, a *pied noir* born in colonial Algeria, changed her identity papers—Marie-Pierre Pruvot, born female—after undergoing sex reassignment surgery (SRS or what is now called *gender confirmation surgery*) in Casablanca, Morocco, two years after Coccinelle (Jacqueline Charlotte born Jacques Charles Dufresnoy) or ‘Cox,’ in Burou’s terminology.<sup>8</sup> These (mostly MTF) surgeries in the late 1950s were to initiate a fluid trail of ‘Coxes’ crossing borders between Morocco, that is, the Westernmost region of the East, and European countries, as further evidenced by the role of Belgium in Michiel Van Erp’s film documentary. In Erp’s *I am a Woman Now* (2012), a Belgian transwoman attempts to locate Burou’s clinic where she stayed in the early 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Against a politically charged canvas, which involved the exiled Sultan and future King Mohammed V’s return in 1955 and Morocco’s independence in 1956 following anti-French rioting, Morocco, almost incongruously, acted as an Orientalist

8 Even though the term has been amply documented, this was confirmed by Dr. Mohamed Lebbar, who closely worked with Georges Burou, during an interview carried out by Chantal Zabus, assisted by Chérif Sadaoui, on 27 April 2016 in his office, 71 rue Hassan II in Casablanca, Morocco.

9 Note that it is today a building occupied by a Xerox company. Conversely, Belgium, especially Ghent’s Universitair Ziekenhuis (UZ), now reads more like a haven for French transgender individuals.

haven of TS (transsexual) transitioning. French MTF Alexandra Cerdan, whose mother was Tunisian and who was reassigned in Ghent, Belgium, termed Morocco in *Transsexuelle et convertie à l'Islam* (2010) “a transsexual hub” (Fr: “plaque tournante de la transsexualité”) (Cerdan, 112). Cerdan’s explosive admixture of transsexualism and Islam further queers the East/West binary.

The elision of gender and exacerbations of conventional masculinities may further be blamed for the contemporary resurgence of theocratic Islamism. In *Occidentalism* (2004), Buruma & Margalit locate “wars against the West” in very broad terms: “Wars against the West have been declared in the name of the Russian soul, the German race, State Shinto (which extolled the Japanese as a divine race), communism and Islam” (102). They thus see Islamic fundamentalism as a late avatar of “Occidentalism,” whereby the West is both “the source of the Enlightenment and its secular, liberal offshoots but also, of its frequently poisonous antidotes” (Buruma and Margalit, 6). Such a fundamentalist resurgence, which Said could not have witnessed, may result not only from regional instability, colonialism, strict secularisms, or the failed experiments in state socialism in e.g. Egypt, Syria and Algeria but also, as Amanullah de Soudy (2015) has ventured, from Islamic communities’ tendency to “idealize an entrenched masculinity” (De Soudy, 1) and an ideal family structure. De Soudy’s fresh approach to Islam and gender through a historically situated reflection on the construction of masculinities provides a sound antidote to some Saidian critics’ denunciation of orientalism in contemporary gender politics.<sup>10</sup>

As I have shown, women, marginals, sexual dissidents and gender outlaws are not so much the objects of an Orientalizing gaze, as Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and its post-Orientalist legacy demonstrate, as the agents always already living in both textual and geographical interstices. These interstitial spaces helped further crack the Saidian divide between an allegedly passive East and a supposedly active West.

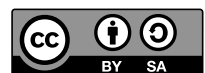
10 One such critic is Edward Said’s younger colleague at Columbia University, anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, who, one year before Said’s death, wrote an essay (2002) on “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?”, which gave the title to her Harvard book in 2013.

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**‘Neizrečeni/nesaidovski’ spol: raziskava vrzeli v knjigi *Orientalizem* Edwarda Saida**

Članek raziskuje tekstovne in geografske vrzeli v osnovnem tekstu Edwarda Saida *Orientalizem* (1978), kakor tudi nekatere vidike post-orientalistične dediščine.

**Ključne besede:** Edward Said, spol, orientalizem, seksualnost

## William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* in Slovenia between Socialism and Post-socialism

*Janko Trupej*

### Abstract

This article compares the socialist and post-socialist reception of William Golding's classic novel *Lord of the Flies* (1954) in Slovenian serial publications. Taking the socio-political context into consideration, the reasons for the differences in responses to the novel at different periods of Slovenia's history are addressed. Furthermore, the Slovenian reception of *Lord of the Flies* is compared to the contemporary reception (in both 'mainstream' and socialist publications) in the English-speaking world.

**Keywords:** William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*, reception, serial publications, ideology, English literature

## INTRODUCTION

In *Lord of the Flies*, a novel about a group of pre-adolescent boys stranded on an isolated island somewhere in the Pacific Ocean, William Golding paints a rather bleak picture of human nature, i.e., that people are inherently evil. A similarly pessimistic assertion is frequently put forward by those who argue that socialism or communism could never work: they claim that people are not innately invested in the common good but rather motivated by self-interest. However, socialists have a different view of humanity, such as the view expressed by Adaner Usmani: “Humans are capable of many things other than simple selfishness. We’re capable of caring for others, we’re capable of empathy and compassion, we have the capacity to distinguish fairness from unfairness, and the capacity to hold ourselves to those standards. The bourgeois view inflates our selfish drives and ignores these other qualities.”

The protagonists of Golding’s novel experience ultimate freedom in the midst of nature; since food is abundant on the island and the boys are apex predators there, a possible Marxist perspective would be that the boys—freed of ‘bourgeois’ constraints—could have formed a society in which the communist slogan “from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” would be put into effect (cf. Tiger 158). In *Das Kapital*, Karl Marx touched upon *freedom* in relation to *Nature*:

In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; [...] Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature.

Instead of “rationally regulating their interchange with Nature”, the boys in *Lord of the Flies* let Nature take its course with them—almost from the very beginning, the vast majority acts irresponsibly: they spend most of their time amusing themselves, neglect to keep the signal fire burning, do not help with building shelters, etc. Eventually, the social order agreed upon at the beginning totally disintegrates; the boys descend into a state of anarchy and turn into ‘savages’.

Given that Golding’s representation of human nature seems not to be in accordance with socialist/communist views, it can be presupposed that certain aspects of *Lord of the Flies* would be criticized by Marxists across the world, especially in countries with socialist systems. Since from 1945 to 1991, the Slovenian nation was part of socialist Yugoslavia, the present paper will try to establish the

differences between the reception of *Lord of the Flies* during Slovenia's socialist era and its reception after Slovenia declared independence and transitioned into a parliamentary democracy. In order to have a frame of reference, an overview of the reception (both in 'mainstream' and Marxist publications) of the novel in the source culture will be presented first.

## SOURCE CULTURE RECEPTION OF *LORD OF THE FLIES*

Golding had offered the manuscript of *Lord of the Flies* to at least twenty publishing houses before it was published by Faber and Faber, and initially it only sold modestly (Wilson 83).<sup>1</sup> Its critical reception was also mixed; some critics had issues with the novel's tendentiousness (Haugrud Reiff 95) and criticized it for being "too facile and fashionable in its pessimism" (Wilson 83), while others praised *Lord of the Flies* for its originality and writing style (Haugrud Reiff 95). Its popularity eventually increased (especially in schools and universities across the English-speaking world), and it came to be regarded as a modern classic (Wilson 83).<sup>2</sup> However, artistic tastes changed, and Golding "was soon found wanting—an antique tragedian, a pessimist, a Christian moralist who would not let us transcend original sin and the disastrous history of the last 50 years" (Baker 63).<sup>3</sup> While *Lord of the Flies* remains popular among readers (Tiger 133–34),<sup>4</sup> during the 1980s, academic interest in it began to diminish (Haugrud Reiff 103); James R. Baker (64) remarked that "[s]ince Golding's death in 1993 his work has gone into partial eclipse".

Sceptical views of the novel continued to be voiced in recent decades, one ardent critic being the renowned literary scholar Harold Bloom (2), who expressed doubt about *Lord of the Flies* reflecting the human condition, instead stating that the boys may have turned out the way they did because they were brought up in the British school system. He criticized the book's tendentiousness and questioned the psychological representation of the characters; he found the Christlike

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- 1 For instance, one reader of the manuscript (qtd. in Tiger 142) gave the following verdict: "Absurd and uninteresting fantasy about the explosion of an atomic bomb on the colonies and a group of children who land in jungle country near New Guinea. Rubbish and dull. Pointless."
  - 2 According to Raychel Haugrud Reiff (96), some academics recommended *Lord of the Flies* to their students, and after the paperback version was published in 1959, it began to sell well. It eventually also became popular in Europe and Asia (Baker 63).
  - 3 In North America, there have been numerous calls for *Lord of the Flies* to be removed from libraries and reading lists in schools, with profanity, violence, racism etc. being given as reasons (Haugrud Reiff 97).
  - 4 Haugrud Reiff (102) claims that "[t]hroughout his life and to the present time, Golding's popularity has been almost totally dependent on *Lord of the Flies*."

figure of Simon to be especially unconvincing and went as far as to say that the main characters were mere ideograms, paling in comparison to some other juvenile characters, for instance Kipling's Kim or Twain's Huckleberry Finn. Bloom (ibid.) concluded that "*Lord of the Flies* matters, not in or for itself, but because of its popularity in an era that continues to find it a useful admonition". Similarly, Virginia Tiger (134) asserted the following: "Unquestionably, the novel's teachability has fostered—as well as sustained—its reputation. Some would argue that this pedagogic feature, 'rather than any clearly established merit,' was 'responsible for the general acclaim with which it has been received'." While it is widely believed that Golding wanted to subvert some of the views propagated by many classic juvenile adventure stories from Britain's colonial era, reading *Lord of the Flies* from a post-colonial perspective, Stefan Hawlin (71–73; see also Tiger 138–39) asserted that

the novel reflects a profoundly conservative ethos. [...] Under a thin disguise it presents the cliché about the bestiality and savagery of natives, the 'painted niggers' in the forest, ready at a whim to tear each other to pieces in tribal conflict unless the white 'grown-ups' come to rescue them from themselves. It is, in its odd way, a defence of colonialism. [...] The text shows us white, respectable, middle-class boys—whose fathers, incidentally, were the kind that governed the Empire centrally and locally—becoming like tribesmen, 'savages', or to put it in overtly racist terms, 'no better than blacks.'

Socialist commentators were also frequently critical of the novel—many had an issue with its representation of human nature. For instance, in an essay, Paul O'Flinn expresses scepticism about Golding's view of humans being inherently bad; instead, he provides examples to the contrary and asserts that the human condition is one of constant improvement. He concludes with the following statement:

The point, to get back to *Lord of the Flies*, is that here as elsewhere what is presented as eternal, as a part of human nature, is in fact only temporary, a feature of the customs and beliefs of our own dearly beloved ruling classes. These customs and beliefs, as Golding magnificently portrays, are in important ways brutal, anti-life, dehumanising and degrading. The response of Golding and his fans is to fall on their knees before the everlasting horror of Man's Original Sin. We reject extreme solutions of this sort. Our response is much more moderate and sensible. We become revolutionary socialists.

Similar criticisms were expressed by socialists in the new millennium. For instance, in the *Socialist Worker*, the weekly of the International Socialist Organization, Paul D'Amato rejects the view that people's "default setting is barbarism", and calls *Lord of the Flies* "profoundly reactionary". *The Guardian* published an

excerpt from Rutger Bregman's book *Humankind: A Hopeful History*, in which the author rejects Golding's pessimistic view of human nature in *Lord of the Flies* and relates a real-life event similar to the plot of the novel, an event which did not end with the stranded boys descending into barbarism—quite the contrary. Although the book does not propagate socialism, Dave Kellaway reviewed it on the portal *Socialist Resistance* and discussed this chapter at some length; he remarked that one “could argue that Golding's story was taken up so enthusiastically, including in schools, because it chimed so well with dominant ideology.” In his review of Bregman's book for the newspaper *The Socialist*, Dave Carr discussed the chapter in a similar manner, and Anton Jäger also mentioned it in his review for the socialist-oriented magazine *Jacobin*.

## RECEPTION OF *LORD OF THE FLIES* IN SLOVENIAN ETHNIC TERRITORY

### Socialist period

Although no mentions of *Lord of the Flies* in the year of its initial publication could be found, in 1955 the novel was discussed in overviews of notable foreign literary works published the previous year. In the literary magazine *Knjiga*, an author credited as ‘Dr. Bran.’ (230) merely mentions that *Lord of the Flies* relates the adventures of a group of primary school boys stranded on a desert island, while in *Nova obzorja*, a magazine devoted to culture and politics, prominent translator Janez Gradišnik (664) does not present the novel as a run-of-the-mill adventure story; instead, he states that although the protagonists are children, the target readership comprises adults exclusively.

*Lord of the Flies* received considerable attention after Janko Moder's translation was published in 1965. In the note accompanying the translation, renowned writer and translator Mira Mihelič (220) remarks that *Lord of the Flies* is regarded as a modern classic and asserts that, with this novel, Golding warned modern society that it was high time to decide whether it desired bloodshed, which would ultimately lead to its downfall, or whether it wanted reason as its guiding principle. A short anonymous review in the regional weekly *Dolenjski list* states that by presenting the boys as an allegory of the nations of the world, the novel addresses the issue of whether humans will recognize that they have a common destiny and will try to help one another, or whether they will destroy each other.<sup>5</sup> In an anonymous

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5 *Dolenjski list*, 9/12/1965: Gospodar muh, 7.

review in *Knjiga* (N.N. 311), it is mentioned that Golding's experiences in World War II influenced his writing—the book is described as follows:

In the novel "Lord of the Flies", a group of boys finds itself on a desert island. There, in the wilderness, they try to arrange their everyday life, which causes all the primary instincts which are characteristic of the aspirations and clashes, the co-existence and conflicts of grown-ups to flare up. Golding masterfully portrays this dark essence of humanity—as one could call it—through a group of boys, who, when left to their own devices, start to wage war and nearly forget the friendships of yesterday—until they are rescued by a ship.<sup>6</sup>

In a review in the weekly *Tovariš*, an author credited as 'J. S.' (7) provides some information on Golding's background before going on to describe the plot of *Lord of the Flies* and stating that the veneer of civilization that covered the boys' primal instincts soon rubbed off; this—in Golding's view—supposedly proved that there was only a small step from civilization to savagery. At the beginning of a quite lengthy review in the most widely read Slovenian daily newspaper *Delo*, writer Jože Snoj describes *Lord of the Flies* as a thrilling book. He claims that when the killing begins, the boys are not actually killing individuals but the character traits or values that those individuals personify, for instance reason, democracy, etc., which are becoming increasingly unacceptable as the majority descends ever deeper into savagery. Snoj also expresses the opinion that these primitive instincts linger in everyone and that this can quickly turn humans into brutes; he interprets the boys as representing the nations of the world and the *deus ex machina* in the form of the navy officer as a symbol of the fact that "civilization can only be saved by civilization".<sup>7</sup> The story is interpreted similarly by Slavko Rupel (credited as 'Sl. Ru.') in the regional daily *Primorski dnevnik*:

It is a tense, almost horrifying novel, which is more utopian [sic] than realistic; however, its principal meaning is broader than the story itself. It has a symbolic meaning; with the group of boys, the writer indicates the nations and countries in today's world, which are in conflict with each other, and which are threatened with annihilation if someone like the captain of the warship does not turn up to save them from quarrels, conflict and destruction. It is not without reason that the novel *Lord of the Flies* gained worldwide recognition. And Slovenian readers will certainly gladly take up reading this truly original and interesting book; the story itself—tense and interestingly told—will grab their interest.<sup>8</sup>

6 The Slovenian quotations were translated into English by the author.

7 *Delo*, 23/1/1966: William Golding: Gospodar muh, 7.

8 *Primorski dnevnik*, 1/2/1966: Zadnja dva zvezka zbirke Zenit in novi načrti za to zbirko, 2.

By interpreting the ending of the story this way, both Snoj and Rupel put a positive 'spin' on the appearance of the warship and the officer who saves the boys; both reviewers disregard Golding's implication that, while the boys destroyed the island and their community, the officer is taking part in destruction on a much larger scale.<sup>9</sup>

In the late 1960s, *Lord of the Flies* received only a few passing references. A short article in *Dolenjski list* announcing the Slovenian translation of Golding's novel *The Spire* mentions that in *Lord of the Flies*, Golding addresses one of the basic questions of the human condition; however, it is not stated which question this is supposed to be.<sup>10</sup> In *Delo*, the novel is recommended as one of the books worth reading while on holiday and described as a modern-day *Robinson Crusoe*,<sup>11</sup> while in a later article in the same publication, someone credited as 'S. G.' remarks that the novel addresses the subconscious impulses leading young people to violence.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1970s—a decade during which Golding experienced years of severe writer's block—there was not much interest in his best-known novel either. The only notable exception we were able to find is an article in *Delo*, in which Jože Snoj names *Lord of the Flies* as one of the examples of juvenile literature that can at the same time be considered 'high art'.<sup>13</sup>

After Golding was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983, several articles about him were published; most of them discuss *Lord of the Flies* to some extent. A short article in *Delo* announcing Golding as the laureate describes it as a novel with a simple plot addressing the circumstances of the basic human condition.<sup>14</sup> In *Delo's* weekly supplement *Sobotna priloga*, Mitja Meršol published a longer profile on Golding, stating, among other things, that in *Lord of the Flies* the author "portrays a dark vision of evil in human nature".<sup>15</sup> An article in *Primorski dnevnik* merely mentions *Lord of the Flies* as Golding's best-known work,<sup>16</sup> while in the next issue of the same newspaper, an article about the responses to Golding's award asserts that the author owes his reputation to his best-selling debut novel, which became an instant classic, while his other works were not as

9 In 1963, Golding remarked about the ending of the story: "The officer, having interrupted a manhunt, prepares to take the children off the island in a cruiser which will presently be hunting its enemy in the same implacable way. And who will rescue the adult and his cruiser?" (qtd. in Tiger 160).

10 *Dolenjski list*, 13/4/1967: Goldingov zvonik, 5.

11 *Delo*, 8/6/1967: Prave knjige za počitnice, 9.

12 *Delo*, 6/3/1969: Pogled na platno, 6.

13 *Delo*, 18/11/1975: Zgled šablonizirane teze, 8.

14 *Delo*, 7/10/1983: Nobelova nagrada za književnost pripovedniku Williamu Goldingu, 3.

15 *Delo*, 8/10/1983: William Golding, 15.

16 *Primorski dnevnik*, 7/10/1983: Anglež William Golding je letošnji nobelovec, 12.

successful either with critics or with readers.<sup>17</sup> In a further article in *Delo*, Meršol remarks that *Lord of the Flies* is widely regarded as Golding's best work.<sup>18</sup> Mirko Jurak (694), a prominent scholar of English and American literature, published a quite extensive portrait of Golding and his work in the magazine *Naši razgledi*. In it, he discusses *Lord of the Flies* at some length, stating that with this novel, Golding rejected some literary works' idealized portrayal of young people who are put to the test; instead, the island in Golding's story becomes a place where the worst aspects of human nature prevail. After summarizing the plot, Jurak addresses the Freudian functions that critics have been ascribing to certain characters: Ralph is supposed to represent God or the *ego*, Piggy a father figure or the *superego*, and Jack personified evil or the *id*. Jurak claims that with *Lord of the Flies*, Golding implicitly warns readers to make informed and humane decisions even in the direst straits and regardless of the potential consequences.

Janko Moder devoted some attention to *Lord of the Flies* in the afterword to his translation of the novel *Pincher Martin*, asserting that Golding wrote a subversive version of classic adventure stories and substantiating this with statements from the author himself. Moder interpreted the novel as follows:

Golding is no longer merely addressing the question of survival and solitude à la Robinson Crusoe, but a deeper question of co-existence in the complete freedom of primal nature. His experiences on a large (global) and small (school) scale have led him to a fatal realization: humanity is not mature enough to survive in co-existence until society is made up of individuals who are all imbued with an ethical consciousness. (Moder: 387-88)

In the years leading to the dissolution of Yugoslavia, very little was written about *Lord of the Flies*. An exception was renowned writer Tone Partljič, who refers to it as 'legendary' while reviewing another book in *Delo*.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, in the same newspaper, Marko Crnković was dismissive of a paper on the reception of *Lord of the Flies* in Macedonia, which was presented at an academic conference in Ljubljana; he remarks that only Macedonian scholars of English could possibly be interested in this topic—and that even they might not be.<sup>20</sup>

## Post-socialist period

In an article in *Delo* marking Golding's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the plot of *Lord of the Flies* is summarized in one sentence, and the novel is described as a cult classic that

17 *Primorski dnevnik*, 8/10/1983: Polemike o nobelovcu Goldingu, 9.

18 *Delo*, 13/10/1983: Beseda o avtorju, 10.

19 *Delo*, 15/6/1989: Zadnje Dolenčeve knjige ali Mate in morje, 6.

20 *Delo*, 23/11/1990: Maček v žaklju ali simpozij o britanskem romanu na Univerzi, 7.

supposedly changed the cultural taste of a whole generation in the 1960s (similar to Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* in the 1950s).<sup>21</sup> After Golding died in 1993, *Delo* published an obituary by Radovan Kozmos, who states that Golding tried to see the world through the eyes of others, and cites the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies* as an example: the officer of the Royal Navy who arrives on the island reproaches the boys for having behaved in an uncivilized way, while remaining blind to the fact that he is himself taking part in the destruction of civilisation. At the end of the article, Kozmos mentions that Golding was an admirer of classic Greek literature and proclaims *Lord of the Flies* to be Golding's *Iliad*.<sup>22</sup> A profile on Golding published in the same issue of *Delo* states that with *Lord of the Flies*, which became a cult classic for a whole generation, Golding had written something quite different from traditional juvenile adventure stories, which are essentially coming of age stories enabling their young protagonists to reaffirm their human values; instead, the boys turn into monsters and kill the only one among them (i.e. the symbolic representation of Christ) who recognizes the truth about human nature. Furthermore, the anonymous author of the article uses the following quotation from Jurak's aforementioned article in *Nasi razgledi* (without giving the original author proper credit): "In this novel, Golding indicates the presence of evil in people, and leads readers to the conclusion that people should not give up, but should remain humane even in the most difficult circumstances."<sup>23</sup>

Towards the end of the 1990s, *Lord of the Flies* again received some notable attention. The novel was mentioned in an academic article published in the journal *Otrok in knjiga*: in discussing the evolution of the adventure novel, Lilijana Burcar (30) states the following:

Instead of maintaining a democratic way of governing that would befit civilized individuals, the boys are increasingly regressing into an authoritarian and tribal way of regulating interpersonal relationships. This accentuates the weak nature of social rules in regulating behaviour; behind it, there is always the inclination to evil, which is additionally spurred on by the desire for power. Unlike Robinson [Crusoe] and the heroes of *The Coral Island*, Golding's heroes do not encounter a single native. This plays a key role in revealing evil, which is no longer something coming from outside and therefore comparable to the unruly Other, but residing within themselves. Golding transfers the established external bipolarity exclusively into the intertwining internal forces of each individual. Thereby, he ultimately undermines the foundations of the legitimacy of the conquering expeditions in British adventure novels.

21 *Delo*, 26/9/1991: Konservativni obstranec, 20.

22 *Delo*, 24/6/1993: William Golding – gospodar ustvarjalne domišljije, 51.

23 *Delo*, 24/6/1993: Umrli je William Golding, 60.

Also in 1999, *Lord of the Flies* received some attention in *Slovenski vestnik*, a weekly published by the Carinthian Slovenian minority in the Austrian city Klagenfurt. A play based on the novel was staged by a theatre group, and its premiere was announced in said newspaper; after summarizing the plot, someone credited with the initials 'K. J.' states that with this work, Golding posed the question whether people could co-exist in ultimate freedom and that the answer seems to be 'no', since evil lurks in everyone.<sup>24</sup> The play received a positive review in the same newspaper, written by an author credited with the initials 'S. W.', who in the first half the review has the following to say about the novel itself:

The powerfully convincing events, the allegorical simile of humanity, which has a choice between damnation or salvation, faith in a 'saviour', faith in the good in human beings in spite of pessimism, violence [sic] as the guiding star of society and human reason as the last hope—all of this is material for thick philosophical books. [...] The play/novel is, in essence, a deeply philosophical-religious discussion about the meaning of existence and human behaviour.<sup>25</sup>

When in 2004 a new edition of Moder's translation was published by the newspaper publishing company Delo in the series *Vrhunci stoletja* [Highlights of the Century], Igor Bratož published a review of it in *Delo*. He recounts Golding's life story and the events that led up to writing the cult classic *Lord of the Flies*; however, the reviewer also mentions that upon receiving the Nobel Prize, Golding was attacked by certain critics for his alleged lack of artistry. Bratož concludes the review by quoting at some length from Jurak's 1983 essay on Golding.<sup>26</sup> The following year, Jurak published an adapted version of this essay in a monograph; he expanded it and made some changes to the part about *Lord of the Flies*, ascribing somewhat different symbolic meanings to the characters: Simon is supposed to represent a Christ-like figure or the human *ego*, Piggy a father figure or the *super-ego*, and Jack the subconscious part of the human psyche or the *id*. Furthermore, Jurak discusses Golding's writing style at greater length than previously, going so far as to state that nothing could be added to nor subtracted from the novel without damaging its artistic worth. The author concludes that although the novel is categorized as juvenile literature, its reach is far greater, and it is therefore not surprising that it is regarded as Golding's *magnum opus* (183).

In the following years, the novel was sporadically mentioned in the press. Among book recommendations in the magazine 26!, Petra Žigon (29) presented *Lord of the Flies* as a well-written timeless story, which reveals the dark side of

24 *Slovenski vestnik*, 24/6/1999: Gospodar muh - Lord of the Flies, 4.

25 *Slovenski vestnik*, 1/7/1999: Osupljivo dobra predstava, 5.

26 *Delo*, 14/7/2004: Zlo je v nas vseh, 12.

human nature. On the portal *MMC*, Tina Tarter summarizes the plot and questions whether after a while the boys wanted to be rescued at all; furthermore, she poses the question whether a single one of the 'biguns' was capable of defeating the evil which—according to Golding—lies within each one of us. In *Otrok in knjiga*, Andrej Adam published an article in which he argues that *Lord of the Flies* can be used in secondary school to discuss issues related to democracy, and lists examples from the book that can be used to do so. In *Pogledi*, Tina Vrščaj remarks that *Lord of the Flies* shows us that in every society power relations develop: some become hunters, while others are hunted.<sup>27</sup>

*Lord of the Flies* was again prominently featured in the Slovenian media in 2017, when Simona Hamer adapted it into a play entitled *Pošasti* [Monsters], which was staged by the theatre Slovensko mladinsko gledališče; unlike in Golding's novel, the protagonists in the play are adults. Writing about it in *Delo*, Ženja Leiler states that the potency of the novel was in its display of "ultimate evil, evil as an inevitable part of every society and thereby, of course, also of every individual". After describing the plot, in which the boys supposedly represent an allegorical representation of humankind, she concludes that evil is ever-present and that in the end, the surviving boys are robbed of their youthful innocence. In the continuation of the article, the play's director Vito Taufer is quoted as saying the following:

Golding's protagonists still had to act, they were part of historical events. In Simona Hamer's play, we witness a generation that has no purpose, it does not write history and is in a way excluded from it. Golding's characters are still archetypal, in a certain way clearly Manichean, while the characters in *Pošasti* are de-individualized and empty—subjected to every type of violence and extortion of power.<sup>28</sup>

In a review published in the same newspaper, Anja Radaljac states that, while Hamer followed the basic plot of *Lord of the Flies*, certain deviations from it firmly root the play in the present. For instance, in the novel, humankind is threatened by atomic war, while in the play the world is on the verge of an ecological catastrophe; thus, both works address the danger of human self-destruction.<sup>29</sup> In the daily *Slovenske novice*, Andrej Predin provides background information on the genesis of the play, lauds it as excellent, and quotes Taufer as saying that while the novel deals with people torn between good and evil, the play addresses the conformism of today's society.<sup>30</sup>

27 *Pogledi*, 14/9/2011: Ne preveč slasten zalogaj, 28.

28 *Delo*, 15/12/2017: Generacija, ki ne piše več zgodovine, 20.

29 *Delo*, 19/12/2017: Ocenjujemo, 16.

30 *Slovenske novice*, 24/12/2017: Pošast na odru Mladinca, 12.

In more recent years, there have not been many noteworthy articles on Golding. An exception can be found in *Delo*, where Zorana Baković mentions the novel in a political commentary; she states that *Lord of the Flies* addresses the issues of the *Rechtsstaat* and the complicated state of human nature.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, in the Catholic weekly *Novi glas*, Andrej Vončina remarks that with this novel, Golding shows us how quickly civilization can turn into barbarism.<sup>32</sup>

## CONCLUSION

*Lord of the Flies* barely received any attention in the Slovenian literary system before it was translated in 1965; it was then reviewed in several widely read newspapers and magazines. Most reviewers interpreted the boys' behaviour on the island as an allegory of what would happen to the nations of the world in the absence of civilisation. Virtually all the reviewers disregarded the fact that the representative of 'civilisation' who saves the boys in the end is taking part in the destruction of humankind in a similar manner to the boys destroying their microcosm of the world. Furthermore, none of the reviewers had an issue with how human nature is presented in the novel, which can perhaps be attributed to the fact that propagating the importance of having rules was also in the interest of the socialist regime. The same is true for the rest of the 1960s, when *Lord of the Flies* received only passing mention. In the 1970s there were almost no noteworthy mentions of the novel, but it received some attention after Golding won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1983, although in most of the articles no new insight into the novel was provided. Mirko Jurak's more in-depth analysis, which even discusses certain characters from a Freudian standpoint, is an exception.

After Slovenia declared independence, *Lord of the Flies* was sporadically mentioned in the press; some articles acknowledge the destructive element that the navy officer represents, the novel is once even discussed from a post-colonial standpoint, but questions regarding how the plot of the novel can be interpreted with a view to modern society (interpersonal relationships, people's conformism, ecological issues, etc.) received the most attention.

To some extent, the differences in reception can be explained by taking the contemporary socio-political context into consideration. *Lord of the Flies* was initially published in Slovenian only a few years after the Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought the world to the brink of nuclear war, and it is therefore not surprising that reviewers drew parallels between the conflict among the boys in the story

31 *Delo*, 31/8/2019: Vladavina muh ali kdo je Faust med politiki, 6.

32 *Novi glas*, 11/2/2021, Je Gospodar muh postal resničnost? (1), 4.

and conflict between nations in the real world. Furthermore, Yugoslavia was one of the founders of the Non-aligned Movement and perceived both the Eastern and Western blocs as potential threats. However, around the time that Slovenia declared independence, the Cold War also ended, and in the subsequent decades, the threat of an all-out war that could possibly destroy civilization seemed less imminent, which presumably somewhat influenced the reception of *Lord of the Flies*. The focus of interpretation turned not to the relations between nations but rather to the relationships between people within a certain society and people's attitudes towards the environment.

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## **Goldingov *Gospodar muh* v Sloveniji med socializmom in post-socializmom**

Članek primerja socialistično in post-socialistično recepcijo klasičnega romana *Gospodar muh* (1954) izpod peresa Williama Goldinga v slovenskih serijskih publikacijah. Ob upoštevanju družbeno-političnega konteksta so obravnavani razlogi za razlike v kritiških odzivih na roman v različnih obdobjih slovenske zgodovine. Poleg tega je slovenska recepcija *Gospodarja muh* primerjana s sodobno recepcijo (tako v *mainstream* kot v socialističnih publikacijah) v angleško govorečih predelih sveta.

**Ključne besede:** William Golding, *Gospodar muh*, recepcija, serijske publikacije, ideologija, angleška književnost



## Une réflexion sur la métaphysique des sketches de Raymond Devos

*Andrej Serna Balgač*

### Résumé

Raymond Devos a toujours été perçu comme un humoriste hors pair, génie de la langue française et porté au nom des plus grands malgré qu'il n'ait été qu'un simple comédien. Son monde surréaliste a fait rire et continue encore aujourd'hui de le faire. Mais comme bon nombre d'artistes comiques persistants, leur humour, inspiré bien souvent de la réalité, véhicule la plupart du temps un message plus universel ou plus personnel. Cet article tentera donc de présenter un aspect méconnu de Devos qui se reflète dans certains de ses sketches. Car si certaines thèses tendent à le faire passer pour un nihiliste, on trouve néanmoins des références cachées à diverses philosophies ou courants de pensées. C'est donc au travers d'éléments de sa vie et de l'analyse de quelques sketches que nous essayerons de trouver un fond de message religieux chrétien bel et bien présent derrière son humour débonnaire.

**Mots-clés :** Raymond Devos, religion, humour, chrétien, métaphysique.

## RAYMOND DEVOS : UN ESPRIT FORMÉ PAR LA DURE RÉALITÉ EMPIRIQUE

Né en 1922 à Mouscron en Belgique d'une famille que l'on peut qualifier de « bourgeoise », Raymond Devos n'a pas la vie facile contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait penser de prime abord. Son père, industriel dans le monde du textile à Tourcoing, possède également un château à Mouscron. Les ressources ne manquent pas et l'enfance de Devos se passe dans le bonheur candide des premières années, découvrant peu à peu le monde du cirque et de la musique. La famille comptera sept enfants dont un mourra rapidement rappelant ainsi la fragilité de la vie, de même que son aspect éphémère à toute la famille. Puis les remous de la faillite du père commencent à se faire sentir. En 1929 la famille subit les revers de la crise financière. Raymond est retiré de l'école du Sacré Cœur de Tourcoing où il reçoit pourtant un prix de récitation. Mais la chute ne s'arrêtera pas là. La famille doit revendre le château de Mouscron puis déménagera en 1933 en banlieue parisienne, se rapprochant ainsi du nouveau lieu de travail du père devenu expert-comptable par la force des choses. En 1936, Devos obtient son certificat d'études avec brio, cependant, le monde s'enfonçant lentement dans la tourmente qui se préparait, il doit renoncer à continuer son parcours scolaire et se voit contraint de participer aux frais familiaux en enchaînant divers emplois sans envergure notamment aux Halles. Il dira lui-même plus tard que ces activités lui ont fait découvrir sa véritable vocation. Voyant clairement qu'il ne faisait que « mimer » ou « parodier » ses collègues comme dans son exemple à la crèmerie.<sup>1</sup> Devenant autodidacte dans de nombreux domaines, il parfait ses connaissances tout au long de sa vie. À ses heures perdues, il prendra ses premiers cours de théâtre et de musique puis, attiré par cet univers, Devos fera ses débuts de comédien dans de petites compagnies à Paris. C'est avec le début de la guerre que la situation s'envenime pour l'artiste. En effet, en 1942 il passe au service civique rural et travaille dans une ferme du Loiret. Plus tard, en 1943, il finit par être déporté à Berlin sur réquisition du STO. En travaillant dans l'usine où il est affecté, Raymond apporte un peu de réconfort à ses camarades de fortune par ses talents de musicien si bien qu'il monte une troupe de music-hall. Les contraintes linguistiques l'obligent aussi à faire usage de ses talents de mime et, par extension d'amuseur, renforçant de cette façon sa maîtrise des compétences de saltimbanque. Mais c'est aussi un moment important dans la vie de Devos qui, bien qu'étant à un passage sombre de son histoire, lui a permis de découvrir et de comprendre un aspect de l'essence de l'humanité, saisissant ainsi ontologiquement le mélange de méchanceté et de bonté qui réside en

1 Voir l'interview de radio Canada de 1968 dans l'émission « Le sel de la semaine ».

chacun.<sup>2</sup> Enfin la guerre se termine permettant au comédien de revenir à Paris en 1945 où il vit de petits métiers tout en continuant sa formation dans les domaines du mime, de la musique ainsi que du théâtre.

C'est alors qu'entre en jeu la troupe du Vieux Colombier, la rencontre d'Étienne Decroux et de Robert Verbeke. La formation élémentaire de Devos s'achève, alors que son ascension débute en tant que comédien. Mais il faudra attendre 1955, au détour d'une tournée à Biarritz pour que l'artiste vive un moment décisif. Dans un petit restaurant, un dialogue absurde se déroule entre lui et le serveur, ce sera le pivot de sa carrière. En effet, Devos découvre alors ce qui couvait en lui depuis si longtemps, c'est à dire le don du monologue empli de jeux de mots exploitant les absurdités du langage. À partir de ce moment, son succès est total. Il enchaînera les représentations et les projets jusqu'à la fin de sa vie, cumulant les récompenses et les prix les uns après les autres.

Malgré tout cela, il est nécessaire de noter une chose importante. Si Raymond Devos a traversé des épreuves difficiles dans sa vie puis s'est mué en vedette par la suite, il a néanmoins su garder un caractère simple, curieux et réfléchi. Lorsque nous observons l'envers du décor de sa personnalité, c'est un homme timide et mal assuré que nous trouvons. En effet, c'est un perfectionniste qui s'efforce de trouver le mot juste à défaut d'en utiliser un autre plus approximatif. À l'oral, il bafouille, cherche ses expressions et préfère cesser son discours lorsqu'il ne trouve pas le terme parfait. Comme on peut le voir ici :

« Devos, quand il n'est pas sur scène, n'est pas à l'aise dans ses mots. Il les lâche lentement et comme à regret. Sa parole ressemble à un brouillon avec des lacunes et des ratures. Dans notre transcription, nous avons supprimé les très nombreux parasites de l'oral (qu'on aurait pu noter "euh"... si l'on n'avait craint de rendre le texte illisible), tout en essayant, au moyen de la ponctuation, de restituer les hésitations, les faux dialogues et les effets d'intonation. »<sup>3</sup> de même qu'ici :

« Avec Devos, c'est tout ou rien. Soit le discours laisse un vide, le mot manque, il est remplacé par un silence (noté par des points de suspension), soit le discours est trop plein. »<sup>4</sup>

C'est donc quelqu'un de précis, un esprit cartésien et rigoureux qui se dévoile. Tel Descartes obnubilé par la tromperie des sens physique, il est hanté par l'imprécision

2 Voir l'interview de radio Canada de 1968 dans l'émission « Le sel de la semaine ».

3 Rullier-Theuret Françoise. *Raymond Devos ou la peur des mots*. Université de Conakry dans Langage et société, n°78, 1996. pp. 91-106

4 Rullier-Theuret Françoise. *Raymond Devos ou la peur des mots*. Université de Conakry dans Langage et société, n°78, 1996. pp. 91-106

du langage. Le comédien cherche perpétuellement la perfection dans la langue, comme un point absolu où le sens ne peut souffrir aucune autre possibilité ni comparaison.

En écoutant ou lisant la communication spontanée de Devos nous pouvons clairement voir une certaine timidité de sa part. Ce trait de caractère pouvant être la source de ce perfectionnisme. Comme il le dit :

« Je suis très timide. La timidité, cela se traduit par des dérobades, des refus. Vouloir faire quelque chose, imaginer comment cela va se faire et se dérober, ne pas le faire... Ne pas avoir le courage de le faire... Ne pas pouvoir, ne pas avoir le droit de le faire... Refouler... Je pense que je suis comme tout le monde, mais chez moi il y a souvent une grande lâcheté. »<sup>5</sup>

Nous pouvons alors comprendre que l'artiste est en proie à une grande peur qui peut être la conséquence de sa vie passée. Néanmoins, cette peur de l'inconnu, de la réaction inattendue et par conséquent imprévisible, est probablement le moteur même de la quête du comédien pour l'exactitude représentant la stabilité totale. On pourrait presque comparer le « cogito ergo sum » de Descartes avec cette recherche frénétique d'un point d'encrage définitif dans le langage.

## UNE RECHERCHE MÉTAPHYSIQUE MASQUÉE PAR LE COMIQUE

« Les mots disent n'importe quoi »<sup>6</sup> Face à une telle absurdité, Raymond Devos a donc exploré de nombreuses possibilités dans le langage en tentant de trouver des notions stables dans un océan de quiproquos potentiels. Cependant, il est intéressant de noter que dans nombre de ses sketches nous pouvons relever l'idée d'une métaphysique chrétienne ou tout du moins semblable. Par conséquent, un parallèle avec Descartes est inévitable. Un excellent exemple de cela se trouve dans le sketch *Un ange passe* où l'auteur commence par déclarer :

« On dit que j'extravague, parfois que je délire ! Moi ? Alors qu'il n'y a pas plus raisonnable que moi.

Il n'y a pas d'esprit plus cartésien que le mien.

Je ne fais que rapporter les faits tels que je les observe. »<sup>7</sup>

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5 Thévenon Patrick, Collange Christiane et Kanters Robert. *Entretien avec L'Express*. L'Express, 29 janvier 1968.

6 Rullier-Theuret Françoise. *Raymond Devos ou la peur des mots*. Université de Conakry dans Langage et société, n°78, 1996. pp. 91-106

7 Devos Raymond. *A plus d'un titre*. Paris : Editions Pocket, 1990. p.77

En effet, Devos tout au long de sa carrière, a toujours été d'une logique imparable. Exploitant les multiples sens des mots pour donner un ensemble certes, absurde au final, mais parfaitement cohérent. C'est ici presque sur la défensive que nous pouvons comprendre cette déclaration, comme s'il répondait à des accusations qui pointeraient sur l'absurdité des ses textes et par extension de son propre esprit.

Plus loin, nous retrouvons justement les définitions qu'il donne du terme « observer » avec toute la logique dont on puisse faire preuve. C'est là, qu'un aspect passionnant du comédien surgit. Le silence est « observé » au sens de voir. Le jeu de mots est indéniable mais cache une notion plus profonde.

« Parce que les gens redoutent le silence.

Alors, lorsque le silence se fait, ils le meublent. »<sup>8</sup> Nous retrouvons ici l'idée de peur que nous avons rencontrée précédemment. Car quand le silence se fait, il n'y a plus d'interlocuteur. Il ne reste que le « moi » dans la solitude de l'être face à lui-même. L'obligation de se tourner vers l'essence de l'être est alors la seule chose qui demeure. Le silence, c'est aussi le néant sonore qui traduit un vide environnemental, un monde purgé de toutes distractions substantielles. Tel un moine dans un monastère aux règles les plus austères, c'est un repli vers l'intériorité qui se fait. Lorsque cet isolement est brisé :

« Quelqu'un dit :

- Tiens, un ange passe !

Alors que l'ange, il l'a pas vu passer. »<sup>9</sup> On retourne vers l'univers sensible, s'éloignant à nouveau du divin qui terrifie de par sa perfection. Mais en surmontant sa peur et en acceptant le monde tel qu'il est, on accède alors à la vérité :

« Ben s'il avait le courage comme moi d'observer le silence en face,

L'ange, il le verrait. »<sup>10</sup>

Ce n'est pas par hasard que la figure de l'ange est ici utilisée, de même que dans plusieurs des sketches de Devos. L'entité céleste est l'incarnation de la perfection spirituelle dans de nombreuses cultures et rappelle toujours le divin à l'Homme. Le comédien incite à observer le silence en face, tout comme se fait la recherche de Dieu en « regardant sa face ». <sup>11</sup> De plus, le texte débute par la notion d'observation du silence qui est proche du concept de « minute de silence » utilisé à la fin pour rendre un hommage à quelqu'un de défunt. La mort étant l'ultime limite de

8 Devos Raymond. *A plus d'un titre*. Paris : Editions Pocket, 1990. p.77

9 Devos Raymond. *A plus d'un titre*. Paris : Editions Pocket, 1990. p.77

10 Devos Raymond. *A plus d'un titre*. Paris : Editions Pocket, 1990. p.77

11 *La Bible* Exode 33 : 18 - 23

chacun, de même que la frontière avec le monde transcendantal, c'est presque une porte ouverte vers Dieu que Devos dévoile ici, utilisant le même mécanisme que Wittgenstein « ...sur ce dont on ne peut parler, il faut garder le silence. »<sup>12</sup> La mystique du silence est donc la clé de l'humilité nécessaire pour accepter sa condition et se rapprocher de Dieu. Cette thèse peut être étendue encore par la suite avec un retour aux anciens auteurs de l'antiquité. Nous retrouvons en effet clairement un écho dans la philosophie de Platon dans l'idée « d'ombres ». Le doute (cartésien) qui plane dans la salle à l'idée de voir réellement la créature extrasensorielle qu'est l'ange projette une ombre permettant d'identifier le doute relié à l'être céleste.

« - Comment pouvez-vous identifier un doute avec certitude ?

- A son ombre !

- L'ombre d'un doute... c'est bien connu !

- Si le doute fait de l'ombre, c'est que le doute existe.

- Il n'y a pas d'ombre sans doute ! »<sup>13</sup>

Le rapprochement avec l'allégorie de la caverne de Platon est alors indéniable. Car pour les plus sceptiques et les plus craintifs qui réclament des preuves tangibles de l'existence du divin, les projections d'ombres sont alors une indication suffisante pour au moins mettre un pied sur le chemin de la foi. Ainsi la boucle est bouclée et c'est là que l'on retrouve tout le génie caché de Devos qui a su en un texte court rassembler plusieurs millénaires de philosophie en un seul faisceau afin de pointer sur l'existence de Dieu.

De la même façon, le sketch *L'homme existe, je l'ai rencontré* est une prolongation claire de l'aspect métaphysique de Raymond Devos. Moins masquée que la précédente œuvre, celle-ci reprend pourtant les mêmes éléments. En effet, nous pouvons retrouver les notions de doute : « Parce que j'ai eu le privilège de rencontrer Dieu juste à un moment où je doutais de lui. »<sup>14</sup> et de solitude : « Dans un petit village de Lozère abandonné des hommes, il n'y avait plus personne. »<sup>15</sup> C'est toujours dans la solitude que l'on rencontre Dieu mais aussi lorsque l'on est en proie au doute. La comparaison avec l'apôtre St. Thomas doutant de la résurrection du Christ et qui finit par le rencontrer en personne est facile à saisir. En utilisant l'inversion des rôles entre Dieu et l'Homme, l'auteur arrive à provoquer un rapprochement avec le divin. L'Homme se sent bien souvent seul et abandonné dans

12 Wittgenstein Ludwig. *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Paris : Editions Gallimard, 1993. p.31

13 Devos Raymond. *A plus d'un titre*. Paris : Editions Pocket, 1990. p.78

14 Devos Raymond. *Matière à rire*. Paris : Editions Plon, 2015. p.115

15 Devos Raymond. *Matière à rire*. Paris : Editions Plon, 2015. p.115

un monde qu'il ne maîtrise pas vraiment, ne voyant qu'une succession de causes et d'effets à une échelle matérielle. La part transcendante n'est alors que difficilement perceptible. Or, en intervertissant les rôles, Devos permet à l'Homme et, par extension au spectateur, de ressentir et de comprendre le point de vue de Dieu.

Les chrétiens ont toujours eu une divinité personnelle qui s'inquiète et souffre à cause de l'Homme. Essayant perpétuellement de racheter sa création corrompue, le divin aide, annonce, punit, pardonne. Si on peut voir en ce texte une influence Nietzscheenne :

« Devant Dieu ! – Mais maintenant ce Dieu est mort ! Hommes supérieurs, ce Dieu a été votre plus grand danger. Vous n'êtes ressuscité que depuis qu'il gît dans la tombe. C'est maintenant seulement que revient le grand midi, maintenant l'homme supérieur devient – maître ! »<sup>16</sup>

Ayant un rapport à une non-existence de Dieu, il n'en est pourtant rien. La simple réplique du début réfute de façon éclatante cette hypothèse :

« Que Dieu existe, la question ne se pose pas ! »<sup>17</sup>

Ce qui signifie que l'humoriste emploie cette inversion des rôles dans un but de rapprochement de l'Homme au divin en affichant un Dieu qui doute, se morfond à l'image de l'Homme.

Cependant, c'est dans l'interprétation du sketch sur scène que se trouve un élément important. Si le texte ne retransmet aucune intonation orale, sa version jouée contient quelques points qu'il est nécessaire de mentionner.

Tout d'abord, nous pouvons voir un respect qui se dégage de la voix du comédien lors de la première partie du sketch. L'artiste chuchote au passage lorsqu'il est en présence de Dieu comme le font les fidèles dans une église. Puis il parle lentement en interprétant Dieu, d'une voix mélancolique qui traduit presque un désespoir tout comme un humain dans ses heures sombres. Alors que dans la réplique finale résonne un regain d'espoir avec une reprise de confiance. Le sourire de Devos s'entend clairement aussi à cette phrase comme si l'humoriste était heureux d'avoir pu réconcilier, même de façon fictive, l'Homme et Dieu. Par effet de miroir, la réciproque est évidente avec la fameuse expression populaire « Dieu existe, je l'ai rencontré ! » indiquant que les deux mondes se sont enfin retrouvés.

16 Nietzsche Friedrich. *Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra*. Paris : Société du Mercure de France, 1903.

17 Devos Raymond. *Matériau à rire*. Paris : Editions Plon, 2015. p.115

## L'HUMOUR AU SERVICE D'UN MESSAGE PLUS PROFOND

Bien que l'on pourrait mettre en doute cet aspect chrétien, Devos n'est pas un être insensible au transcendant comme en témoignent ses sketches. La thématique religieuse apparaît souvent comme dans *Le fils d'Abraham* ou encore *Jésus revient* qui sont clairement énoncés comme ayant une forte connotation religieuse et représentative de Dieu. Mais un dernier sketch peut être révélateur par image miroir d'un dernier aspect. En effet, *Où courent-ils ?* révèle une autre facette métaphysique de la croyance en Dieu. Dans la religion chrétienne on note une dualité entre le bien et le mal, Dieu et le diable. Or, en observant de plus près cette œuvre on peut y comprendre un sens plus profond. De prime abord, il n'y a aucune référence directe à la religion. Les trois éléments clés sont ici la folie, la course et l'argent. Le premier est la trame générale du sketch, il s'agit d'une ville de fous, plaçant ainsi un contexte absurde par essence. Une ambiance chaotique voire dérangeante se dégage alors de ce milieu mettant l'imaginaire du spectateur mal à l'aise. Car la folie est contraire à l'ordre naturel, à la logique, restant une maladie et par conséquent quelque chose de négatif. Amplifié par la vitesse de la course, le cadre du sketch prend une tournure générale accélérée appuyant l'effet nocif de l'aliénation mentale. On peut vite s'imaginer une sorte de grouillement de personnes désordonné dans une frénésie collective. Enfin, l'argent est l'un des pivots de ce texte. En tant que motivation première, il demeure le moteur de chacun, poussant les individus à se soumettre à la folie. Bien entendu, les jeux de mots avec les expressions populaires « courir pour la gloire » et « courir à sa perte » ne représentent que la façade humoristique de l'œuvre. Il faut souligner que les personnes de cette ville courent pour la gloire, les honneurs, l'argent et ultimement à leur perte comme l'écrit Devos.<sup>18</sup> L'humilité, valeur chrétienne par excellence, n'a donc pas sa place dans cette cité. Au contraire, c'est l'orgueil qui est mis en exergue, de même que la quête insensée et incessante de richesses. L'orgueil, premier des péchés dans l'échelle chrétienne, est la source de tous les maux y compris de la folie. C'est donc presque une caricature du monde réel qui nous est présentée ici. Car l'argent est aussi le principal but de nombreuses personnes bel et bien réelles. Il en va de même avec la gloire citée plus haut. À l'image de Sodome et Gomorrhe, seul un contestataire marche s'opposant au vice de la population de la ville, restant seul. Incompris ou plutôt abandonné comme l'explique l'artiste, c'est une figure que l'on peut comparer au Christ ayant apporté un enseignement contraire à la vision humaine que les hommes n'ont pas pleinement saisis. Enfin, le personnage à qui tout profite depuis le début n'est autre que le banquier dont l'identité n'est dévoilée qu'à la chute du sketch. Ce dernier ne se définissant nullement comme désaxé, exploite

18 Devos Raymond. *Matière à rire*. Paris : Editions Plon, 2015. p.18

la démence locale pour ses propres intérêts. Ravi, tout en s'enrichissant, il pourrait représenter un diable soumettant autrui à son pouvoir pour le mener à sa perte. Le sketch *Le possédé du perceuteur* reprend un code similaire de façon plus explicite comparant directement le personnage du perceuteur et l'argent à une force démoniaque contre laquelle même un prêtre ne serait pas de taille :

« — Mon père, je suis possédé du perceuteur. Pouvez-vous pratiquer l'exorcisme ?

Il m'a dit :

— Mon fils... vous m'auriez parlé du Démon... J'aurais pu tenter quelque chose... Mais contre les puissances de l'argent... »<sup>19</sup>

C'est donc par opposition entre Dieu et le diable que l'on retrouve aussi une part non négligeable de la métaphysique de Devos qui pointe vers les sphères célestes en dénonçant les déviations et autres horreurs du malin.

La liste étant longue, on ne peut analyser la totalité des textes ici, mais les éléments apportés permettent d'étayer la thèse du message à teneur chrétienne.

De plus, l'artiste, bien qu'avare de commentaires sur sa vie spirituelle était lui-même en recherche de réponses. Une chroniqueuse du journal *La Croix* se souvient :

« Je me souviens d'un entretien sur l'humour de Dieu avec Raymond Devos. L'artiste avait hésité avant de l'accepter : la foi, il en parlait peu, sauf dans ses sketches où elle était bien là, avec ses crises, ses doutes. Ces histoires donnaient à l'artiste matière à nous faire sourire. Et matière, pour moi, à l'interviewer sur sa foi. L'artiste aimait inviter Dieu chez lui, mais sans témoin, l'entendre frapper à sa porte. Il aurait aimé donner à Judas quelques deniers pour qu'il ne trahisse pas... Il était attentif au silence, au bruissement d'ailes, aux anges qui passent. »<sup>20</sup>

Ceci indique clairement une dimension spirituelle chez Raymond Devos sans pour autant en faire un prédicateur fanatique. Nous pouvons alors sans hésitation affirmer que le comédien plaçait donc une part de lui non négligeable dans ses œuvres. L'article de *Libération* rapporte d'ailleurs ses propos :

« On pense qu'il rit pour oublier, non, il n'oublie pas : « J'ai écrit un sketch sur les camps, c'est le seul sketch écrit sur ma douleur, il s'appelle le Plaisir des Sens, les sens interdits. » Et, au cas où on n'aurait pas bien compris, devant vous, Devos prenait un crayon, lui qui n'écrivait qu'à l'encre violette, et vous dessinait un rond-point, quatre rues en étoile, chacune fermée d'un panneau de sens interdit afin qu'on n'en sorte pas :

19 Devos Raymond. *Matière à rire*. Paris : Editions Plon, 2015. p.110

20 Gérard Anne-Marie. *De l'humour*. La Croix, 25.11.2017.

« Le camp, c'est comme ça, on arrive la gueule enfarinée, penaud, sans résistance et vlan ! La porte se ferme derrière notre dos, on tourne en rond, sans arrêt, avec en point de mire le corbillard. Quand je disais ce sketch, je pensais au camp, chaque fois. Les gens riaient. »<sup>21</sup>

Cette expérience a sans doute contribué à renforcer le questionnement métaphysique de l'artiste. La proximité de la mort et le désespoir de cette époque remettant souvent en question les certitudes et les valeurs de chacun, nul doute que cette période a profondément marqué Devos ainsi que sa carrière.

Enfin, comme on peut le voir encore dans les propos de Devos lors de l'entretien avec la RTS : « Si on commence à se poser des questions, il faut les poser toutes ! ... La curiosité de la vibration de la vie, rien que ça, je trouve ça fabuleux ! »<sup>22</sup>

C'est donc un homme simple, fasciné par le monde qui l'entoure que nous trouvons. Un survivant de la guerre qui a su garder un regard de même qu'une âme d'enfant tout en transmettant par le rire ses pensées, ses angoisses, ses interrogations. Une personne en quête de vérité, tentant de comprendre l'incompréhensible et dont la carrière a été le chemin de sa recherche. Sa maîtrise des mots combinée à sa personnalité ont fait de lui un « Petit » prince en chair et en os de la langue française qui restera dans les mémoires malgré tous les « serpents » du monde.

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## Razmišljanje o metafiziki v skečih Raymonda Devosa

Raymond Devos je vedno veljal za izjemnega komika, za genija francoskega jezika in za tistega, ki je kljub temu, da je bil zgolj komik, segal po najvišjih vršacih duha. Njegov nadrealistični svet je ljudi spravljal v smeh. Ta moč mu je ostala še danes. Kot pri precej komikih pa ima tudi njihov humor, ki ga navdihuje resničnost, pogosto bolj univerzalno ali osebno sporočilo. V tem članku bomo zato poskušali predstaviti malo znan vidik Devosa, ki se odraža v nekaterih skečih. Čeprav je v svojih tezah videti kot nihilist, se v njih skriva sklicevanje na različne filozofije ali miselne šole. Zato bomo s pomočjo elementov iz njegovega življenja poskušali najti krščansko versko sporočilo, ki se skriva za duhovitim humorjem.

**Ključne besede:** Raymond Devos, religija, humor, kristjan, metafizika



# La novela “a la española”: un paradigma novelesco en el siglo XVIII

*Ignac Fock*

## Resumen

El presente artículo trata de la recepción de España y de su tradición narrativa en la novela europea del siglo XVIII. Los primeros teóricos de la novela atribuyen su origen a los pueblos orientales, pero Sade menciona España entre los primeros sucesores de estos, añadiendo que la capacidad de, o inclinación a, escribir novelas es una debilidad humana. Por la así llamada Leyenda Negra, la Inquisición, la intolerancia religiosa y el retraso económico España tenía mala fama en la Europa ilustrada. Además, la producción novelesca en España atrofó justo en el período crucial para la articulación de este género literario. Este artículo demuestra un oxímoron: el desarrollo de la novela europea del siglo XVIII se apoyó en dos modelos españoles, el picaresco y el cervantino, y también el espíritu de España, visto desde Europa, se adecuaba al espíritu de la ficción novelesca, cuyo origen, según Sade, estaría relacionado con una engañosa debilidad generadora de invenciones. En el *Quijote* el manuscrito encontrado es obra de un historiador árabe, puesto que la falsedad y engaño de esas naciones eran proverbiales en aquel tiempo. Pero en el siglo XVIII, su lugar fue ocupado precisamente por la patria del Quijote, que en el contexto de la novela se convirtió en “el nuevo Oriente” mucho antes de la aparición del estereotipo romántico de la España orientalizada.

**Palabras clave:** novela española, novela francesa, Ilustración, origen de la novela, manuscrito encontrado

## INTRODUCCIÓN

Marcelino Meléndez Pelayo llamó al siglo XVIII “el siglo menos español”. José Ortega y Gasset atribuyó la carencia que lastrara la civilización española precisamente al hecho de que los españoles se habrían “saltado” ese “siglo insustituible”, “el gran siglo educador”. “Cuanto más se medita sobre nuestra historia, más clara se advierte esta desastrosa ausencia del siglo XVIII”, sostiene el filósofo (Ortega y Gasset 1966, 600). Por lo mismo, durante mucho tiempo persistió la opinión de que a lo largo del Siglo de las luces, época de la articulación de la novela europea, España no hubiera producido ninguna novela de relevancia e interés. Aunque numerosos estudios han relativizado y desmentido este tópico, sigue innegable el hecho de que la producción novelesca española entre Cervantes o Quevedo por una parte y, por la otra, Pérez Galdós, no se puede comparar con la inglesa o la francesa.<sup>1</sup> Como causas por ello, Montesinos (1966) alega la herencia y prolongación del Barroco, el excesivo desarrollo del doctrinarismo moral, el atraso socioeconómico y el consecuente escapismo, el desdén hacia la novela por parte de la preceptiva neoclásica, traducciones generalmente tardías y escasas de las novelas europeas contemporáneas, una recepción deficiente del *Quijote*, que la crítica calificó meramente de sátira en prosa, y, finalmente, la fuerte presencia de la censura y la Inquisición.<sup>2</sup>

Igual de conocidos son los estereotipos dieciochescos sobre España. Al clásico tópico de la Leyenda Negra, arquetipo del abuso de poder, se sumó el de un país que durante su ocaso imperial se veía marcado por la intolerancia religiosa, la ambición política y la ineficacia económica. Su imagen en la Europa ilustrada es objeto de numerosos estudios y el presente artículo no pretende continuar esta línea de investigación. Nuestro objetivo es matizar dicha situación desde un punto de vista exclusivamente literario para señalar que simultáneamente a los prejuicios ilustrados y a las polémicas de índole filosófico-política, iba articulándose un motivo o incluso paradigma literario bien diferente: el de España como fuente de la ficción y, más particularmente, de la novela. Intentaremos señalar que aunque en los ojos del siglo ilustrado todo lo español fuera objeto de críticas y desprecio, resulta que, por los mismos motivos, la fama de España venía a coincidir con la de la novela. Revisaremos algunas de las primeras teorías sobre la novela y, por

1 Esta última posiblemente sea el único caso de una literatura moderna que contaba con obras representativas, “canónicas”, pudiendo ser consideradas como “clásicos”, en todas las etapas de su desarrollo.

2 Al proponer una revisión del supuesto agotamiento de la novela respaldado por Montesinos, Guillermo Carnero atribuye tal situación ante todo a la falta de “la clase lectora que dio vuelos a la narrativa europea; la clase que, con número de personas y poder económico suficiente, conquistaba al mismo tiempo la libertad de pensar y la libertad política” (en García de la Concha 1995, XL).

otra parte, la imagen que tenía la España dieciochesca en el resto de Europa, para presentar las circunstancias en las que la novela, el género ficcional cuyo espíritu moderno más corresponde al de las Luces, estaba vinculado esencialmente al país que más reprobaciones recibía por parte de esa misma Ilustración.

## EL ORIENTE, LA PATRIA DE LA NOVELA

El primer teórico de la novela fue Pierre Daniel Huet. En su *Traité de l'origine des romans* (1670) sostiene que "ce que l'on appelle proprement Romans sont des fictions d'aventures amoureuses, écrites en Prose avec art, pour le plaisir et l'instruction des Lecteurs". El objetivo principal de la novela sería la instrucción, pero visto que el ser humano por naturaleza esquiva y por culpa de su orgullo hasta contradice las lecciones, hace falta manipularlo para atraer su atención, atenuando el rigor de la moraleja mediante una fábula agradable. Por lo consiguiente, el placer y el interés despertados en el lector no son más que una herramienta destinada a otros fines, que son "l'instruction de l'esprit et la correction des mœurs" (Huet 1966, 5-6).

Al traducir en 1787 la novela *Gil Blas* (1715-1735) de Alain-René Lesage, José Francisco de Isla añadió un prólogo en el que mencionó a Huet, constatando que su texto hablaba "sobre el origen de los romances o novelas" (en García de la Concha 1995, 948). Se podría decir que de esta manera demostró comprender la bifurcación del concepto "novela" de la que unas décadas más tarde haría constancia Clara Reeve.<sup>3</sup> Pero al mismo tiempo hay que subrayar, primero, el impacto que seguía teniendo el *Tratado* de Huet cien años después de su aparición y, segundo, su actualidad y su consiguiente modernidad y posibilidad de aplicación a la novela ilustrada, cuyas bases teóricas fundó la obra *Versuch über den Roman* (1774) del alemán Christian Friedrich von Blanckenburg, quien define la novela como una historia verdadera, pero ficcional. La considera como una importante herramienta educativa cuya ficcionalidad ha dejado de ser dañosa para convertirse en un medio para divulgar la verdad: el placer que proviene de la lectura no es una forma de escapismo sino un camino hacia el conocimiento (Blanckenburg 116). En ese aspecto, coincide con Huet, para quien, según hemos visto, la trama novelesca es un cebo.<sup>4</sup>

3 "The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen. The Novel gives a familiar relation of such things as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves; and the perfection of it is to represent every scene in so easy and natural a manner, and to make them appear so probable, as to deceive us into a persuasion (at least while we are reading) that all is real, until we are affected by the joys or distresses of the persons in the story as if they were our own." (Reeve 111)

4 A quien Blanckenburg no habría leído, según afirma Montandon (43).

Otra teoría sobre la novela que hay que mencionar en el contexto ilustrado es *Idée sur les romans* del Marqués de Sade (1799). Katarina Marinčič la considera como la más cercana a la de Huet, notando varios paralelismos entre ambos teóricos franceses a pesar del lapso temporal de ciento treinta años. Subraya que los dos ven la novela como un género en constante desarrollo, atribuyéndole el espíritu de libertad creadora. Pero coinciden incluso donde, a primera vista, parecen divergentes: al tratar de la funcionalidad de la moraleja que conlleva la novela y, lo más importante para nuestro artículo, al trazar los orígenes de la novela (Marinčič 2012, 53-54), ya que la propia definición de la novela incluso es un producto secundario del *Tratado* de Huet, añade Katarina Marinčič (2016, 11). En efecto, de acuerdo con el título de su tratado, el teórico francés no se planteaba la pregunta qué era la novela sino de dónde provenía: “Après être convenus des ouvrages qui méritent proprement le nom des Romans, je dis que l’invention en est due aux Orientaux; je veux dire aux Égyptiens, aux Arabes, aux Perses et aux Syriens” (Huet 1966, 11). Más interesantes todavía son los argumentos en los que fundó la opinión de que la novela era de origen oriental. En primer lugar, porque los épicos griegos eran descendientes de los pueblos orientales, desde donde las fábulas fueron meramente “transplantadas” a Grecia.<sup>5</sup> Y en segundo lugar, porque la esencia de la novela, que es ficcional y por lo tanto inventada, se adecuaba perfectamente al espíritu oriental:

Aussi à peine est-il croyable combien tous ces peuples ont l’esprit poétique, inventif et amateur des fictions; tous leurs discours sont figurés; ils ne s’expliquent que par allégories; leur Théologie, leur Philosophie et principalement leur Politique et leur Morale sont toutes enveloppées sous des fables et des paraboles. Les Hiéroglyphes des Égyptiens font voir à quel point cette nation était mystérieuse. Tout s’exprimait chez eux par images; tout y était déguisé. (Huet 1966, 12)

Del mismo modo que Huet, también Sade encuentra el origen de la novela en Egipto para luego justificar tal origen con las características de la novela:

Il est des modes, des usages, des goûts qui ne se transmettent point; inhérents à tous les hommes, ils naissent naturellement avec eux. [...] N’en doutons pas: ce fut dans les contrées qui, les premières, reconnurent des Dieux, que les romans prirent leur source, et par conséquent en Égypte, berceau certain de tous les cultes; à peine les hommes eurent-ils soupçonné des êtres immortels, qu’ils les firent agir et parler; dès lors, voilà des métamorphoses, des fables, des paraboles,

5 “[T]out ce pays mérite bien mieux d’être appelé le pays des fables que la Grèce, où elles n’ont été que transplantées, mais où elles ont trouvé le terroir si bon qu’elles y ont admirablement bien pris racine” (Huet 1966, 12).

des romans; en un mot, voila des ouvrages des fictions, dès que la fiction s'empare de l'esprit des hommes. (Sade 1799, 28)

No obstante, en ese preciso punto se esboza una importante divergencia entre ambos, constatada también por Katarina Marinčič (2012, 56): Sade considera que el origen egipcio de las fábulas novelescas no es sino un azar histórico; las novelas, según él, surgen en todas las lenguas, en todas las naciones. Recordemos la definición de Huet sobre lo que vendría a ser novela: son ficciones sobre aventuras amorosas, escritas en prosa y con arte.<sup>6</sup> Pero según él, la imaginación capaz de idear novelas es una exclusividad oriental, mientras que para Sade, es propia a todo el mundo: “L’homme est sujet à deux faiblesses [...]. Partout il faut *qu’il prie*, partout il faut *qu’il aime*; et voilà la base de tous les romans; il en a fait pour peindre les êtres qu’il *implorait*, il en a fait pour célébrer ceux qu’il *aimait*” (Sade 1799, 30). Y este es, finalmente, el aspecto que queremos subrayar para apoyarnos en él en adelante. La afirmación de Sade se podría tomar por una quasi-paráfrasis de la “fórmula” propuesta por Huet —la novela es amor más prosa—, pero la capacidad, o voluntad, creadora la considera como *debilidad* (“faiblesse”).

## LA NOVELA “A LA ESPAÑOLA”

Aunque el *Tratado* de Huet es uno de los textos esenciales para comprender el desarrollo de la novela en la época moderna y ha sido estudiado y citado abundantemente, raras veces se haga mención del libro del que formaba parte. A saber, no se publicó de manera autónoma sino como introducción a la novela *Zaïde* (1671) de Marie-Madeleine de La Fayette, siete años anterior a su famosa *Princesa de Clèves*. Por las causas que expondremos a continuación, *Zaïde* no fue calificada de “novela” sino que llevaba el subtítulo *Historia española* [*Histoire espagnole*].

El primer porqué del subtítulo es la trama. *Zaïde* es arrojada por un naufragio a la costa española donde la encuentra Consalve y se enamora de ella. A lo largo de la novela —o más precisamente, del relato diegético— procura conocer su identidad, tarea dificultada por el hecho de que la joven mujer no habla español. Pero además del espacio geográfico lo español de esta novela podría explicarse también por medio de su estructura narrativa que, siguiendo una práctica narrativa barroca fácilmente reconocible, reposa sobre una serie de “cajones”, es decir, relatos metadiegticos intercalados, largas digresiones confiadas a personajes secundarios que, a su vez, aportan trocitos de la historia que Consalve trata de reconstruir.

Episodios ensartados en la (auto)biografía del héroe (o heroína), su desarrollo psicológico y su formación, acontecimientos yuxtapuestos, relatos metadiegticos

6 “[D]es fictions d’aventures amoureuses, écrites en Prose avec art”, cf. *supra*.

ante los que el protagonista se convierte en testigo: todo esto lo había sintetizado, a través de la fábula milesia y la picaresca, también Cervantes. El ámbito inglés adoptó ambos modelos narrativos españoles, cuyos rasgos estructurales y temáticos la historia literaria reconoció en las obras de Daniel Defoe (*Moll Flanders*), Henry Fielding (*Tom Jones*, *Joseph Andrews*), Tobias Smollet<sup>7</sup> (*Sir Launcelot Greaves*, *Humphry Clinker*, *Roderick Random*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*), Laurence Sterne (*Tristram Shandy*) y, al fin y al cabo, Charlotte Lennox. Su novela *The Female Quixote* fue una de las primeras obras con “hipotexto quijotesco” en alcanzar el efecto que hubiera deseado Cervantes: el escapismo caballeresco y sentimental desapareció por completo para convertirse en pura parodia. Garrido Ardila (2014, 218) sostiene que la propia Jane Austen, lectora apasionada de la versión femenina del *Quijote*, al escribir *The Northanger Abbey*, se inspiró en el modelo de la parodia desarrollado por Lennox. Por fin, cabría mencionar a Marivaux, quien ideó una parodia de *Don Quijote*, esto es, en términos estrictos, una metaparodia: *Pharsamon ou Les nouvelles folies romanesques* (1712).<sup>8</sup>

En realidad podrían rastrearse fácilmente las raíces españolas en buena parte de la producción novelesca del siglo XVIII. Alain-René Lesage con su *Gil Blas* (1715–1735) renovó la imagen del pícaro que terminó por “institucionalizarse” en las letras francesas; Delon y Malandain (1996, 165) consideran la picaresca como el *melting pot* de la novela realista en la primera mitad del siglo, y Montandon (1999), por su parte, llama “hermanos de Gil Blas” a los narradores autodiegéticos en la novela francesa ilustrada. La educación y la formación aportan, además de la trama, también la estructura en la cual se basa el relato seudomemorial redactado una vez alcanzada la madurez, gracias a la que el protagonista se ve capaz de contar su vida con cierta distancia. El héroe es una persona “normal”, común y corriente, pero excepcional por su espíritu y su corazón; puede juzgar de manera lúcida tanto sus propias acciones como las de su entorno. No obstante, contrariamente a la picaresca, es de suma importancia que la mala experiencia no le hace convertirse en antihéroe, lo que sucediera con el pícaro clásico, sino que sobrepasando las adversidades llegue a formarse como un hombre de bien.

Preciso es mencionar también la obra de Lesage como traductor. En 1732 firmó una nueva traducción de *Guzmán*, a la que dio un título muy llamativo: *Histoire de Guzman d'Alfarache (de Mateo Alemán), nouvellement traduite et purgée des moralités superflues par R. Lesage*. Tradujo además el *Quijote* apócrifo y en la introducción, más que a Cervantes, alabó al impostor, lo cual parece ser un ejemplo aislado en la recepción de la novela de Avellaneda. Diderot, por ejemplo, cuyo

7 Entre las numerosas traducciones que se habían publicado hasta mediados del siglo, una también es de Smollet (1755).

8 En este caso “romanesque” significa dos cosas: en forma de novela y por culpa de las novelas.

*Jacques el fatalista*<sup>9</sup> es la única novela francesa de la época que menciona explícitamente el *Quijote*,<sup>10</sup> criticó abiertamente la mala imitación por parte de Avellaneda.

Debemos subrayar que el *Quijote* apócrifo, que hoy es estudiado ante todo como fenómeno y como uno de los mayores enigmas en las letras españolas, gozaba de mucho éxito en la España barroca, siendo considerado como una divertida novela cómico-burlesca. Pero que Lesage prefiriera el plagio al original, es extraño, más aún si consideramos que el escritor francés era conocedor de la literatura española. Sade (1799, XV) incluso sostuvo que como no hubiera sido por (¡el verdadero!) Cervantes, Lesage nunca hubiera escrito la mayoría de sus obras.<sup>11</sup> Danny Roberge (2009) investiga los motivos por esta recepción tan favorable de Avellaneda, pero podríamos añadirle otro, un poco más anecdótico tal vez. En la edición del 1726 de *Gil Blas*, Lesage admitió la “contaminación” por la cual varias veces se le había acusado de plagio. A saber: la novela *Le Diable boiteux* (1707) la tomó “prestada” de Luis Vélez de Guevara —quien había escrito una obra homónima (*El diablo cojuelo*, 1641) que Lesage más que nada tradujo—, y la crítica halló en *Gil Blas* muchas similitudes con *La vida del escudero don Marcos de Obregón* (1618) de Vicente Espinel, con *El Conde Lucanor* de Juan Manuel y, claro está, con *Lazarillo de Tormes*. En fin, puede que al toparse con el enigmático Avellaneda, a Lesage le pareciera simplemente *chic* su *modus operandi*.

## ESPAÑA, EL “ORIENTE” DIECIOCHESCO

Es innegable que los antecedentes de la novela moderna hay que buscarlos en la narrativa española del Siglo de oro; no en balde *Don Quijote* es considerado como la primera novela moderna. Igualmente legítima es la comparación de la novela realista con la Corriente del Golfo, propuesta por Pérez Galdós en su prólogo a *La regenta* de Clarín. Según él, la novela realista sería una “mercancía” que España habría exportado; primero a Inglaterra, desde donde pasó por Francia, y cuando en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX el Naturalismo se introdujo en España, en realidad tan solo volvió a casa.<sup>12</sup>

9 En cuanto a la aplicación de la “pareja quijotesca” a Jacques y su maestro, véase p. ej. Martínez García (2009).

10 Cf. p. ej. “Et puisque Jacques et son maître ne sont bons qu'ensemble et ne valent rien séparés non plus que Don Quichotte sans Sancho et Richardet sans Ferragus, ce que le continuateur de Cervantès et l'imitateur de l'Arioste, monsignor Forti-Guerra, n'ont pas assez compris, lecteur, causons ensemble jusqu'à ce qu'ils se soient rejoints.” (Diderot 1973, 99)

11 Lo cual, por cierto, es otro argumento a favor de la hipótesis de nuestro artículo.

12 Tal “revisión” histórico-literaria podría compararse, por ejemplo, con la respaldada por Jesús G. Maestro (2017), quien se opone a la interpretación exclusivamente zoliana del naturalismo.

Pero fuerza es reconocer del Naturalismo que acá volvía como una corriente circular parecida al gulf stream, traía más calor y menos delicadeza y gracia. El nuestro, la corriente inicial, encarnaba la realidad en el cuerpo y rostro de un humorismo que era quizás la forma más genial de nuestra raza. Al volver a casa la onda, venía radicalmente desfigurada: en el paso por Albión habíanle arrebatado la socarronería española, que fácilmente convirtieron en humour inglés las manos hábiles de Fielding, Dickens y Thackeray, y despojado de aquella característica elemental, el naturalismo cambió de fisonomía en manos francesas: lo que perdió en gracia y donosura, lo ganó en fuerza analítica y en extensión, aplicándose a estados psicológicos que no encajan fácilmente en la forma picaresca. Recibimos, pues, con mermas y adiciones (y no nos asustemos del símil comercial) la mercancía que habíamos exportado, y casi desconocíamos la sangre nuestra y el aliento del alma española que aquel ser literario conservaba después de las alteraciones ocasionadas por sus viajes. En resumidas cuentas: Francia, con su poder incontrastable, nos imponía una reforma de nuestra propia obra, sin saber que era nuestra; aceptámosla nosotros restaurando el Naturalismo y devolviéndole lo que le habían quitado, el humorismo, y empleando éste en las formas narrativa y descriptiva conforme a la tradición cervantesca. (Pérez Galdós 2000, X-XI)

Pero finalmente hay que volver a mencionar aquella debilidad atribuida por Sade a la escritura de novelas, que hemos subrayado en el capítulo anterior. Parece que la España dieciochesca, por muy odiada que fuera por parte de la Europa ilustrada, se adecuaba perfectamente a la imagen de un territorio “generador” de novelas por cumplir justo con esta “debilidad”. Al clásico tópico de la Leyenda Negra, arquetipo del abuso de poder, se sumó el de un país que durante su ocaso imperial se veía marcado por la intolerancia religiosa, la ambición política y la ineficacia económica. Los ingleses excluyeron el territorio español del famoso circuito aristocrático llamado *Grand Tour* y limitaron sus contactos con España a lo relacionado con el comercio ultramarino, que en los albores del siglo XIX ya habrían monopolizado por completo.<sup>13</sup> En la Francia ilustrada, por ejemplo, el caso de Montesquieu fue uno de los más destacados en la articulación de los prejuicios contra España; en las *Cartas persas* retrató a los españoles como soberbios, avaros, perezosos, cobardes y crueles, sin olvidársele que su escasa producción literaria no estaría a la altura del gran XVII francés: “Le seul de leurs livres qui soit bon est celui qui a fait voir le ridicule de tous les autres.” (Montesquieu 1960, 155) En respuesta a dicha carta, José Cadalso publicó el artículo intitulado “Defensa de la nación española contra la ‘Carta Persiana LXXVIII’ de Montesquieu” para desmentir lo sostenido por el filósofo francés, quien, en palabras de Cadalso, al infamar la nación española en

13 El fenómeno de “los grandes acaparamientos del comercio inglés” es descrito magistralmente por Benito Pérez Galdós en los primeros capítulos de *Fortunata y Jacinta*.

realidad “atropella lo ilustre de su [propia] sangre, lo grave de su [propio] carácter, lo sagrado de la verdad y lo cortés de su [propia] nación” (Cadalso 2002).<sup>14</sup> Pero de todas las polémicas hispano-francesas que se desarrollaron a lo largo del siglo, la más aguda y notoria fue indudablemente la desencadenada por el artículo de *Encyclopedie* aparecido en 1782 y firmado por Masson de Morvilliers, quien aprovechó la obra científica de referencia en aquel entonces para exponer el juicio de que España, por ser un país ignorante, conservador y fanático, enemigo de la ciencia y del progreso, nunca había contribuido nada a la civilización y a la humanidad.<sup>15</sup>

Hay otro aspecto de la imagen de España, más fuerte todavía por haber sobrevivido en la cultura popular y en las artes, que asimismo podría explicarse por medio de la inclusión de lo “español” en la novela *Zaïde*. La ubicación no sería escogida casualmente; es verdad que podría pasar por un intento de escapismo novelesco en una época que todavía apreciaba escapismos, pero por otra parte, España es —por razones históricas, obviamente, como también por los estereotipos que se irían formando a lo largo del siglo siguiente— el puente que conecta a Europa con el Oriente. Al analizar el desarrollo de los estereotipos sobre la imagen de España, Manuel Lucena Giraldo, entre otros muchos, constata la visión (prer)romántica, que llama “Carmen y los bandidos”, sustentada en “la experiencia, real o imaginaria, del viaje por la península” (2006, 224). La historiografía suele relacionar la orientalización de España con el siglo XIX, cuando la Leyenda Negra fue sustituida por la Leyenda Amarilla: el Romanticismo reinterpretó los elementos del estereotipo antiguo de tal modo que la crueldad española se convirtió en valentía, la soberbia en orgullo patriótico y el fanatismo en pasión desbordante e indómita.

Sin embargo, un “tópico español” que terminaba siendo positivo era bien anterior al Romanticismo: el de la “España novelable”, y parece que el propio Sade lo tenía presente al notar que los primeros en “heredar” la novela de los orientales habían sido precisamente los españoles, y eso mucho antes de que fueran escritos *Don Quijote* o *Lazarillo de Tormes*:

Chez quel peuple devons-nous trouver la source de ces sortes d'ouvrages [...] ?  
L'opinion commune croit la découvrir chez les Grecs, elle passa de là chez les

14 Véase sobre todo el artículo de Ana Peñas Ruiz (2008), quien analiza por temas la respuesta de Cadalso.

15 “Mais que doit-on à l'Espagne ? Et depuis deux siècles, depuis quatre, depuis six, qu'a-t-elle fait pour l'Europe ? Elle ressemble aujourd'hui à ces colonies foibles & malheureuses, qui ont besoin sans cesse du bras protecteur de la métropole : il nous faut l'aider de nos arts, de nos découvertes ; encore ressemble-t-elle à ces malades désespérés qui, ne sentant point leur mal, repoussent le bras qui leur apporte la vie ! Cependant, s'il faut une crise politique pour la sortir de cette honteuse léthargie, qu'attend-elle encore ? Les arts sont éteints chez elle ; les sciences, le commerce ! Elle a besoin de nos artistes dans ses manufactures ! Les savans sont obligés de s'instruire en cachette de nos livres !” (Masson de Morvilliers 1782, 554-568)

Mores, d'ou les Espagnols le prirent, pour la transmettre ensuite à nos truba-dours, de qui nos romanciers de chevalerie la reçurent. (Sade 1799, 28)

Según él, España históricamente habría sido la “segunda” patria de la novela, dado que los españoles la tomaron de los moros, por lo cual parece aún más comprensible que en el siglo XVIII, reforzada por los estereotipos europeos, volvió a serlo. Anteriormente a Sade, también Huet advirtió que sería erróneo buscar los orígenes de la novela en España, Italia o Grecia, pueblos mediterráneos que se limitaban a imitar a los orientales, pero al fin y al cabo, de esta advertencia podría deducirse una opinión homóloga a la de Sade: del Oriente la novela pasó, a través la imitación, primero a España.

## ESPAÑA, UN TÓPICO NOVELABLE

Es bien sabido por qué tantas novelas dieciochescas —*Cartas persas*, *Amistades peligrosas*, *Julia o la Nueva Eloísa*, para mencionar solo algunas— se presentan como “manuscritos encontrados”. A finales del siglo XVII y comienzos del XVIII, el término “romancesco” generalmente equivalía a lo insólito y fantástico; se refería al mundo imaginario de las novelas caballerescas, amorosas y pastoriles, que tenían en común la estructura enmarañada, el tamaño excesivo y la preciosidad estilística. Hay que destacar que a partir de Aristóteles la prosa era el medio de expresión reservado a la Historia, que hablaba de lo verdaderamente acaecido, así que la novela, al apartarse de lo natural y verdadero, violaba la regla a la que por excelencia hubiera debido adecuarse, considerando la forma.

Pero el gusto del público dieciochesco iba cambiando. Como los lectores ya no eran exclusivamente los aristócratas, sino que la mayoría eran burgueses, estos últimos pasaron a ser el modelo con el que tenía que contar el escritor a la hora de construir tramas y personajes literarios con los cuales el público pudiera identificarse. La novela, género desprestigiado aunque popular, ahora se ajustaba a los tiempos en los que los cambios sociales tuvieron por consecuencia que precisamente lo “romancesco”, hasta hace poco inherente a la novela, fuese considerado como inauténtico y polvoriento. La novela entonces seguía siendo un género literario “bastardo” en los ojos de la crítica oficial al mismo tiempo que dejaba de ser popular en los ojos del público, porque el término en sí remitía a una tradición literaria anticuada. En fin, llamar una obra “novela”, era mala publicidad, de ahí que la fórmula “Esto no es una novela” se fijase como una estrategia narrativa destinada a asegurar la verosimilitud al texto ficcional en prosa.

Claro está que el tópico del manuscrito encontrado no es una novedad dieciochesca: uno de sus antecedentes más notables es justamente el *Quijote*. Recordemos

que Cervantes no optó al azar por un historiador *arábigo*: la doblez y engaño de los moros, musulmanes y turcos eran proverbiales, y él mismo nos lo advierte diciendo que si al relato “se le puede poner alguna objeción acerca de su verdad, no podrá ser otra sino haber sido su autor arábigo, siendo muy propio de los de aquella nación ser mentirosos” (Cervantes 2004, 120). Pero teniendo en cuenta los tratados de Huet y de Sade, la elección resulta aún más lógica: además de ser “mentirosos”, o justamente por serlo, aquellos autores dieron origen a la novela — o por lo menos a los “manuscritos” en los que esta se basaría.

En el marco del congreso dedicado a la célebre novela de Jan Potocki, *Manuscrit trouvé à Saragosse* (1794–1810), Jan Herman explica por qué el manuscrito fue encontrado *precisamente* en Zaragoza:

[C]’est dans une auberge sur la route de Saragosse que le chevalier à la triste figure et Sancho rencontrent les gentilshommes lisant le *Quichotte*, dans la version apocryphe d’Avellaneda. Voilà pourquoi le Manuscrit a été trouvé à Saragosse, voilà pourquoi tous les manuscrits ont été découverts à Saragosse. (Herman 1999, XXIX–XXX)

Esta explicación de hecho es otro argumento para seguir rastreando huellas cervantinas a lo largo de todo del desarrollo de la novela dieciochesca. Además, según constata François Rosset, Zaragoza se impuso como el lugar abstracto, “la capitale inconsistante de cette fameuse ‘modernité’ littéraire dont Cervantès est couramment soupçonné d’avoir assuré le sacre” (2000, 196).

Inmaculada Barrena, por su parte, se pregunta si tal vez no habría que suponer que existan otros manuscritos, además del de Potocki, y que por lo tanto, el evocado por el escritor polaco es, más que una intertextualidad, una metonimia (o, más precisamente, una sinécdoque) para toda una tradición que él hubiera llegado a conocer: “Cependant l’on peut présumer que, de même que Miguel de Cervantès, Potocki put aussi avoir connaissance d’autres manuscrits trouvés à Saragosse.” La estudiosa opina que “il est tout à fait imaginable que l’auteur s’est inspiré, au moins en partie, de quelque(s) récit(s) aljamiado(s), présumablement trouvé(s) à Saragosse” (Barrena 2019, 171, 175), proponiendo de esta manera un método más bien biobibliográfico para buscar la respuesta al enigma de Zaragoza.

Coincidiendo absolutamente con los tres autores, quisiéramos añadir, sin embargo, que el propio hecho de haber encontrado el manuscrito en Zaragoza, es un doble argumento para apoyar nuestra hipótesis de que existiera, en la novela europea del siglo XVIII, algo que nos atreveríamos a llamar “el tópico español”. La procedencia española es una intertextualidad que linda con homenaje; en ella confluyen, por una parte, el motivo cervantino de los cartapacios con la historia de Cide Hamete Benengeli traducidos por el morisco aljamiado en el noveno

capítulo del *Quijote*, y, por la otra, la omnipresencia latente, a veces incluso a guisa de hipotexto, de la tradición narrativa española en las letras europeas. En otras palabras: Potocki no fue a España a por el manuscrito, sino porque este era el país que por entonces ya pasaba por ser el origen de las ficciones y que incluso era el más cercano a lo que tanto Huet como Sade habían proclamado por el lugar origen de la novela — geográfica e históricamente, puesto que del Oriente la novela habría sido adoptada, según constataron, *primero* por los españoles.

En 1721, al publicar las *Cartas persas*, Montesquieu usó la forma epistolar y le antepuso un prólogo pseudoalógrafo con un motivo bien preciso: le aseguró la verosimilitud a su texto, además de tratar de esquivar la responsabilidad ocultando dos veces su identidad (puesto que la obra no se publicó bajo su nombre). Pero aunque “lo persa” era un pretexto para hablar de la sociedad francesa de su época, también era un cebo: porque el Oriente estaba de moda y porque la historia que transcurre en Ispahán es la que verdaderamente “hace” a la novela. Lesage, en cambio, trasladó el cebo del Oriente a España: su Gil Blas, protagonista de la novela homónima, viene de Santillana en Cantabria. Podríamos decir que además de “europeizar” la picaresca, retomó el escenario español que habíamos visto, por ejemplo, en *Zaïde*, para ubicar en él a un héroe “común y corriente” hecho a la medida del lector ilustrado, dando lugar a una tradición narrativa cuyo último eslabón sería, cien años más tarde, el *Manuscrito encontrado* —precisamente— en Zaragoza.

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## Roman "po špansko": romaneskna paradigma v 18. stoletju

Pričujoči članek obravnava recepcijo Španije in španske pripovedne tradicije v evropskem romanopisju 18. stoletja. Najzgodnejše teoretske opredelitve romana slednjega pripisujejo orientalskim ljudstvom, Sade pa prav Španijo omenja kot eno prvih v vrsti njihovih naslednikov in dodaja, da je zmožnost oz. nagnjenost k pisanju romanov človeška šibkost. Zaradi t. i. črne legende, inkvizicije, verske nestrpnosti in gospodarske zaostalosti je imela Španija v razsvetljenski Evropi slab sloves. Za nameček je španska romaneskna produkcija praktično zamrla ravno v času, ki je bil za uveljavitev romana ključen.

Ta prispevek pa pokaže na oksimoron: ne le, da se razvojna pot evropskega romana 18. stoletja opira točno na dva španska modela, pikareskni roman in *Don Kihota*, temveč se tudi duh Španije v očeh Evrope prilega duhu romaneskne fikcije, katere nastanek naj bi bil, po de Sadu, pogojen s šibkostjo, ki ji je lastno izmišljanje. Najdeni rokopis v *Don Kihotu* je delo arabskega zgodovinarja, pripadnika v 17. stoletju pregovorno lažnivih in prevarantskih ljudstev, katerih mesto pa je v 18. stoletju zavzela prav Kihotova domovina, ki je v kontekstu romana postala "razsvetljenski Orient", in to še pred romantično orientalizacijo Španije.

**Ključne besede:** španski roman, francoski roman, razsvetljenstvo, izvor romana, najdeni rokopis

# Georg Rolls Komödie von Pontus und Sidonia im Vergleich zum Prosaroman Eleonores von Österreich\*

Marija Javor Briški

## Abstract

Im Fokus des Beitrags steht der Vergleich von Georg Rolls *Comoedia Von Ritterliche[n] Adlichen, Manlichen Tugenden vnd Thaten, sonderlicher Tugentreicher Ehren, Erbarkeit vn[d] zucht des tewren Ritters Ponti, Königs Tiburtij Sohn aus Gallicien* (1576) und Eleonores von Österreich Prosaroman *Pontus und Sidonia* in der Ausgabe von 1548. Die Analyse wurde auf drei Ebenen durchgeführt: im Bereich der Paratexte, auf inhaltlicher Ebene und im Kontext des Türkenbildes. Die in den Paratexten des Dramas formulierten Themenschwerpunkte setzen wichtige Akzente bei der Bearbeitung des Pontusromans und stellen einen Bezug zum soziohistorischen Kontext her. Die inhaltlichen Erweiterungen als Gegenbilder zu der von Pontus und Sidonia verkörperten Idealität enthalten sozialkritische Themen, die für eine Aufführungserlaubnis nicht förderlich waren. Im Unterschied zu dem nuancierten, dem dogmatischen Interpretationsmodell entsprechenden Heidenbild im Prosaroman ist das Türkenbild im Drama angesichts der osmanischen Bedrohung nach dem apokalyptischen Deutungsmuster konzipiert.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Georg Roll, Eleonore von Österreich/Schottland (um 1433–1480), *Pontus und Sidonia*, Prosaroman, *Comoedia Von Ritterliche[n] Adlichen, Manlichen Tugenden vnd Thaten, sonderlicher Tugentreicher Ehren, Erbarkeit vn[d] zucht des tewren Ritters Ponti, Königs Tiburtij Sohn aus Gallicien*, Komödie, Intertextualität, Paratext, Heidenbild, Türkenbild

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## EINLEITUNG

Wie in der Fachwelt allgemein bekannt, ist die deutsche Übersetzung von Geoffrey de la Tour Landrys Prosaroman *Ponthus et la belle Sidoyne*, der auf die um 1180 entstandene anglonormannische Chanson de geste von *Horn et Rimenbild* zurückgeht und Ende des 14. Jahrhunderts verfasst wurde (Steinhoff 2010: 472), in den drei Fassungen A (Hahn 2005, Steinhoff 2010), B (Schneider 1961, von Ertzdorff 2010) und C (Hahn 2002, 2003, Streun 2010) überliefert. Jedoch gelangte nur die Eleonore von Österreich zugeschriebene<sup>1</sup> Fassung A in Druck und hatte demzufolge im Vergleich zu den beiden anderen eine größere Breitenwirkung. Vom 15. bis zum 18. Jahrhundert erschienen nach neuem Erkenntnisstand 24 Ausgaben an verschiedenen Orten: in Augsburg, Straßburg, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Köln und Nürnberg (Müller 2013: 1580–1582). Diese Drucke inspirierten auch andere Dichter zur produktiven Rezeption des Pontusstoffes, vor allem die Straßburger Ausgabe von 1539 (Müller 2013: 1578). So entstanden in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts drei Pontusdramen: 1551 soll der Nürnberger Rechenmeister Heinrich Hoffot das Schuldrama *Ein Teutsch spil von dem edlen Ritter Ponto, wie er mit dem Haydnischen Ritter umb Gottes wort gekempfft vnd den sieg erhalten, schon, lustig vnnd lieblich zu lesen* veröffentlicht haben (Weller 1866: 278, Brooks 1918: 583), leider ist dieser Text verschollen. Es folgt Hans Sachs mit seiner 1558 verfassten *Comedia mit 13 personen: Pontus, eins königs sohn auß Galicia, mit seiner schönen Sidonia, eins königs tochter zu Britania, vnnd hat 7 actus* (Keller/Goetze 1880: 378–426), die unlängst im Rahmen der Türkendarstellung bei Hans Sachs untersucht wurde (Ackermann/Nöcker 2009: 454–459). Beim dritten Drama handelt es sich um Georg Rolls *Comoedia Von Ritterliche[n] Adlichen, Manlichen Tugenden vnd Thaten, sonderlicher Tugentreicher Ehren, Erbarkeit vn[d] zucht des tewren Ritters Ponti, Königs Tiburtij Sohn aus Gallicien [...]*, diese erschien 1576 in Danzig.

Während der Prosaroman *Pontus und Sidonia* des Öfteren als Bestseller (Classen 2015: 689, 2016a, 2016b: 24) bezeichnet wurde und auch in den letzten Jahren in wissenschaftlichen Studien vermehrt Beachtung fand (z. B. Hahn 2010, Classen 2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c) und Hans Sachsens Pontusdrama schon Thema einer neueren Studie war, stieß Georg Rolls *Comoedia* weder bei den zeitgenössischen Rezipienten noch in der Forschung auf große Resonanz. Rolls

1 Zur Diskussion über die Autorschaft von Fassung A der Übersetzung der französischen Vorlage *Ponthus et la belle Sidoyne* siehe u. a. Hahn 1990: 73–85, 156–158, Backes 2004: 58, die ihrer Autorschaft kritisch gegenüberstehen, und Kästner 1982/83: 110, Classen 1993: 3–7, 19, 2000: 15, 2016a: 105f., 2016b: 23f., Classen/Dinzelbacher 1995: 66 als Befürworter. Allerdings ist die Debatte noch bis zur jüngsten Zeit nicht ausgefochten (Speth 2017: 205f.).

Komödie wurde in Danzig nicht einmal uraufgeführt.<sup>2</sup> Seine in den Jahren 1600 und 1605 gestellten Gesuche an den Danziger Rat um eine Aufführungserlaubnis des Stückes wurden nicht bewilligt (Bolte 1895: 16, 29), vielleicht aufgrund der bei der Stadtoberkeit eingebrachten Beschwerden über die bisweilen ausgelassene Darstellungspraxis von Komödien (vgl. ebd.: XV)? Oder gab es (auch) andere Gründe? Wer war Georg Roll und was sind die allgemeinen Merkmale seiner Komödie? Welchen Einfluss der zeitgenössische historische Kontext und die in den Paratexten formulierten Aussagen auf die Bearbeitung des Pontusromans, die Rezeptionssteuerung der Adressaten und die Darstellung der ‚Heiden‘ und Türken hatte, soll in der folgenden, auf der komparativen Methode beruhenden Untersuchung eruiert werden.

## DATEN ZU GEORG ROLL

Über den Autor selbst gibt es nur einige spärliche Angaben. Georg Roll stammte aus Brieg (Brzeg) in Schlesien und war als kaiserlicher Notar in Danzig tätig, Geburts- und Todesdatum sind nicht bekannt (ebd.: 14, 29).<sup>3</sup> Neben der Schulkomödie von Pontus und Sidonia verfasste er in seiner Freizeit auch die *Comoedia vom Fahl Ade und Eve* (1573) und die *Historia Samaritani* (1574) (ebd.: 14, 29, XIVf.). Mittels seiner schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit versuchte er, wie man seiner oben erwähnten Bittschrift (ebd.: 29) von 1600 entnehmen kann, seine Existenzgrundlage zu verbessern, was ihm seine Prokuratur „bey jetziger vberheuffung der Mechtiger vnd der eingerißnen vnordenung“ (ebd.) nicht ermöglicht. Mit den eingetretenen Wirren mag er u. a. wohl die negativen Folgen der am Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts eskalierenden polnisch-schwedischen Auseinandersetzungen und der religiösen Konflikte für die einst prosperierende Handelsmetropole Danzig, die sich 1454 der polnischen Krone unterstellt hatte, gemeint haben (vgl. Loew 2011: 63, 95f., Müller 2016).

## DRUCKVORLAGE FÜR ROLLS KOMÖDIE

Welche der bis 1576 erschienen Druckfassungen die Vorlage für Rolls Komödie bildet, lässt sich aufgrund der mir zur Verfügung stehenden Drucke nicht

2 Zumindest einmal soll jedoch das Stück in Königsberg unter der Leitung des Schulmeisters Daniel Brodach gespielt worden sein (Bolte 1895: 16).

3 Das in der Online-Version der Deutschen Biographie angegebene Todesdatum 1573 ist unzutreffend (vgl. [https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/search?\\_csrf=656c55fa-b33e-4f0d-9604-8a5892b34257&name=Georg+Roll](https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/search?_csrf=656c55fa-b33e-4f0d-9604-8a5892b34257&name=Georg+Roll) [Zugriff 23.01.2022]). Sein Tod ist nach dem 1605 an den Danziger Rat gestellten Gesuch (siehe oben) zu datieren.

eindeutig festlegen. Roll (1576: Aij r) verweist in seiner Zueignung<sup>4</sup> auf die „*Historia Ponti* (welche eine Ertzhertzogin aus Osterreich/ sonderer ergetzlikeit/ wie es die *Præfation* gibet/ *transferiret*)“<sup>5</sup>, weiter unten schreibt er, dass er sie auf einer Reise in seine Heimat „zur kurtzweil vberlesen“ (ebd.: [Aij v]<sup>6</sup>) habe. Ferner enthält seine Zueignung recht ausführliche Moralisierungen (ebd.: [Aij v]–Aiiij r). Diese u. a. Merkmale, wie die vorangestellte Phrase im Titel (vgl. Hahn 2010: 58) *Von Ritterliche[n] Adlichen, Manlichen Tugenden vnd Thaten [...]* deuten auf die Druckfassung von 1548<sup>7</sup>: Im Unterschied zu der 1539 erschienenen Ausgabe, welche als erste eine ausführliche Vorrede enthält, findet man hier im erweiterten Titel den Hinweis auf das kurzweilige Lesen. Bei den späteren Fassungen, die weitgehend auf der Prachtausgabe von 1548 beruhen, ist dagegen die Vorrede um die moralisierende Auslegung der Geschichte erheblich gekürzt (vgl. Wüst 1903: 30–50). Allerdings fehlt im Titel der Ausgabe von 1548 der meines Wissens nur im Titel des Straßburger Druckes von 1539 erhaltene Hinweis auf Pontus’ Tapferkeit „gegen den Heyden“ (vgl. Gotzkowsky 1991: 145–152), wie er auch modifiziert auf dem Titelblatt der Komödie zu finden ist. Eine genauere Bestimmung der Vorlage ist umso schwieriger, als Roll seine Komödie recht eigenwillig gestaltet und im Vergleich zum Prosaroman erweitert hat. Deswegen soll aus heuristischen Gründen die Ausgabe von 1548 in der folgenden Untersuchung als vorläufige Vergleichsgrundlage dienen, zumal der eigentliche Text der Handschrift mit dem der Druckfassungen, abgesehen von Nebensächlichem, identisch ist (Hahn 2010: 58).

## DIE PARATEXTE IN DER KOMÖDIE UND DER DRUCKFASSUNG DES PROSAROMANS VON 1548

Paratexte als Beiwerke des eigentlichen Textes steuern u. a. die Lektüre (Genette 2016: 10), indem sie die Aufmerksamkeit des – potentiellen – Lesers auf bestimmte inhaltliche Aspekte des Werkes und deren Verständnis lenken. Während die verlegerischen Rahmentexte keinen erheblichen Einfluss auf den Autortext haben, wie das bei den Editionen des Prosaromans von Pontus und Sidonia der Fall ist (Hahn 2010: 58), indizieren die auktorialen Paratexte von Rolls Drama die Bearbeitungstendenzen. Die Pontus-Komödie weist mehrere, vornehmlich

4 Zur Differenzierung zwischen ‚Zueignung‘ und ‚Widmung‘ siehe Genette (2016: 115).

5 In den Zitaten des Dramas ist die Schreibung der *s*-Grapheme und der Umlaute dem heutigen Usus angepasst.

6 Da die Lagen- und Blattzählung im Druck nicht konsequent durchgeführt wurde, stehen die fehlenden Angaben in eckigen Klammern.

7 Im Folgenden abgekürzt als PS 1548.

auf den Autor<sup>8</sup> zurückgehende Paratexte auf. Im Folgenden sollen Titel, Vorwort, Zueignung, Prolog und Epilog näher vorgestellt werden.

Im Titel als thematischem Indikator (Genette 2016: 82–86) werden die vorzüglichen Eigenschaften und tapferen Taten von Pontus und sein hohes gesellschaftliches Ansehen sowie Sidonias Tugendhaftigkeit hervorgehoben. Er enthält ferner die Gattungsangabe (vgl. ebd. 60) *Comoedia*, die im 16. Jahrhundert ein gutes Ende suggeriert (Profitlich/Stucke 2007: 312), was die auf der Titelseite angeführte, in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit gebräuchliche Sentenz „TANDEM BONA CAVSA TRIVMPHAT“ („Endlich triumphiert die gute Sache“, Schmidt 1986: 709) unterstreicht. Dem Titel folgt ein Hinweis auf einen weiteren thematischen Schwerpunkt des Stückes, „des Türcken gewalt vnd Tyranny/ gegen den armen Christen“, und auf die Vorbildfunktion eines christlichen Königs und aller Obrigkeit gegenüber ihren Untertanen. Angesichts der damaligen Konflikte zwischen dem polnischen König und Danzig und der gesellschaftlichen Spannungen zwischen dem regierenden Rat der Stadt und den niederen Bevölkerungsschichten, die sich zur Zeit der Abfassung der Komödie besonders zugespitzt hatten (vgl. Loew 2011: 86–88), wird der König als nachahmenswertes Ideal präfiguriert, an dem sich die herrschende Schicht orientieren soll. Erwähnt wird auf der Titelseite schließlich der Autor mit Nennung seiner Herkunft und gesellschaftlichen Position als Notar.

Das auktoriale Originalvorwort<sup>9</sup> (Roll 1576: [A r]) ist, stellvertretend für alle unerbittlichen Kritiker, an Zoilus bzw. Zoilos von Amphipolis (vgl. Stephanos 2002) gerichtet, mit der Bitte um wohlwollende Aufnahme des Dramas und Zurückhaltung eines vorschnellen negativen Urteils, um die Rezeption des Werkes nicht zu gefährden, denn der Autor verfolgt mit diesem Stück, wie er schreibt, etwas Gutes und verweist in Anbetracht auf etwaige Mängel, dem Bescheidenheitstopos entsprechend, um potenzieller Kritik vorzubeugen (Genette 2016: 201), entschuldigend auf die Unzulänglichkeit eines jeden Menschen: „Denn es ist keiner nicht geborn/ Der nicht thut tragen Esels ohren“ (Roll 1576: [A r]). Mit der Anspielung auf das in seinem Umfeld allgemein vorherrschende Lob der Esel als Symbol der Laster (Zeitler-Abresch 2002) stellt Roll abschließend durch ironisch-satirische Umkehrung noch einen zeitkritischen Bezug zu den bestehenden gesellschaftlichen Missständen her.

Die folgende Widmungsepistel (Roll 1576: Aij r–[Aijj v]) als besonderer Form der Zueignung (Genette 2016: 117–124) ist mittels einer damals üblichen,

8 Inwieweit die Gestaltung der Titelseite auf den Verleger Jacobus Rhodus zurückzuführen ist, ist nicht mehr feststellbar.

9 Zum Begriff und den Funktionen des auktorialen Originalvorwortes siehe Genette (2016: 190–227).

Respekt zollenden Anredeform adressiert an die vornehmlich aus Patrizierfamilien rekrutierten Ratsherren und Schöffen der Stadt Danzig, denen die Rechtsprechung oblag (vgl. Loew 2011: 86). Roll erwähnt die Quelle seines Dramas und dessen – dem Horazischen Grundsatz entsprechenden – Nutz- und Unterhaltungswert (vgl. Bertelsmeier-Kierst 2014: 163), betont aber, wie schon im Titel, die Exempelhaftigkeit der Protagonisten. Vor allem der vielfache Nutzen bewog ihn zur Abfassung seiner Komödie. Als Zielpublikum angegeben ist die Jugend, für die das Stück als Tugend- und Zeitspiegel fungieren soll, der nicht nur die Probleme reflektiert, sondern auch deren Lösung präfiguriert, wie die Errettung der Christen durch Gott angesichts ihrer Bedrohung durch die Osmanen, den Schutz der Untertanen vor den Intrigen des Hofes durch eine Recht und Gerechtigkeit praktizierende Obrigkeit sowie die Abwehr der Feinde durch ständige Verteidigungsbereitschaft der von Gott eingesetzten Obrigkeit und durch Gottvertrauen. Allerdings ist das wichtigste Ziel der Komödie die Deskription „eines Gotseligen Christlichen vnd Gerechten Königes“ (Roll 1576: Aijj r), wie ihn Justinian in der Vorrede zu seinem *Corpus Iuris Civilis* beschreibt, wonach ein Monarch nicht nur mit Waffen, sondern auch mit Gesetzen gerüstet sein müsse, um sowohl in Kriegs- als auch in Friedenszeiten gut zu regieren. Die Zueignung des Werkes an die ‚Herren‘ der Stadt ist ihrer Funktion als herrschenden und richterlichen Gewalt und ihrer apostrophierten Gerechtigkeitsliebe geschuldet. Mit der Bitte um Gunsterweisung schließt Roll die Widmungsepistel in üblichem Demutston.

Der Prolog (Roll 1576: Av r–[Avijj r]) enthält neben der einleitenden Intensionsbekundung, ein tugend- und ehrenreiches Spiel „zur Lehr/ Als vbung Ritterlicher Ehr“ (ebd. [Avijj r]) vorzutragen, im Wesentlichen ein stark verkürztes Resümee des bekannten, aber nicht bis zum Ende geführten Handlungsverlaufs, wie er, mit einigen Abweichungen, im Prosaroman dargeboten wird: von der Expansion des türkischen Sultans, der gewaltsamen Eroberung Galiziens durch dessen Sohn Produs, der Flucht von Pontus und 13 anderen Knaben nach Britannien, der ritterlichen Erziehung des Protagonisten, seiner tugendhaften Liebe zu Sidonia, der siegreichen Bezwingung von Corodus, dem zweiten Sohn des Sultans, von Pontus’ weitreichendem Ruhm, seiner Einsetzung als Statthalter des Königs in Britannien bis zu den aus Neid initiierten Ränken Gendulets, um Pontus in Ungnade zu bringen. Die entsprechenden Inhaltsabschnitte werden anschließend in den Argumenta, die die folgenden fünf Akte einleiten, in detaillierter Form mit Ergänzungen und gewissen Akzentsetzungen nochmals vorgetragen.

Der Epilog (Roll 1576: Nij r–[Nijj v]) bietet gewissermaßen eine Quintessenz der aus dem Stück zu ziehenden Lehren, die im Vergleich zur Widmungsepistel etwas modifiziert sind, und stellt so eine abschließende, für das Publikum

verbindliche Deutung des Stücks dar: Die erfolgreiche Abwehr der Bedrohung der Christenheit durch die Türken gründet auf festem Vertrauen auf Gott, der den Menschen in Not beisteht, dies wird, so Roll, an Pontus exemplifiziert. Demnach ist Pontus' Vorbildhaftigkeit hier auf seinen unerschütterlichen Glauben fokussiert, der die Grundlage für seine Errettung und sein gesellschaftliches Ansehen bildet. Sidonia ist ein Exempel für Sittsamkeit und Tugendhaftigkeit, die über allen Reichtum zu stellen sind. Als dritte Beispielfigur fungiert schließlich der König nicht allein um seiner unparteiischen Gerechtigkeit willen, sondern vor allem wegen seiner Liebe zu seinen, ihm von Gott anvertrauten „leut vnde land“ (Roll 1576: Nij r), seiner friedvollen Regierung, seiner nach göttlichem Gebot praktizierenden Rechtsprechung und seiner Anerkennung ritterlicher Tugenden, wie sie durch die Einsetzung von Pontus in das Amt des Statthalters offenbar wurde. Im Unterschied zum Prosaroman, wo die allseitige Vorbildhaftigkeit durch Pontus (vgl. von Ertzdorff 1974) allein verkörpert wird und König Agril als schwacher Herrscher erscheint (PS 1548: 5v, 13r, 15r, 17r, 20r, 32r, 35r, 42v, 43r, 49r), repräsentiert er hier eine Idealfigur, damit an ihm exemplifiziert wird, welche große Verantwortung er gegenüber seinen Untertanen hat, die seinem Schutz anvertraut sind. Denn so groß das Glück eines einzelnen auch sein mag, wie Roll (ebd.: Nij r– [Nij v]) in seiner folgenden Hofkritik formuliert, kann es nicht der bösen Zunge des Neiders standhalten:

Dauon lernt jr an diesem end/  
 Das kein glück so gros es werd gwend/  
 Durch falsche zungen in der zeit/  
 Vnd dadurch bracht in noth vnd leid/  
 Wie dann solche giffit vornemlich/  
 Bein hoffe viel vnd vnzechlich/  
 Erfaren wird mit sonderm Spott/  
 Vnd manch Ehrliebend man in not/  
 Vnehr vnd schand wird gedrunge/  
 Das es ist vmb sein glück gesungen.

Am Ende des Epilogs bittet der Autor das Publikum um wohlwollende Beurteilung seines Stücks, indem es trotz etwaiger Mängel seine Bemühungen würdigen soll.

Was die Begleittexte des Prosaromans der Frankfurter Ausgabe von 1548 (vgl. Hahn 2010: 58) anbelangt, die neben dem Titel nur eine Vorrede aufweist, sollen an dieser Stelle lediglich einige markante inhaltliche Unterschiede zu den Paratexten der Komödie erwähnt werden.

Das Titelblatt enthält neben der Angabe des Themas und der Autorennennung schon den Hinweis auf die Funktion des Werkes. Es dient der Belehrung

und Unterhaltung, was der in der Widmungsepistel des Dramas angeführten Funktion entspricht, allerdings geht es hier um eine Unterweisung in ein dem ritterlichen Kodex konformen Verhalten „bei Fürsten und Herren“ (PS A 1548: [\* j r]).

Die anschließende Vorrede (PS A 1548: \* ij r–[\* iv v]) umfasst den Inhalt der Historie, eine Leseinstruktion mit dem Hinweis auf die zu erbringende Interpretationsleistung und eine Rechtfertigung der Geschichte durch Hervorhebung ihrer Exempelhaftigkeit, um sie vor dem Vorwurf, sie sei „ein schlecht geschicht/ oder onnütze fabel“ (ebd.: [\* iv v]), zu feien. Die oben angekündigte Adelsdixade wird hier abgewandelt zu einer „Leer des eusserlichen lebens/ sitten vnd haußhaltung auch anrichtung gütter policeien“ (ebd.: \* ij r) durch Kenntnis alter Historien, in denen den Rezipienten Bewältigungsstrategien in verschiedenen Lebenslagen und vor allem das allmächtige Eingreifen Gottes in den Lauf der Welt und der menschlichen Existenz in Exempeln anschaulich vermittelt werden. Anschließend werden vier Lehren anhand von Bibelstellen und der Romaninhalte explizit formuliert: 1. Die Bedrohung der Christen durch die Heiden wird erklärt als Strafe Gottes; 2. Gott erlöst die Gläubigen aus der Gewalt der Feinde und rettet sie vor dem Tod „damit er jn dester bekanter vnnd lieber werde/ vnd seine wunderwerck dester grösser in jren augen erscheinen“ (PS A 1548: \* iij r); 3. Pontus ist eine Verkörperung Gottes;<sup>10</sup> und 4. wenn das Laster des Neids von dem Menschen Besitz ergreift, verdrängt es all seine Tugenden und wird ihm schließlich selbst zum Verhängnis, während Gott den Tugendreichen seinen Schutz angeeignet lässt.

## HINZUGEFGTE EPISODEN UND FIGUREN IN ROLLS DRAMA ALS GEGENBILDER ZU DER VON PONTUS UND SIDONIA VERKÖRPERTEN IDEALITÄT

Im Vergleich zum Prosaroman hat Roll sein Drama um Episoden und Figuren erweitert, die auf den ersten Blick befremdlich erscheinen. Was ist der Sinn dieser Zusätze? Beschränken sie sich tatsächlich nur darauf, „die Ritter- und Liebesgeschichte zu einer figurenreichen Komödie“ (Bolte 1903: 15) auszubauen?

10 „[...] sihestu in der Histori in dem jüngling Ponto/ wie Gott so herrlich inn jm erscheinet/ daß er fürtrifft alle andern inn hüpsche vnnd schonhey/ in zucht/ erbarkey/ weißhey/ vernunft vnd verstand/ auch an mannlichen thatten vnnd ritterlichem gemüt/ also daß er herfür zogen/ vnd vom König/ seinem hoff/ vnnd dem gantzen land/ geliebt/ hoch vnnd werd gehalten/ vñ für ein sonderlichen gottes freund/ in dem Gott öffentlich wircke erkant würt/ vnnd also Gott in jm ersehen/ erkant/ gelobt vnnd gepreißt wirt/ [...]“ (PS A 1548: \* ij r–[\* ij v]).

Im 2. Akt spricht Sandoletus, ein integrierter Ritter, in ironisch-sarkastischem Ton von den vor allem durch Neid initiierten Intrigen am Hof und ihren Folgen für den Betroffenen, der Scheinheiligkeit des Adels und der Titelsucht der Geistlichen. Thematisiert werden ferner die Bestechlichkeit der Räte und die Amtsführung der Funktionäre, die zu Lasten der einfachen Leute auf das eigene Vorteil bedacht sind. Claus, ein Narr und Vertreter des Bauernstandes, klagt in einer der Volkskultur eigentümlichen „familiären Rede“<sup>11</sup> (Bachtin 1995: 52) über die Ausbeutung und das Unrecht, das ihm von seinem Herrn, einem wahren „Pauerschinder“ (Roll 1576: [Ej v]) widerfahren ist, der ihn nicht nur materiell zugrunde gerichtet, sondern auch dessen Kinder in die Leibeigenschaft gedrängt hat. Er hofft seine Beschwerde dem König vorzubringen, wird jedoch von Susa, einem korrupten Sekretär, der auch das allgemeine Aufbegehren der Bauern fürchtet, daran gehindert:

„Weistu nicht ha ha/ wo gelt gebricht/  
wird gar selten Recht gericht/  
Gelt für allen mir wol gefelt/  
So wird das Vrteil recht gestelt/“ (Roll 1576: Ev r)

Durch Claus' Beschuldigungen in seiner Ehre angegriffen, weist ihn der Sekretär in grobianischem Ton schroff<sup>12</sup> zurück. Desgleichen ablehnend tritt ihm der Marschall gegenüber, der einem Angehörigen des niederen Standes nur mit Ironie begegnet und dessen Rechtlosigkeit als unveränderbare Normalität betrachtet (ebd.: Ev r–[Ev v]). Nichtsdestotrotz beharrt der Bauer auf seinem Recht, das er sich von dem König erhofft (ebd.: [Evj r]), mit gutem Grund, denn König Agril präsentiert sich als ein von Gott in sein Amt eingesetzter Monarch, der an seiner statt gegen jedermann, ungeachtet seines Standes, Recht und Gerechtigkeit obwalten lässt (ebd.: [Evj v–vij r], [Evij v], [Fvij v]–[Fvij r]), auch wenn ihn seine Berater, die der König eines Besseren belehrt, immer wieder davon abzuhalten versuchen. Am Ende der 2. Szene des 2. Aktes übt Claus, der Narr, in saloppem Jargon Kritik an den korrupten Räten, die um ihres Vorteils willen das Recht verdrehen (ebd.: Fij r–[Fij v]), wodurch ihr rechtswidriges Verhalten nochmals in den Fokus rückt.

Im 3. Akt werden der Exempelhaftigkeit Sidonias und ihrer keuschen Liebe zu Pontus die verwerflichen Praktiken des Adels und die Verdorbenheit der Welt gegenübergestellt, die u. a. in einem eingeschobenen Gespräch zwischen Agripina und Corona, zwei Jungfrauen am Hofe König Agrils, thematisiert werden (ebd.: [G ij v]–[G v r]). Als Antipoden zu den Idealfiguren Pontus und Sidonia

11 Z. B.: „Es wird der König das ist gwis/ Den Junckern einlegen ein gbiß/ Das er das maul wird halten/“ (Roll 1576: Eij r).

12 „Packe dich Bub durch mein geheis/ Ehe ich dir da die haut volschmeis“ (Roll 1576: Ev r).

agieren in der 4. und 5. Szene des 3. Aktes (ebd.: H iiii r–[H viij r]) Asmodeus, der „Eheteufel“ (Bolte 1903: 15) und Vetula, ein altes Weib, das entgegen seiner traditionellen Rolle in der antiken Literatur (vgl. Hömke 2021: 43–50) nicht als Kupplerin, sondern als Zwietracht stiftende Wahrsagerin, die die Liebenden im Auftrag von Asmodeus zu entzweien trachtet, in Erscheinung tritt. Jedoch lässt sich Sidonia, fest an ihre tugendhafte Liebe glaubend, nicht beirren und lässt die böse Alte durch den Narren Jakupki in einer burlesken Szene die Treppe hinabwerfen, schließlich wird Vetula als Personifikation des Bösen in die Hölle geschleppt, wo sie von Satan empfangen wird.

Die 2. Szene des 5. Aktes (Roll 1576: [Lij v–Lvj v]) bietet einen Einblick in das wüste Leben und Treiben gesellschaftlicher Randgruppen. Zwei umherziehende Landsknechte, Harbastus und Piandrus, Holler, ein Trossbub, und Gerda, eine Dirne, melden sich zu Wort. Ihre in ironisch-derber Sprache<sup>13</sup> gehaltenen Dialoge weisen auf ihr erbärmliches Dasein, das beherrscht wird vom egoistischen Kampf um das eigene, vor allem materielle<sup>14</sup> Wohl. Die käufliche Liebe steht in krassem Kontrast zu der tiefen, auf ethischen Werten basierenden Verbundenheit zwischen Pontus und Sidonia.

## VON DER RUTE GOTTES ZUM BLUTDÜRSTIGEN WÜTERICH: ZUM HEIDEN- UND TÜRKENBILD IM PROSAROMAN UND IN ROLLS DRAMA

Im Zuge der osmanischen Expansion in Europa (Matschke 2004) – vor allem nach der Eroberung Konstantinopels im Jahr 1453 – setzte in der Literatur ein „Diskurs der *Türkengefahr*“ ein, der die Bedrohung durch die Osmanen ins Bewusstsein einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit rückte (Thumser 1997: 66, Höfert 2003: 51–87, 314f.). Der Prosaroman, der Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts aus dem Französischen ins Deutsche übertragen wurde, könnte aufgrund des dargestellten Konfliktes zwischen Christen und Muslimen ein Reflex auf die aktuellen politischen und militärischen Auseinandersetzungen sein, wenn die Heidenthematik nicht schon auf die um 1180 verfasste *Chanson de geste* zurückginge, in der vermutlich zur Eroberung Spaniens durch die Mauren<sup>15</sup> Bezug genommen wurde

13 Z. B.: „Wieuilmahl bin ich vom hauffen/ Als ein ehrlich Kriegsman entlauffen/ Dauon gar nichts mehr getragen/ Denn flöh vnd leus vmb den kragen/ Die tetten mich redlich gleitten/ Mit jnen allein must ich streitten/ Schlag jr gar oft zwey schock zu todt/ Ja meint jr diß sey keine noth/ In Kriegsleufften ausgestanden/ Vnd durchstrichen alle landen“ (Roll 1576: [Liij v]).

14 „So mangelt mir gar nichts denn gelt“ (ebd.: Liij r).

15 Vgl. „Darnach kamen sie in Hispania zu dem kriege der Heyden vnnd der vngläubigen [...]“ (PS 1548: [61v]).

(Hahn 1990: 209). So gründet entsprechend der mittelalterlichen Tradition die Darstellung der Muslime im Prosaroman auch auf der „Dichotomie von Heiden<sup>16</sup>–Christen“ (Höfert 2003: 56) – nur an zwei Stellen ist von „Türcken“ (PS 1548: [41v], [53v]) die Rede –, während im Drama das zeitgemäße „Gegensatzpaar Türken–Christen“ (Höfert 2003: 56) dominiert.<sup>17</sup> ‚Christen‘ einerseits und ‚Heiden‘/‚Türcken‘ andererseits bilden, um Reinhart Kosellecks Termini zu gebrauchen, „asymmetrische Gegenbegriffe“, wonach die eigene Position durch Negation der Gegenposition definiert wird, so dass dem Anderen die Gleichrangigkeit abgesprochen wird (Dipper 2016: 36, Bole Maia 2019: 136f.).

Wie sich die Darstellung der feindlichen Fremden auf der Ebene der Handlungsmotivation, der Religion, ihrer Bezeichnungen, ihres Verhaltens und Aussehens in beiden Werken manifestiert, soll im Folgenden skizziert werden.

Im Prosaroman (PS 1548: [\* ij v], 5r, [40v], [55r]) wird der Einfall der Heiden in christliche Territorien einem gängigen Topos (vgl. Thumser 1997: 63, Ackermann/Nöcker 2009: 446) gemäß als Gottesstrafe für die begangenen Sünden gedeutet, mit dem Ziel, die Christen noch frommer und gottesfürchtiger zu machen, indem sie Gottes Gerechtigkeit und sein wunderbares Eingreifen erkennen:

Das sihestu hie inn diser Histori/ mit dem Soldan dem Heyden/ wie er wider<sup>18</sup> sein fürnemen/ durch ungewitter in Galiciam das Künigreich geworffen wirt/ das landt einnimpt/ vil vñ groß blüt vergeußt/den Künig Tiburt mit vil volcks/ vnnd den seinen erwürgt/ jedermann durch wüten vnnd drawen/ zů seinem glauben zubringen befließt/ dem Gott zůsicht/ allen mütwil verhengt/ vnnd nach seinem fürnemen alle ding laßt glücken/ braucht zů einer rhüten seiner bestimpten zeit über das land vnnd volck/ biß zuletzt/ so wirt die rhüt zerbrochen/ vnd jm mit gleicher maß gemessen/ wie er gemessen hat. (PS 1548: [\* ij v])

Durch die Instrumentalisierung der Heiden als Rute Gottes erscheint die Verantwortung der Aggressoren für ihre Gewalttaten und so auch deren Schuldhaftigkeit in gewisser Hinsicht gemindert, ihr Vorgehen ist dargestellt als göttliche Fügung,<sup>19</sup> die sie ihrer Entscheidungsfreiheit beraubt.

16 Zu Etymologie und Gebrauch von ‚Heide‘ siehe Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm, digitalisierte Fassung im Wörterbuchnetz des Trier Center for Digital Humanities, Version 01/21. <https://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB> [Zugriff 12.03.2022].

17 Das Verhältnis von ‚Heide‘ (Roll 1576: Kij r, [Kij v], [Kijj v] (zweimal), Kiiij r, Kv r, [Kvj r]) / ‚heidnisch‘ (ebd.: [Avij r], Biiij r, [Jij v], [Kj v], [Kijj v]) im Vergleich zu ‚Türcke‘ / ‚türckisch‘ (ebd.: Av r, B[j r], Ev r, G[j r], Jij r, [Jij v], Jiiij r, Jv r, Nj r, Nij r).

18 Hervorhebung durch die Verfasserin.

19 „[...] dises volck ist durch Gottes willen kommen zu fechten/ vnnd durch das geschick Jesu Christi“ (PS 1548: 52r).

Im Vordergrund der muslimisch-christlichen Auseinandersetzungen steht weniger das Streben der Eindringlinge nach dem Gewinn neuer Territorien als der Glaubenskampf,<sup>20</sup> dessen von Gott gewollter siegreicher Ausgang (ebd.: 54r) für die Christen als Beweisführung für die ‚wahre‘ Religion dienen soll, so dass auch die Gegenpartei von der Richtigkeit des Christentums überzeugt wird. Nachdem Soldan von dem Tod seiner drei Söhne erfahren hat,

da warde er gantz vnmütig/ vnnd betru<sup>e</sup>bt/ vnd ergrimmet über seinen Gott den Machmet/ vnnd sprach öffentlich für jedermann/ als in eyner vnsinnigkeit/ Daß der gecreuziget Gott seinen Machmet überwunden hette/ vnd sehe nun wol daß der Christen Gott ma chtiger were dann jr Gott Machmet/ seittemal er seinen sunen vnnd volck/ nit helffen hette künden/ [...]. (PS 1548: [54v])

Wie der Islam im Sinne der dogmatischen Deutung als Irrlehre (vgl. Klein 2004: 26) oder als Verkehrung des Christentums entworfen wird (vgl. Deeg 1992: 175), indem beispielsweise Jesus als „des waren Gottes son/ Machomet aber [als] des Teufels son“ (ebd.: 10r) bezeichnet wird, so findet man für dessen Anhänger auch Benennungen, die negative Gegenbilder der Christen repräsentieren, wie „feind des Christlichen Glaubens“ (ebd.: [\* iij v]), „feind vnd widerwertige[...] vnsers glaubens“ (ebd.: [13v]), „onchristlich volck“ (ebd.: 6r), „vnglaubige[...]“ (ebd.: 12r, [12v], 16r, 42r, 44r, [51v], [54v], 59r, [61v]) und „vnglaubig volck“ (ebd.: 12r). Vielfach werden sie lediglich als ‚Feinde‘ (ebd.: 1r, 12r, [13v], 14r, [14v], 15r, [15v], 16r) apostrophiert und nur einmal als „wüttrich“ (ebd.: [\* iij v]), aber nicht in dem auf die Handschrift A zurückgehenden Text, sondern entsprechend dem vorherrschenden Türkendiskurs des 16. Jahrhunderts (vgl. Ackermann/Nöcker 2009: 439, 443f., 452) in der sekundär hinzugefügten Vorrede.

Allerdings werden die ‚Heiden‘ nicht nur durch plakative Etikettierungen charakterisiert, ihre Eigenschaften werden darüber hinaus durch ihr Verhalten nuanciert vermittelt. Als Beispiel angeführt sei das Agieren von Probus bei der Einnahme der „stat Colognen“ (ebd.: 1r-[2v]), das ihn als (hinter)listigen und erbarmungslosen Herrscher darstellt. Er zeigt aber auch Dialogbereitschaft, indem er Pontus’ Vater vor die Wahl stellt, „eins harten todts“ (ebd.: [2v]) zu sterben oder zu konvertieren, und entpuppt sich später als manipulierbarer – oder positiv ausgedrückt – als besonnener und einsichtiger Machthaber, der dem Rat von Patrides, einem zum Schein zum Islam konvertierten Ritter, folgt (ebd.: [3v], 4r). Auch legt er geradezu höfliches Verhalten an den Tag (ebd.: 3r) und zeigt sogar Emotionen,

20 Immer wieder kommt die Zwangskonversion der unterjochten Christen zur Sprache, der sie sich entweder durch erfolgreichen Kampf oder durch höhere Abgaben an die neuen Machthaber entziehen können (PS 1548: [\* iij v], 1r, [1v], [2v], 4r, [4v], 5r, [9v], 10r, [10v], [12v], 14r, 16r, 40r, [40v], 45r).

wie Liebe (ebd.: 3r), Angst, Traurigkeit (ebd.: [3v], 4r) und Freude (ebd.: 5r), die ihn sogar menschlich erscheinen lassen. Aufgrund der positiven Züge weisen die Beschreibungen der äußeren Erscheinung mancher ‚Heiden‘ (ebd.: [41v]) und die Erwähnung ihrer ritterlichen Fähigkeiten (ebd.: [14v]–15r) stellenweise Parallelen zu den Darstellungen in Wolframs von Eschenbach (1989: z. B. 26,9, 86,3) *Willehalm* auf. Dennoch überwiegt generell eine Negativdarstellung der fremden Eindringlinge, die, solange ihnen der Kampferfolg gesichert erscheint, der sündigen Superbia verfallen sind (ebd.: [40v]), aber bei Überwindung durch die Christen von negativen Emotionen wie Erschrecken, Unmut und Verzagttheit übermannt werden, so dass sie in der Beschreibung ihrer Flucht degradierend mit Hasen und wilden Tieren verglichen werden (ebd.: [41v]).

Im Unterschied zu dem im Prosaroman vorherrschenden dogmatischen Interpretationsmodell der Muslime und des Islam dominiert in Rolls Drama das apokalyptische Deutungsmuster, das angesichts der Ausdehnung des Osmanischen Reiches im späten Mittelalter und in der ersten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhundert das Türkenbild maßgeblich bestimmte (Klein 2004). Das Ziel der Türken, wie es in der *Comoedia* klar formuliert wird, ist – einhergehend mit der Ausdehnung des Osmanischen Herrschaftsraumes (ebd.: [Avij r], Bij r, [Bijj v], Bvj r u. passim) – die Ausrottung der Christen und ihres Glaubens (Roll 1576: Av r –Avj r, B r–[Bij v], [Bvi r], Jij r u. passim). Bei der Beschreibung der Feinde bedient sich Roll der im 16. Jahrhundert gängigen negativen Türken-Topoi (vgl. Ackermann/Nöcker 2009: 439, 443f., 452), die sie als blutdürstige, erbarmungslose Bestien, Kindermörder und Frauenschänder präsentieren.<sup>21</sup> Im Gegensatz zu dem eher differenzierten ‚Heiden‘-Bild im Pontusroman wird der Türkendiskurs in Rolls Drama von einem negativen Grundton beherrscht, was u. a. auch in der verächtlichen Bezeichnung „Bluthund“ (Roll 1576: [Ciijj v], [Cvj v], [Gj r]) zu Tage tritt.

Ihr brutales Vorgehen gegen die Christen, die sich ihnen widersetzen, erscheint aus ihrer Perspektive gerechtfertigt als Strafe für deren Sündhaftigkeit (ebd.: [Bij v]–Bij[ij] r). So ist das Zuchtruten-Motiv auch in diesem Text präsent, aber eher losgelöst von dem Motiv der Strafe Gottes, denn die Türken agieren hier primär im Einklang mit ihrer Expansionspolitik aus eigener Initiative (ebd.: [Av v], Bij r, [Bij v], Bijj r–[Bijj v]).

21 Z. B.: „All aber so darwider sein/ Verdammen wir mit grosser pein/ Vertilgen sie alle samen Als jren Christlichen namen/ Sein wir ein Geschworner Erbfeind Von vnserm Anfang biß ans end. Die gfangen Menner/ Weib vnd Kind/ Edel vnd vnedel wie die sind. Erwürgen wir schrecklicher pein/ Oder verkauffen sie in gmein. In hart vnd schwere dienstbarkeit/ Mit grossem wehklagen vnd leid/ Der Schwanger Frawen seit bericht/ Auch der Frucht im Leib schon wir nicht. Sondern schneid sie auff biß an rücken/ Reissen sie vor den augn zu stücken. Die Jungfrawen nach vnserm willn/ Schenden wir öffentlich zur stelln. Die jungen Kinder ja viel mehr/ Spiessen wir auff die Zeun daher.“ (Roll 1576: B–[Bj v]; siehe auch [Av v], Avj r, Avij r u. passim).

## FAZIT

Der Vergleich von Rolls Komödie und der Druckfassung des Prosaromans von 1548 wurde aus drei Perspektiven durchgeführt: im Bereich der Paratexte, auf inhaltlicher Ebene und im Zusammenhang des Türkenbildes. Beide Werke sind mit verschiedenen Paratexten ausgestattet, die in ihren Funktionen und inhaltlichen Schwerpunktsetzungen zum Teil differieren. Rolls Drama begleiten neben dem Titel, der neben den Protagonisten Pontus und Sidonia die Türkenproblematik und einen idealen König als Vorbildfigur hervorhebt, im Wesentlichen ein auktoriales Originalvorwort, eine Widmungsepistel, ein Pro- und ein Epilog. Im Vorwort versucht der Autor etwaiger Kritik vorzubeugen, um die Rezeption seines Werkes zu favorisieren und rekurriert durch eine ironisch-satirische Äußerung auf soziale Probleme seiner Zeit. In der Widmungsepistel, die an die Ratsherren und Schöffen von Danzig als Vertreter der Justiz gerichtet ist, formuliert Roll die Intention des Dramas als Tugend- und Zeitspiegel für die Jugend, das aktuelle Probleme konstatiert und deren Lösung vor Augen führt, besondere Bedeutung kommt hierbei einer intakten Rechtsprechung zu. Während der Prolog hauptsächlich einen Überblick über den Inhalt der Komödie bietet, enthält der Epilog im Vergleich zur Widmungsepistel modifizierte Lehren, die durch die Protagonisten praktiziert werden: Gottvertrauen durch Pontus, Sittsamkeit und Tugendhaftigkeit durch Sidonia und vorbildhaftes Verhalten als Herrscher durch König Agril, der sich durch Gerechtigkeit, Liebe gegenüber seinen Untertanen, vorbildhafte Rechtsprechung und Würdigung ritterlicher Tugenden auszeichnet.

Die in den Paratexten vom Autor angeführten Themenschwerpunkte setzen wichtige Akzente bei der Bearbeitung des Pontusromans und stellen einen Bezug zum soziohistorischen Kontext her, in dem Roll die Komödie verfasst hat, insbesondere zur verwerflichen Rechtspraxis und der immer noch aktuellen Türkenproblematik.

Das Titelblatt des Prosaromans vermittelt dagegen u. a. die Intention des Werkes: neben der Unterhaltung die ritterliche Tugendlehre, die in der Vorrede, welche eine Leseanleitung und eine Rechtfertigung der Geschichte vermittelt, zu einer allgemeinen Lebenslehre umgestaltet wird.

In den von Roll hinzugefügten Episoden werden sozialkritische Themen, wie nicht integrires Verhalten von Räten und Funktionären und Ausbeutung der Untertanen durch den Adel angesprochen, was die Aufführungserlaubnis der Komödie sicherlich nicht favorisierte, weil der Bezug zu den damaligen prekären gesellschaftlichen Zuständen zu offensichtlich war. Etliche Figuren dieser eingeschobenen Szenen, zum Teil Angehörige gesellschaftlicher Randgruppen, sind negative Gegenbilder von Pontus und Sidonia, wodurch deren Idealität noch zusätzlich hervorgehoben wird.

Das Bild der Muslime, das auf der Ebene der Handlungsmotivation, der Religion, ihrer Bezeichnungen, ihres Verhaltens und Aussehens untersucht wurde, hat im Vergleich zum Prosaroman einen deutlichen Wandel erfahren. Während im Prosaroman die Darstellung des Islam als Irrlehre und der Muslime als Negativfolie der Christen und als Rute Gottes dem dogmatischen Deutungsmuster entspricht, dominiert in der Komödie unter dem Einfluss der Osmanischen Expansion im späten Mittelalter und im 16. Jahrhundert das apokalyptische Interpretationsmodell, wonach die Türken im Gegensatz zu dem differenzierten Heidenbild des Prosaromans als blutrünstige Vernichter der Christen erscheinen, deren Ausrottung aus ihrer Perspektive wegen der Sündhaftigkeit der Christen als gerechtfertigt erscheint. Sie agieren aber weniger als Werkzeug Gottes denn aus eigenem Antrieb im Rahmen ihrer Herrschaftserweiterung.

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## Komedija o Pontusu in Sidoniji Georga Rolla v primerjavi z romanom v prozi Eleonore Avstrijske

Prispevek se fokusira na primerjavo drame *Comoedia Von Ritterliche[n] Adlichen, Manlichen Tugenden vnd Thaten, sonderlicher Tugentreicher Ehren, Erbarkeit vn[d] zucht des tewren Ritters Ponti, Königs Tiburtij Sohn aus Gallicien* (1576) Georga Rolla in romana v prozi *Pontus und Sidonia* Eleonore Avstrijske v izdaji iz leta 1548. Avtorica je analizo izvedla na

treh ravneh: v sklopu paratekstov, na vsebinski ravni in v kontekstu podobe Turkov. Tematska težišča, formulirana v paratekstih drame, pomembno vplivajo na priredbo romana o Pontusu in se sklicujejo na družbeno-zgodovinski kontekst. Vsebinske dopolnitve kot nasprotja idealnosti, ki jo utelešata Pontus in Sidonia, vsebujejo družbenokritične teme, ki so otežile pridobivanje dovoljenja za uprizoritev komedije. V nasprotju z niansirano podobo poganov v romanu, ki ustreza dogmatičnemu interpretacijskemu modelu, je podoba Turkov v drami pod vplivom osmanske grožnje koncipirana po apokaliptičnem razlagalnem modelu.

**Ključne besede:** Georg Roll, Eleonora Avstrijska/Škotska (ok. 1433–1480), *Pontus und Sidonia*, roman v prozi, *Comoedia Von Ritterliche[n] Adlichen, Manlichen Tugenden vnd Thaten, sonderlicher Tugentreicher Ehren, Erbarkeit vn[d] zucht des tewren Ritters Ponti, Königs Tiburtij Sohn aus Gallicien*, komedija, intertekstualnost, paratekst, podoba poganov, podoba Turkov

## Adelma von Vay aus Slovenske Konjice im Kontext zeitgenössischer österreichischer Schriftstellerinnen\*

*Johann Georg Lughofer*

**Abstract:** Die in ihrer Zeit bekannte spiritistische Autorin und Heilerin Adelma von Vay verbrachte ihr produktives Leben in der südlichen Steiermark. Nun erhält ihr Werk erneut Aufmerksamkeit in Slowenien: Ihr Schaffen wird in neueren Forschungen in ein lokales Netzwerk sowie in globale esoterische Bezüge gestellt. Für das Verstehen Vays ist es aber genauso aufschlussreich, die spezifische Situation der Schriftstellerinnen in der Donaumonarchie ihrer Zeit und Vay in diesen Kontext zu beleuchten. Dies bewerkstelligt dieser Beitrag anhand einer Darstellung der generellen Situation intellektueller Frauen und anhand eines Vergleiches Vays mit den zentralen Autorinnen der Zeit. Dabei können wohl manche Erklärungsmöglichkeiten für ihren eigenen Schreibprozess nahegelegt werden.

**Schlüsselwörter:** Spiritismus, Spiritualismus, automatisches Schreiben, Magnetismus

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## DIE SPIRITISTISCHE AUTORIN ADELMA VON VAY AUS DER STEIERMARK

Adelma von Vay (1840–1925), die ihr produktives Leben in der slowenischen Steiermark verbracht hat, war eine in ihrer Zeit bekannte spiritistische Autorin und Heilerin. Die Quellenlage zu ihrer Person sowie der Forschungsstand sind problematisch, weil lange Zeit nur okkultistische Vereine und esoterisch angehauchte Forscher das Interesse an ihr hochgehalten haben. Doch in Slowenien gibt es in den letzten zehn Jahren verstärkt Studien zur Person und ihrem Werk, wobei auch hier mitunter wenig Distanz zur ambivalenten Persönlichkeit eingehalten wird und manche zweifelhaften autobiographischen Angaben bereitwillig übernommen wurden.<sup>1</sup>

Als fünftes Kind wurde sie als Adelaide von Wurmbrand-Stuppach in der österreichischen Garnisonstadt Tarnopol, heute Ternopil in der Ukraine, geboren, wo ihr Vater als Oberleutnant diente. Sie scheint erst auf dem Familiengut in Schwarzau in Niederösterreich<sup>2</sup> und später in der preußischen Mark Brandenburg aufgewachsen zu sein, da ihre Mutter nach dem Tod ihres Vaters dorthin heiratete. Mit 20 Jahren vermählte sie sich mit dem ungarischen Baron Ödön/Eugen von Vay (1832–1921), der dann seine Armeekarriere aufgab. Das Ehepaar sollte sechzig Jahre zusammenleben und ohne Kinder bleiben. Nach sieben Jahren in der ungarischen Stadt Tiszaölk erstanden sie ein Herrenhaus in Prevrath/Preurath in Slovenske Konjice/ Gonobitz (Ciglencečki 2017, 95).<sup>3</sup> Dort sollte Adelma von Vay auch den größten Teil ihres Lebens verbringen, lernte aber übrigens nie Slowenisch, was sie selbst bedauerte (Ciglencečki 2017, 97).

Wenn das Paar auch zahlreiche Reisen – so nach Holland, England, Irland und Frankreich – unternahm, war es in Slovenske Konjice im Gesellschaftsleben aktiv: Der ehemalige Rittmeister wurde stellvertretender Vorsitzender des 1877 gegründeten Kriegsveteranenverbands „Militär-Veteranen-Verein in Gonobitz“. Die Ehepartner waren Förderer des dortigen – 1897 ihr zu Ehren an Vays Geburtstag am 21. Oktober eröffneten (Ciglencečki 2017, 107) – Krankenhauses, zu dem sie 1908 ein weiteres Gebäude errichten ließen. Fünf Jahre später ermöglichten sie einen Kauf eines Krankenwagens. Sie unterstützten nach Ernteaussfällen

1 So vermisst man auch bei jüngeren Veröffentlichungen die notwendige wissenschaftliche Distanz, wenn beispielsweise die von Vay in autobiographischen Schriften stolz vermerkten Heilerfolge als Tatsachen übernommen werden oder wenn ihr Hauptwerk als außerordentlich ehrgeiziges Denkprojekt beschrieben wird, das einen anerkannten Platz in der Geschichte der Philosophie und Esoterik Sloweniens verdiene (Z.B. Rozman/ Ciglencečki 2019, 89 und 103).

2 Eine abweichende Version – von einer Kindheit in Siebenbürgen – erzählt Rudolf Passian (o. J. a).

3 Bei Passian (o. J. b) ist die Falschmeldung zu lesen, nach der es sich um das Stammschloss der Familie gehandelt habe.

Bauern der Region sowie die Familien gefallener Soldaten, verköstigten und beschenkten unterprivilegierte Kinder (ebd. 107f). 1921 starb Ödön von Vay auf Mali Lošinj, wo sie eine Ferienvilla besaßen; Adelma von Vay starb 1925. Trotz ihres Wechsels zum protestantischen Glaubensbekenntnis wurde sie mit dem Einverständnis des örtlichen Priesters am katholischen Friedhof Sv. Ana bei Zgornja Pristava begraben. Sogar in neueren Studien wird berichtet, dass ihr dortiges Grab auf dem Friedhof noch heute von älteren Einheimischen für eine Heil- und Kraftstätte gehalten werde (ebd., 99).

Sie war aber nicht nur heilende Praktikerin, sondern schrieb insgesamt 20 Bücher, die damals Aufmerksamkeit erfuhren. Ihr Hauptwerk *Geist, Kraft, Stoff* (1870) erschien in Lerchners Hofbuchhandlung in Wien, und war bald vergriffen. Mittlerweile wurde es in 9 Auflagen veröffentlicht, auch ins Englische und ins Ungarische, zuletzt – im 21. Jahrhundert – ins Tschechische und ins Slowenische übersetzt. Es erklärt in nummerisch aufgelisteten Thesen die spirituelle, geistige Dimension als Ursprung und wiederum als Ziel der gesamten materiellen Welt; ein Grundprinzip, das in mehreren religiösen und esoterischen Traditionen auftaucht. Vay entwirft eine Kosmogonie, eine Lehre zur Entstehung und Entwicklung der Welt, welche die biblische Schöpfungsgeschichte ergänzen soll. Gott – das Urlicht, Urleben, die Urkraft – habe danach „Erstlinge“ geschaffen – Geschöpfe mit Intelligenz, Liebesfähigkeit und freiem Willen, den sie aber mitunter dazu nutzten, egoistisch und herrschsüchtig zu werden. Die so Abgefallenen wurden zu Dämonen; eine Sekundärschöpfung – die „Embriogeister“ sollten die Verbindung aufrechterhalten, doch auch diese – darunter Adam und Eva – wurden teilweise durch Versuchungen fehlgeleitet. Ein siebenstufiges Jenseits mit je unterschiedlichen Frequenzen, Dualseelen, Karma und Reinkarnation fehlen in dieser bizarren Weltsicht nicht. Zu Gute halten muss man der Textproduktion Vays jedenfalls die Tatsache, dass sie das verdiente Geld teilweise wohltätigen Zwecken zukommen hat lassen.

## DER OKKULTISMUS UND SPIRITISMUS DIESER ZEIT

Insgesamt ist es aber wohl weniger spannend, was sie schrieb, sondern vielmehr wie: Der sie gegen Krampfschmerzen behandelnde Magnetiseur „Dr. Gardos“ soll Adelma von Vay 1865 als begabtes Medium erkannt haben und ihr „zum magnetischen Schreiben“ geraten haben: „Ich wies jedoch solches mit grosser Verachtung von mir, als antikatholisch bezeichnend. Von Kindheit an hatte man mich gelehrt, allen Aberglauben zu meiden und den gesunden Verstand zu behalten; diesem Prinzip wollte ich nicht untreu werden“ (Nach Passian o. J. a). Selbst schreibt sie also in ihren Erinnerungen von einem großen Widerwillen aufgrund

ihrer katholischen Einstellung und betont ihr Nichtwissen über Spiritismus oder jeglichen Mystizismus – offensichtlich auch damals eine etwas delikate Angelegenheit und nicht weithin anerkannt. Zaghafte Versuche sollten sie nach eigenen Angaben dann doch auf die mystische und schriftstellerische Bahn gebracht haben, wie sie in ihren *Studien über die Geisterwelt* (1875) erklärt.

Wenn also auch nicht durchwegs geachtet, war der Magnetismus als Heilpraxis im 19. Jahrhundert weit verbreitet. Angenommen wurde eine dem Elektromagnetismus analoge Kraft im Menschen, die vom Wiener Arzt Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) propagiert wurde, der seine Theorie mit quasireligiöser Verve verteidigte. Basierend auf der Annahme eines unsichtbaren „Lebensstoffes“, der den Organismus durchströmt und von medial begabten Personen auch ausgesendet werden kann, dachte Mesmer, dieses Fluidum sei bei Kranken ungleich verteilt und müsste ausgeglichen werden. Die daraus entwickelte, vielfach praktizierte Heilmethode setzte Handauflegen, Hypnosetechniken sowie Magnete ein, erlangte erhebliche medizinische und geisteswissenschaftliche Bedeutung und beeinflusste vor allem die Romantiker, darunter Novalis, Hoffmann und Schelling mit seiner Naturphilosophie, oder Schopenhauers Metaphysik des Willens. Wenn auch bereits 1784 eine von der französischen Regierung einberufene wissenschaftliche Kommission den Magnetismus für unwirksam und dessen Heilerfolge als Produkte von Einbildungskraft der Patienten und Nachahmung erklärte, wurden 1816 immerhin Lehrstühle für Animalischen Magnetismus an den Universitäten in Berlin und in Bonn eingerichtet. Die Heilmethode war insbesondere bei der französischen und deutschen Oberschicht sehr populär. Sie wurde zwar im späten 19. Jahrhundert verstärkt abgelehnt, doch noch in Zeitromanen aus dem 20. Jahrhundert, beispielsweise bei Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) in *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910) oder Joseph Roth (1894–1939) in *Hotel Savoy* (1924), finden wir noch Vertreter des Magnetismus.

In diesem „wissenschaftlichen“ Zusammenhang wollte Adelma von Vay ihr Schreiben verortet wissen. Im „magnetischen Schreiben“ lieferten – wohl über das Fluidum – andere, bereits Tote, den Inhalt. So wollte sie sogar selbst Ferndiagnosen – also per Brief, ohne die Kranken zu sehen – erstellt haben – mitunter in russischer Sprache, die sie gar nicht beherrschte, was in mancher neuerer Forschungsliteratur unkommentiert als Fakt übernommen wurde (Ciglenečki 2017, 98f), obwohl es wenig realistisch scheint. Allgemein soll bei ihren Diagnosen vor allem der Geist des Begründers der Homöopathie Samuel Hahnemann behilflich gewesen sein. Vay baute dazu eine homöopathische Apotheke auf. Daneben pflegte sie auch ein Hellsehen im Wasser im Glas – auch dies mit Hilfe der Geisterstimmen.

Heute werden solche Gedanken von aufgeklärten Personen schnell abgetan; damals stießen Formen des Spiritismus und Okkultismus auf mehr Akzeptanz.

Im zeitgenössischen seriösen *Biographischen Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich* schreibt der Verfasser des Beitrags zu Vay zurückhaltend, dass „jeder unbefangene Lesende darin weder eine Absicht zu täuschen erkennen kann, noch aber bei rein objectiver Beurtheilung Unmöglichkeiten erzählt findet, denn nicht eben Alles ist für Alle, und Etwas, was bei dem Einen nicht vorkommt, deshalb für absurd zu halten, wenn es bei einem Anderen eintrifft, nur das eben ist absurd.“ Weiters wird konstatiert, dass „[die] von Baronin Adelina Vay herausgegebene[n] Schriften, welche, vorurtheilsfrei gelesen, selbst für den Gegner des Spiritismus ungemein Interessantes und viel Anziehendes enthalten“. Zu Tadel an Vay wird Distanz gehalten: „Die Kritik hat die Verfasserin der ‚Studien aus der Geisteswelt‘ mit unzarter oder sagen wir lieber gradaus mit rohen Händen angefaßt.“ Dafür erscheint sie „umso achtenswerther [...] durch den Muth, mit welchem sie desse-nungeachtet ihre Ueberzeugung offen ausspricht und vertritt“ (Wurzbach 1884, 25–28). Lange wird solch ein automatisches Schreiben ernsthaft untersucht. Der großen Bedeutung des automatischen Schreibens für die „discovery of the unconscious“ geht Shamdasani (1993, 100ff) nach.

Das Studium spiritueller Phänomene wurde denn auch von Leuten wie Adelma von Vay als wissenschaftliche Disziplin angesehen. Damit bezog sie sich auf Allan Kardec (1804–1869), eigentlich Hippolyte Léon Denizard Rivail, erstmals Pädagoge und Schüler von Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746–1827) im Schweizer Yverdon-les-Bains. In der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts organisierte er in Paris erfolgreich unterhaltsame Shows mit der gerade aufkommenden Elektrizität, Phantasmagorien, wissenschaftliche Projektionen, Kuriositäten und spiritistische Vorführungen, in denen angebliche Geister herbeigerufen wurden. Später versuchte er, die Naturgesetze hinter dem Phänomen der vermeintlich sich von alleine bewegend und rückenden Tische zu entdecken, war vorgeblich überzeugt, sich über verschiedene Medien mit Geistern zu unterhalten und widmete sich intensiv dem Studium dieses Phänomens. Von seinem dafür verwendeten Pseudonym Allan Kardec glaubte der Autor, es wäre sein Name aus einem früheren Leben als Druide. Die Veröffentlichung unter diesem Decknamen erlaubte es ihm übrigens auch, weiterhin unter seinem bürgerlichen Namen, akademische Werke zur Pädagogik zu publizieren – so anerkannt war der Spiritismus dann doch nicht. Mit seinen spiritualistischen Lehren liefert er die grundlegenden Bücher der Bewegung wie *Le Livre des Esprits* (1857) und *Le Livre des médiums* (1861), die bis heute kontinuierlich neu aufgelegt werden. Auch die von ihm gegründete Zeitschrift *La Revue spirite* wird bis heute in mehreren Sprachen veröffentlicht. Diese Lehre fand immerhin Beachtung und Interesse auch bei Größen des gesellschaftlichen und künstlerischen Pariser und internationalen Lebens. Napoleon III. (1808–1873) lud ihn zu Gesprächen; intellektuelle Persönlichkeiten wie Victor Hugo (1802–1885), Théophile

Gautier oder später Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) wurden vom Spiritismus überzeugt: sie meinten dieser liefere einen wissenschaftlichen Beweis für das Leben nach dem Tod.<sup>4</sup>

Die Vays waren im Vereinswesen solcher Art aktiv: 1871 waren sie Mitbegründer des „Verein spiriter Forscher“ der „Ungarischen spirituellen Vereinigung“ in Budapest, die übrigens bis 1947 aktiv blieb. Bald hatte der Verein eigene Räumlichkeiten und publizierte in deutscher und ungarischer Sprache. Die relative Akzeptanz war wohl auch möglich, da Adelma von Vay ihre Lehre als „reinen christlichen Spiritualismus“ definierte und die Überzeugung vertrat, dass wahrer Spiritualismus nur im festen Rahmen des christlichen Glaubens praktiziert werden kann. Diese feste Verankerung im christlichen Glauben wurde auch in den Vereinstatuten festgelegt. In den 1870ern veröffentlichte sie auch in der Vereinszeitschrift *Reflexionen aus der Geisteswelt* einzelne Aufsätze. Ab 1878 folgten dann die *Reformierenden Blätter zur Bildung reiner Ethik* im Selbstverlag des Vereins.

Bei der Verbreitung des Spiritismus im weiteren Gebiet Österreich-Ungarns leistete Adelma von Vay damit Pionierarbeit. Zum Vergleich: Die deutsche „Psychologische Gesellschaft“ mit dem Ziel, durch wissenschaftliche Experimente mit „mediumistisch begabten“ Personen Erkenntnisse zu gewinnen, wurde 1886 gegründet. In den 1860ern kam der Spiritismus überhaupt verstärkt nach Europa, der schon in den USA viele Anhänger hatte. Lewis Spence (1874–1955) erwähnt so Vay in seiner *Encyclopaedia of Occultism* (1920) unter dem Schlagwort Österreich als dortige Initiatorin des Spiritismus und schreibt dem „Verein spiriter Forscher“ eine entscheidende Rolle zu.

Vays internationales Netzwerk erstreckte sich vor allem über esoterische Kreise, insbesondere auf Mitglieder der 1875 in New York gegründeten spirituellen und okkulten „Theosophischen Gesellschaft“, deren Lehre sich auf Inhalte hinduistischer Religionen und auf Spiritismus bezieht und meint, einen gemeinsamen wahren Kern in allen Religionen finden zu können. Namhafte Personen wie etwa James Joyce (1882–1941) standen der Theosophischen Gesellschaft nahe. Sogar von 10 Millionen Spiritisten in den USA ist die Rede: Beispielweise allein in Philadelphia soll es 300 spiritistische Gruppen gegeben haben, in den Vereinigten Staaten insgesamt ca. 3000 Medien (Rozman/Ciglenečki 2019, 17).

4 Bedeutende deutsche Philosophen setzten sich auch mit dem Phänomen Geister auseinander, so Immanuel Kant mit *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik* (1766), Arthur Schopenhauer mit *Versuch über Geistersehn und was damit zusammenhängt* (1851) oder Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling mit *Zusammenhang der Natur mit der Geisterwelt* (1862). Dabei beziehen sich die deutschen Denker zumeist auf den schwedischen Mystiker und Theosophen Emanuel Swedenborg (Daiber 2001).

Die Mitbegründerin der „Theosophischen Gesellschaft“ Helena Petrowna Blavatsky (1831-1891), sah Adelma von Vay als wichtige Partnerin. In einem ihrer Hauptwerke, *Isis Unveiled* (1877), preist sie diese:

We do not forget what we have elsewhere written about subjective and objective mediumistic phenomena. We keep the distinction always in mind. There are good and bad of both classes. An impure medium will attract to his impure inner self, the vicious, depraved, malignant influences as inevitably as one that is pure draws only those that are good and pure. Of the latter kind of medium where can a nobler example be found than the gentle Baroness Adelma von Vay, of Austria (born Countess Wurmbrandt), who is described to us by a correspondent as ‚the Providence of her neighborhood‘? She uses her mediumistic power to heal the sick and comfort the afflicted. To the rich she is a phenomenon; but to the poor a ministering angel. For many years she has seen and recognized the nature-spirits or cosmic elementaries, and found them always friendly. But this was because she was a pure, good woman (nach Frey o. J.).

Auf Blavatsky selbst dürfte die hochgelobte Reinheit und Ehrlichkeit übrigens weniger zugetroffen haben. Schon zu Lebzeiten wurden ihr – vor allem im Zusammenhang mit den *Mahatmabriefen*, die von indischen Meistern stammen sollten, – betrügerische Machenschaften vorgeworfen. Die in den Jahren 1884/85 von der Society for Psychical Research initiierte Untersuchung der angeblich paranormalen Phänomene überführte Blavatsky der Fälschung und des Betrugs.

Blavatskys länger nach Vays Hauptwerk erschienenenes *Isis Unveiled* (1877) dürfte der christlichen Österreicherin allgemein nicht gefallen haben: es ist eine durchwegs polemische Abrechnung mit dem jüdischen Glauben sowie mit der katholischen Kirche und ihrer Lehre, insbesondere den Jesuiten. Blavatsky entfaltet dazu eine übergreifende Kosmogonie und zeigt dabei manche Parallelen zu Vays Büchern.

Adelma und ihr Ehemann wurden in der Zeitschrift *The Theosophist* als alte Freunde und Berater der „Theosophischen Gesellschaft“ bezeichnet und waren wohl auch Ehrenmitglieder des Vorstands. (Rozman/Ciglencečki 2019, 81) Nicht nur mit diesen theosophischen Kreisen korrespondierte Adelma von Vay regelmäßig, sondern auch mit vielen anderen einflussreichen Spiritisten und Okkultisten aus ganz Europa und auch aus Amerika. In ihren Tagebucheinträgen stellte Adelma mit Bedauern fest, dass sie in ihrer Heimat Österreich-Ungarn viel weniger Kontakte hätte, was sie der Missbilligung der katholischen Kirche zuschrieb (ebd., 21). Immerhin mit lokalen Heilern hatte Vay Kontakt, so mit dem bekanntesten Heiler Sloweniens, Jurij Humar (1819-1890) aus Primskovo. Er heilte zwar mit Magnetismus, interessierte sich aber als katholischer Priester nicht für Spiritismus und Geister, was aber einer verständnisvollen Briefkorrespondenz nicht im Wege stand.

## SITUATION INTELLEKTUELLER FRAUEN

Vays Leben wurde in der Forschung bereits in ihr lokales Netzwerk sowie in diese globalen esoterischen Bezüge gestellt. Für das Verstehen Vays ist es aber genauso aufschlussreich, die spezifische Situation der Schriftstellerinnen in der Donaumonarchie ihrer Zeit zu beleuchten und Vay in diesen Kontext zu beleuchten. Dies will dieser Beitrag anhand einer Darstellung der generellen Situation intellektueller Frauen und anhand eines Vergleiches Vays mit den zentralen Autorinnen der Zeit bewerkstelligen. Dabei können wohl manche Erklärungsmöglichkeiten für ihren eigenen Schreibprozess nahegelegt werden.

Das ganze 19. Jahrhundert bedeutete innerhalb der Habsburger Monarchie eine Zeit der erheblichen Diskriminierung aufgrund des Geschlechtes. Vom aktiven und passiven Wahlrecht blieben Frauen bis 1918 ausgeschlossen, ebenso von der Mitgliedschaft in politischen Organisationen. Die Rechtsunfähigkeit und der Ausschluss von allen politischen Aktivitäten standen bereits im Gegensatz zu verschiedenen sozialen Tendenzen wie der ständig wachsenden Rolle der Frauen im Arbeitsprozess. Mit der Industrialisierung übernahmen Frauen zunehmend Stellen in der Textilindustrie sowie im Kleingewerbe. Erstmals gewährte die Revolution von 1848 den Frauen die Möglichkeit einer politischen Interessensvereinigung und der „Wiener Demokratische Frauenverein“ wurde gegründet, doch bereits nach zwei Monaten wieder verboten.

Eine höhere Ausbildung blieb Frauen verwehrt. Nur auf elementarstem Niveau wurden Mädchen seit der maria-theresianischen Reform des Schulwesens in privaten Instituten, die sich zumeist in katholischer Hand befanden, unterrichtet. Nach der Volksschule war die offizielle Schulbildung beendet. Nur in wohlhabenden Häusern erhielten die Mädchen vielleicht noch Klavier- und Fremdsprachenunterricht. Selbständige Lektüre konnte diesen ergänzen. Erst mit dem Reichsvolksschulgesetz von 1869 wurde die Schulpflicht auch für Mädchen durchgesetzt. Daraufhin konnten Frauen als Lehrerinnen ein erstes intellektuelles Berufsfeld erschließen. Doch diese wenigen Frauen im öffentlichen Dienst mussten nach einer Heirat die Arbeitsstelle verlassen. In den 1860ern wurde dann auch eine Reihe von Berufsschulen für „spezifisch weibliche Berufe“ gegründet, in weiterer Folge entstanden erste Mädchenlyzeen und höhere Schulen für Frauen.

Erst um 1870 gewann eine bürgerliche Emanzipationsbewegung in Österreich an Gewicht und kämpfte verstärkt um die Möglichkeit zu einer höheren Bildung; verschiedene Frauen- und Lehrerinnenvereine wurden gegründet. 1878 durften Frauen dann zwar die Matura ablegen, doch erhielten ihre Zeugnisse nicht den üblichen Zusatz „reif zum Besuch der Universität“. Eine automatisch zum Universitätsbesuch ermächtigende Matura wurde Frauen in Österreich das gesamte 19. Jahrhundert vorenthalten.

Die Universitäten blieben ihnen lange verschlossen. Erst 1897 wurden die philosophischen Fakultäten für sie geöffnet, 1900 auch die medizinischen. Weitere, wie die rechts- und staatswissenschaftlichen und theologischen, sollten erst in der Republik diesem Beispiel folgen. Dementsprechend erhielt erst nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg die erste Frau Professorinnenwürde. Erst 1907 gab es mit der Romanistin Elise Richter die erste Privatdozentin.

Belletristisch oder essayistisch zu schreiben blieb so lange Zeit die bedeutendste Ausdrucksmöglichkeit für intellektuelle Frauen. Insbesondere mit trivialen Mustern hatten manche Frauen Gelegenheit, ihre Ideen einer breiten Leserschaft nahe zu bringen. Trotzdem gab es im Gegensatz zu Deutschland in der Habsburgermonarchie um 1800 und davor nur wenige Autorinnen, die prominenteste davon wohl Caroline Pichler (1769–1843). Doch im folgenden Jahrhundert wuchs deren Anzahl. Der Vergleich soll in diesem Rahmen mit den bedeutendsten, zur gleichen Zeit wie Vay veröffentlichenden Schriftstellerinnen erfolgen. Vier Übereinstimmungen zwischen den Autorinnen sollen im Folgenden besprochen werden.

## ERSTE PARALLELE: ARISTOKRATISCHE HERKUNFT UND LEBENSWEISE

Wenn man aus der Perspektive einer Forschung zu Adelma von Vay nach Parallelen fragt, fällt zuallererst auf, dass gleich mehrere Autorinnen einer aristokratischen Familie entsprangen. Vays Vater war der Offizier Ernst Graf von Wurmb-Brand Stuppach, ihre Mutter war eine Gräfin Teleki von Szék, spätere Herzogin Solms-Baruth. 1860 heiratete sie standesgemäß den Offizier Baron Ödön Vay und lebte auf ihren Gütern in Ungarn und später in Slovenske Konjice.

Die Frauen aus den Oberschichten waren nicht berufstätig im Gegensatz zu den rechtlosen Armeen von Mägden, Arbeiterinnen und Dienstpersonal. Sie hatten stattdessen Hausbedienstete zur Verfügung und konnten sich in ihrer Freizeit in vielen Fällen der Wohltätigkeit, der Kindererziehung und dem eigenen Vergnügen widmen. Wenige führten ein offenes Haus, das als Treffpunkt für Künstler und Intellektuelle fungierte, manche waren auch literarisch, künstlerisch oder wissenschaftlich tätig. Dass dieses weibliche Dasein nicht immer nur durch Freude über die Privilegien oder gar durch Freiheit gekennzeichnet war, führt uns insbesondere Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) in *Effi Briest* (1896) vor Augen.

Der hohe Stand ermöglichte also eine gewisse Bildung. Marie Freifrau, später Gräfin, Ebner von Eschenbach (1830–1916), die wohl bedeutendste österreichische Literatin des 19. Jahrhunderts, war als eine geborene Freiin Dubský beispielsweise Mitglied des österreichisch-mährischen Altadels, diese Stellung war

für ihre Karriere von größter Bedeutung. Die entscheidende Förderung ihres intellektuellen Interesses erhielt sie durch ihre zweite, hochgebildete Stiefmutter, – ebenso Gräfin – Xaverine Kolowrat-Krakowsky (1808–1869). Bei den jährlichen Besuchen in Wien konnte sie das Burgtheater besuchen und weitere literarische Anregungen bekommen. Mit elf Jahren wurde Marie beauftragt, die Bücher ihrer verstorbenen Großmutter in der Bibliothek am Schloß Zdislawitz zu ordnen. Dabei las sie autodidaktisch nach eigener Auswahl. Dass sie mehrere Sprachen lernte – und zwar Französisch, Deutsch und Tschechisch –, verdankte sie Gouvernanten und Dienstmägden. Doch nicht nur für den Zugang zu Bibliotheken, gebildeten Verwandten und mehrsprachigem Personal war ihre aristokratische Position von großer Bedeutung, auch für ihre Themen: Als Adelige überblickte sie nicht nur die bürgerlichen Verhältnisse, sie war auch mit den staatlichen Zuständen und dem Kommunikations- und Entscheidungsstil der Aristokratie vertraut.

Ähnliches galt für die Erfolgsautorin Bertha von Suttner (1843–1914), die als Gräfin Kinsky von Wchinitz und Tettau schon als Kind viel reisen konnte; Musik und die Sprachen Englisch, Französisch, Italienisch und Deutsch konnte sie von Gouvernanten auf hohem Niveau lernen. Auch thematisch bewegte sie sich in ihren Romanen zumeist im adeligen Milieu, was die Vielzahl der LeserInnen – insbesondere der Familienzeitschriften – auch besonders interessierte. Doch nicht nur Liebesgeschichten ließ Suttner dort spielen, selbst ihr großer pazifistischer Roman *Die Waffen nieder!* (1889) ist im österreichischen Adel angesiedelt. Zuvor kritisierte sie in *High Life* (1886) diese Gesellschaftsschicht scharf.

Auch der unorthodoxen männerfeindlichen Denkerin Helene von Druskowitz (1858–1918), welche übrigens selbst mit spiritistischen Zirkeln Kontakt pflegte, erlaubten ihre Herkunft und ihr beträchtliches Erbe eine Schriftstellerinnenentätigkeit. Ihre Mutter war eine Adelige von Biba, die mit ihrer Tochter sogar nach Zürich zog, um ihr so zu ermöglichen, die erste österreichische und zweite promovierte Philosophin überhaupt zu werden. Die bedeutende Dichterin, Journalistin und Übersetzerin Autorin Betty Paoli (1814–1894) entstammte zumindest der sozialen Nähe des Adels. Der Vater der für Frauenrechte kämpfenden, mit männlichen Attitüden auftretenden Autorin Irma von Troll-Borostyáni (1847–1912) war hoher Beamter in Salzburg. Die Schöpferin erfolgreicher realistischer bis naturalistischer Gesellschafts- und Familienromane Emilie Mataja (1855–1938) entstammte einer wohlhabenden Kaufmannsfamilie.

Arbeiterinnen und Bäuerinnen war es dagegen praktisch unmöglich, publizistisch tätig zu werden. Höchstens in der sozialdemokratischen Bewegung entstanden hier wenige Möglichkeiten. Doch selbst die sozialistische Autorin Minna Kautsky (1837–1912) kam zwar nicht aus der Aristokratie, doch aus einem gebildeten Umfeld, nämlich aus dem Theatermilieu. Die freizügige Dichterin Ada Christen (1839–1901) aus anfänglich wohlhabender Familie wiederum setzte

gegen den Willen ihrer Mutter den Schauspielunterricht durch.

Ebenso auffallend ist die Parallele, dass nicht nur von Druskowitz, sondern auch die erwähnten verheirateten, adeligen Schriftstellerinnen Ebner-Eschenbach, Suttner u.a. sowie Vay kinderlos blieben. Eine Schriftstellerin als Mutter wäre wohl noch weniger akzeptiert worden.

Unterstrichen muss dabei werden, dass diese Frauen andere anspruchsvolle Arbeiten gar nicht ausführen durften; zu schreiben war somit eine der wenigen Möglichkeiten zu Aktivität und Ausdruck, wohl auch für Vay eine attraktive Option.

## ZWEITE PARALLELE: DAS LOB DER MÄNNER ALS MESSLATTE

Die Schwierigkeit, als Schriftstellerin akzeptiert zu werden, spiegelt sich auch in der biographischen Darstellung und der Sekundärliteratur wider, die gebetsmühlenartig erwähnt, dass besagte Schriftstellerinnen von männlichen Kollegen geschätzt wurden. In ihren Biographien werden Hinweise auf männliche Bekanntschaften, Korrespondenzpartner und Bewunderer intensiv betont. Selbst bei Ebner-Eschenbach wird noch heute die Anerkennung von Autorenkollegen wie Ferdinand Saar (1833-1906) und Paul Heyse (1830-1914) zentral angemerkt, um die Bedeutung der Autorin klarzustellen (Kriegsleder 2011, 252). Der jungen Schriftstellerin wurde von Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872) Talent zugestanden, was überhaupt als Ausgangspunkt ihrer Tätigkeit gesehen wird (Gürtler/Schmid-Borstenschlager 1998, 56).

Bei Bertha von Suttner werden einerseits ihre Korrespondenzpartner immer wieder besprochen, denn schon während ihres Aufenthalts in Georgien – nach der von seinen Eltern nicht erlaubten Heirat mit dem Sohn ihres Arbeitsgebers – baute sie Beziehungen zu Schriftstellern wie Friedrich Bodenstedt (1819-1892), Robert Hamerling (1830-1889) und Conrad Ferdinand Meyer (1825-1898) auf – genauso wie zu bedeutenden schreibenden Redakteuren wie Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895) oder Balduin Groller (1848-1916). Andererseits werden bei ihrem bedeutenden Roman *Die Waffen nieder!* männliche Rezeptionen und Reaktionen wie die von Leo Tolstoj (1828-1910), Alfred Nobel (1833-1896) oder auch Peter Rosegger (1843-1918) bis heute in den Mittelpunkt gestellt (Hamann 1991, 125ff; Steffahn 1998, 53ff).

Auch bei Darstellungen zu Helene von Druskowitz bleiben Erwähnungen ihrer Begegnungen mit bedeutenden Zeitgenossen wie Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) und C. F. Meyer niemals aus – und deren lobende Worte wie die Meyers über ihren „klugen, logisch geschulten Verstand“ oder Nietzsches „sie hat sich von

allen mir bekannten Frauenzimmern bei weitem am ernstesten mit meinem Buch abgeben, und nicht umsonst. [...] Ich meine, es ist ein edles und rechtschaffenes Gschöpf, welches meiner ‚Philosophie‘ keinen Schaden tut“ (nach Gürtler/Schmid-Borstenschlager 1998, 158f). Ebenso wenig wird sich eine Auseinandersetzung mit Minna Kautsky finden, die nicht ihre Freundschaft mit Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826-1900), Victor Adler (1852-1918), Franz Mehring (1846-1919) und Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) erwähnt. Dazu kommt, dass ihre Geschichte nicht ohne die Erwähnung ihres bekannten Sohnes Karl Kautsky (1854-1938) auskommt, mit dem sie auch – wirklich ein seltener Fall in der Literaturgeschichte – gemeinsam ein Theaterstück verfasst hat.

Bei Betty Paoli ist die Erwähnung der Kritik Franz Grillparzers stets ein Aufhänger – immerhin bezeichnete er sie als „erste Lyrikerin Österreichs“ (Halper 1957, 14). Das gleiche gilt für ihre Freundschaft mit Adalbert Stifter (1805-1868): viel zitiert ist seine Einschätzung, die er 1844 an den gemeinsamen Verleger Gustav Heckenast (1811-1878) schrieb: „denn das Weib ist durch und durch Genie“ (nach Gürtler/Schmid-Borstenschlager 1998, 38). Als Vorleserin wurde sie sogar in *Der Nachsommer* (1857) zur literarischen Figur, was ihr aber wohl wenig zugesagt hat. (Ebd., 38) Betty Paoli konnte umgekehrt ausnahmsweise als Literaturkritikerin auch ihre männlichen Kollegen fördern – so Nikolaus Lenau (1802-1850), Conrad Ferdinand Meyer und Ferdinand Saar, was in deren Biographien oftmals kaum bis nicht erwähnt wird. Saar unterstützte wiederum Ada Christen, was aber in deren Lebensdarstellungen nie fehlt. In einem ausführlichen Briefwechsel mit Theodor Storm (1817-1888) inszeniert sich Christen ebenso als ratsuchende Dichterin; auch dieser Kontakt wird das Bild der Autorin mitzeichnen.

Der damals einflussreiche Leopold von Sacher-Masoch förderte überhaupt weibliche Kolleginnen in seiner bizarren Kontaktsuche – wie seine spätere Frau Wanda von Sacher-Masoch, eigentlich Angelika Aurora Rümelin, aber auch Emilie Mataja, wobei er neben seiner Freizügigkeit in Sachen literarische Tipps und Förderungen eben auch Liebesaffären – als stilisierter Sklave – anstrebte. Später kooperierte Mataja mit Karl Emil Franzos (1848-1904); ebenso überliefert sind gern genannte Briefwechsel mit Karl Kraus (1874-1936), Ferdinand Kürnberger (1821-1879), Peter Rosegger oder Paul Heyse, dessen positive Rezension ihres Romans *Familie Hartenberg* (1883) für sie wohl wichtig war – doch vor allem in der Sekundärliteratur als wichtig gesehen wird.

Nichts anderes erfährt Adelma von Vay, auch wenn die ihr wohlgesonnenen Männer heute kaum bekannt sind. So formuliert Adolf Grünhut: „Nicht geringere Männer als Favre, Leon Clavarion, Prof. Hoffmann, Graf Adolf Poninsky, J. H. Fichte und andere Gelehrte äusserten sich mit grosser Anerkennung über das Werk“ (nach Passian o. J. a).

Der Fall des magnetischen Schreibens läßt sogar ein besonders vergiftetes Lob für *Geist, Kraft, Stoff* aus der Feder eines Würzburger Philosophieprofessors, nämlich Franz Hoffmanns (1804-1881), für zitierwürdig erscheinen: „Es ist unmöglich anzunehmen, dass diese grossartige Konzeption über eine Lehre des Welterschaffens im Kopfe einer Frau entstanden sein soll.“ (Nach ebd.) Wie sehr manche Frauen in eben solchen Schemata und Klischeevorstellungen über das Weibliche dachten, zeigte Adelma von Vay selbst. Sie nahm die mysogyne Aussage Hoffmanns als Kompliment und nahm nicht ohne Stolz mehrmals darauf Bezug.

### DRITTE PARALLELE: KEINE FRAUENNAMEN ALS URHEBERIN AM BUCHUMSCHLAG

Wie schwierig es für Frauen war zu publizieren, zeigt insbesondere die häufige Verwendung von Pseudonymen. Fast alle genannten Schriftstellerinnen veröffentlichten anspruchsvollere Texte unter Namen, deren Geschlechtszugehörigkeit nicht klar erkannt werden konnte, oder unter männlichen Namen. Trivalliteratur wiederum wurde Frauen zugeschrieben, so nahmen dafür Männer Frauennamen an, weil dies offensichtlich den Zeitgenossen für Schemaliteratur à la Familienzeitschrift *Gartenlaube* passender erschien.

Bertha von Suttner begann so ihre Karriere unter falschen Namen, schrieb ab 1877 unter Pseudonymen Kurzgeschichten für österreichische Zeitungen; unter „B. Outlet“ veröffentlichte sie ihr aufschlussreiches *Inventarium einer Seele* (1883), unter „Jemand“ ihre intelligenten und aufrüttelnden Geschichtsvorlesungen aus der Zukunft *Maschinenzeitalter* (1889). Im Vorwort der dritten Auflage notierte sie: „[D]as *Maschinenzeitalter* ist von Leuten gelesen und Ernst genommen worden, die dem von einer Frau über einen solchen Gegenstand verfaßten Buch keinerlei Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt hätten“ (Suttner 1899, IV). Helene von Druskowitz ließ ihr erstes literarisches Werk, das Trauerspiel *Sultan und Prinz* (1881) unter dem Pseudonym E. von René erscheinen. Dem war ebensowenig Erfolg beschieden wie ihren späteren Lustspielen, die meist unter männlichen und nicht zuzuordnenden Pseudonymen wie „Adalbert Brunn“, „H. Foreign“, „H. Sakkorausch“ und „Sacrosanct“ veröffentlicht wurden. Minna Kautsky schrieb mitunter als „Eckert“ und „Wilhelm Wiener“ – zumeist novellistische Skizzen für die Presse. Irma von Troll-Borotstyáni veröffentlichte nicht nur anfänglich als Leo Bergen, sondern auch später ihre aufsehenerregende Schrift *Die Prostitution vor dem Gesetz* (1903) unter dem Pseudonym Veritas. Emilie Mataja wurde überhaupt unter dem männlichen Pseudonym Emil Marriot bekannt.

Darüber hinaus verzichteten manche Autorinnen auf ihren wahren Namen; es erschien wohl zu anmaßend darunter zu publizieren. So kombinierte Ada Christen die Vornamen ihres Ehemanns und ihren: Adalmar und Christiane. Betty Paoli hieß eigentlich Barbara Elisabeth Glück. Aurora Rümelin schrieb als Autorin vorerst rein im Namen der Protagonistin aus Sacher-Masochs *Venus im Pelz* (1870), nämlich als Wanda von Dunajew. Danach ergänzte sie diesen Namen mit dem ihres berühmten Ehemanns und nannte sich Wanda von Sacher-Masoch.

Hier kann eine gewisse Parallele gezogen werden zur Schreibweise Vays, die sich als Aufschreibemedium männlicher Verstorbener sah. Auch wenn Vay womöglich nicht bewusst getäuscht hat, scheint es jedenfalls solch ein Herstellungsprozess leichter gemacht zu haben, tiefere Einsichten als Gedanken von Männern sozusagen „an den Mann zu bringen.“ Sie pochte darauf, dass ihre Werke von anderen, zumeist von Männern, geschrieben wurden: „Die Geister schreiben durch mich, ohne dass ich dabei zu denken brauche, fliegt mein Arm und der Bleistift über das Papier und ich kann derweil plaudern“ (nach Passian o. J. a). Sie bestand darauf, dass es keineswegs ihre intellektuelle Arbeit, sondern die intellektuelle Leistung von Männern sei: „Sonderbar und frappant war mir dieses mechanische Schreiben ohne Selbstdenken. Es war mir, als erzähle mir da jemand Geschichten, und als höre ich zu; die Bewegung des Armes, das Schreiben, geschah dabei ganz ohne meinen Willen und Einfluss“ (nach ebd.).

Insbesondere Vays bedeutendstes Werk *Geist, Kraft, Stoff* sollen nach ihren eigenen Angaben der Heilige Laurentius von Rom, Buddha und übrigens auch eine Frau, wenn auch keine unbekannte, nämlich niemand geringerer als die Heilige Maria, verfasst haben.

Auch später scheint Vay ihre Hand größeren, verstorbenen männlichen Schriftstellern ganz anderer Natur und Literatur geliehen zu haben – wie dem Märchendichter H.C. Andersen (1805-1875) für die *Erzählungen der Sonnenstrahlen* (1879) oder *Dem Zephir abgelauscht* (1885), was der Aufmerksamkeit für die Bücher wohl gutgetan hat.

## VIERTE PARALLELE: SYMPATHIE FÜR FRAUEN ALS PHILANTHROPINNEN UND DEREN HANG ZUR TENDENZLITERATUR

Selbst die Werke der erfolgreichsten Schriftstellerinnen wurden nicht aufgrund ihrer ästhetischen Qualität respektiert und gelobt. Den Frauen war es vorbehalten, gute, zärtliche und mitfühlende Menschen zu sein, nicht aber große Literatinnen und Denkerinnen.

Selbst der höchste zivile Orden Österreichs, das Ehrenkreuz für Kunst und Literatur, 1898 und der Ehrendokortitel der Universität Wien 1900 für die Erfolgsautorin Ebner-Eschenbach wurden mehr als Zeichen ihres hohen Ansehens und Verkaufserfolgs als eines für die literarische Qualität ihrer Texte gewertet. Diese Qualität wurde geflissentlich übersehen und von ihrem Ruf als hohe Dichterin des Mitleids überdeckt, zu der sie schon zu Lebzeiten stilisiert wurde. Als Frau wurde ihr zwar eine große Meisterschaft für psychologische Erzählungen zugebilligt, bei welchen die Absicht, Sittlichkeit und Humanismus zu vermitteln, und ein Bedürfnis nach harmonischen Lösungen unverkennbar mitschwingt. Doch als große Literatin wurde sie nur selten erkannt. Selbst in einem neueren Lehrbuch wird sie als „gütige Dichterin“ beschrieben, weiters: „Sie zeichnete sich als Mensch und als Dichterin durch warme Herzlichkeit, durch eine mütterliche Haltung und tiefes soziales Verständnis aus.“ Ihre Dichtung stelle ein „umfangreiches Loblied auf die Macht mütterlicher Liebe und Erziehung dar“ (Pochlatko/Koweindl/Thaler 1987, 39, 38, 39). Frauen schienen nicht als große Literatinnen in Frage zu kommen, sondern als Vermittlerinnen einer Idee, als feinfühliges Anklägerinnen von Mißständen und als engagierte Streiterinnen dagegen.

Noch verstärkt galt und gilt dies für Bertha von Suttner, welche heute nur noch als Pazifistin – prominent auf der Euromünze wie früher auf einem Schillingsschein – erinnert wird. Ihr Roman steht aber auf kaum einer schulischen Leseliste auf dem Weg zur österreichischen Matura. Damals wie heute wird die literarische Qualität des Romans *Die Waffen nieder!* übersehen, der in realistischer Schreibweise die Gräueltaten des Krieges eindringlich zu schildern vermag, in einer Montagetchnik geschickt Fiktion und Fakt vermengt und an manchen Stellen sogar die naturalistische bis expressionistische Schreibweise vorwegnimmt, mit welcher viel später der Erste Weltkrieg verarbeitet werden sollte.

Doch bekannt blieb bis heute allein eine andere Suttner, die Kämpferin für den Frieden, den sie als naturrechtlich verbürgten Normalstand definierte. Im Sinne der Evolutionstheorie und des Liberalismus glaubte sie an eine stete Höherentwicklung, eine Veredelung der Menschheit. Konkret forderte sie ein internationales Schiedsgericht und entsprechende Verträge, um Konflikte mit friedlichen Mitteln beizulegen, eine Friedensunion aller Staaten, die jeden Angriff mit vereinter Kraft beantworten müsse. Die großen Ideale sind bis heute nicht erreicht, doch höchst erfolgreich zeigte sich Suttner in Vereins- und Organisationsarbeiten. Als sie 1891 in der *Neuen Freien Presse* in einem Artikel zur Gründung einer Österreichischen Friedensgesellschaft aufrief, war der Erfolg überwältigend. Auf Anhieb zählte die Gesellschaft 2000 Mitglieder. Weiters förderte sie ähnliche Vereine in Berlin, Budapest und Prag und gilt als Inspiratorin der Nobelpreise. Als Friedensaktivistin wird sie heute noch gefeiert, ihre Thesen interessieren hingegen nicht, gelesen wird sie ebenso wenig.

Schreibende Frauen scheinen also stärker als Vertreterinnen einer Idee wahrgenommen worden zu sein; dafür wurden sie nur sehr begrenzt als Denkerinnen und Literatinnen akzeptiert, was auch die Feministinnen Druskowitz, Troll-Borostyáni und die Sozialistin Kautsky spürten. Gerade dass Kautsky ihre literarische Arbeit in den Dienst der politischen Bewegung gestellt hat, überschattete jegliche Qualitätsfrage. Selbst ihr Sohn meinte später: „Erzählungen wurden in die Parteiblätter nur aufgenommen, der Weiber der Genossen wegen, die in ihrer Beschränktheit nach solcher Lektüre verlangten und denen man etwas bieten mußte, um ihnen das Parteiorgan schmackhaft zu machen“ (Gürtler/Schmid-Borstenschlager 1998, 68).

Einen Tendenzroman oder ein Sachbuch erwartete man wohl auch von Adelma von Vay, nachdem man 1870 den Titel *Geist, Kraft, Stoff* las, nämlich eine Polemik gegen Ludwig Büchners (1824-1899) *Kraft und Stoff* (1855). Der vermeintliche Versuch einer Frau, die in diesem Werk entworfene materialistische Weltordnung in Frage zu stellen, wurde als Kuriosum gewertet und die kleine Auflage war bald vergriffen.

Ludwig Büchner, übrigens jüngerer Bruder des revolutionären Schriftstellers Georg Büchner (1813-1837) und Herausgeber von dessen Nachlass, war nämlich in Darmstadt ein bekannter Arzt, Naturwissenschaftler und Philosoph. Sein Werk war für Kirche und politisches Establishment ein Skandal und bedeutete den Entzug seiner Lehrbefugnis in Tübingen. *Kraft und Stoff* propagiert die Evolutionstheorie und eine mechanistisch-materialistische Weltordnung. Denken und Sein sind für Büchner unzertrennlich wie eben Kraft und Stoff oder Geist und Materie. Mit 21 deutschen Auflagen innerhalb von fünfzig Jahren und zahlreichen Übersetzungen wurde Büchners Werk ein Bestseller.

Wenn mancher Käufer dann auch von Vays Arbeit enttäuscht war, fand er – vermutlich aus seiner Sicht – zumindest keinen avancierten literarischen Versuch vor, sondern ein – in den Trend der damaligen Literatur von Frauen passendes – Buch mit Interessen, die über die Literatur hinausweisen. Die Enttäuschung mag sich so in Grenzen gehalten haben. Die scheinbare Notwendigkeit einer weiblichen Literatur, nämlich die, eine Mission zu haben, wurde ja erfüllt. Weitere Ausgaben sollten folgen, auch zwei in englischer Sprache. Den gutherzigen Frauen entsprechend sollte Vay auch die Einkommen aus Publikationen wohlthätigen Zwecken zuführen.

Ähnlich wie Bertha von Suttner in Sachen Pazifismus wurde Adelma von Vay zu einer der bekanntesten und damit auch umstrittensten Spiritistinnen des späten 19. Jahrhunderts.

Mit ihrem Mann war Vay 1871, wie bereits erwähnt, maßgeblich an der Gründung des *Vereins spiriter Forscher* in Budapest beteiligt und hatte dort eine zentrale Rolle, indem sie – natürlich per spiritistischer Eingebung – die Statuten niederschrieb. Nicht gerade effektarm schien sie schnell, den Bleistift mit zwei Fingern

haltend und den Blick immer wieder über die Anwesenden schweifen lassend geschrieben zu haben. Die Gastgeber wurden auch vom Ergebnis nicht enttäuscht: Als „geistige Leiter“ meldeten sich gar Jesus Christus, Maria und Buddha. Die „hohen Geister“ bestimmten passender Weise Ödön von Vay und Dr. Adolf Grünhut zu den irdischen Leitern des Vereins.

## FAZIT

Der Vergleich zwischen Adelma von Vay und den bekannten Schriftstellerinnen der Habsburger Monarchie ihrer Zeit fördert so manche offensichtliche und manche verdeckte Parallele zu Tage, die zur Erklärung des Phänomens Vay beitragen können. Dass es für eine schreibende Frau von essentieller Bedeutung war, aus der gehobenen, meist aristokratischen Schicht zu stammen, ist offensichtlich. Doch auch für diese bedeutete zu schreiben eine der wenigen Möglichkeiten, sich intellektuell zu betätigen und ihre Gedanken teilen zu können. Dass die Qualität ihrer Werke weniger geachtet wurde, ist eine traurige Tatsache. Ihre Leistungen wurden vor allem hinsichtlich der Anerkennung durch männliche Kollegen gemessen. Darum verwundert es wenig, dass viele Frauen auf dem Buchumschlag nicht klarstellen wollten, dass sie die Werke verfasst haben, und männliche oder geschlechtsneutrale Pseudonyme wählten. Besonders spannend ist die vorrangige Beurteilung der Autorinnen als engagierte und gütige Menschen, die ihren Ruf als Literatinnen überdeckt hat. Die Einsatzfreude und der tendenzielle Enthusiasmus einzelner Schriftstellerinnen wie Bertha von Suttner sind auch überwältigend. Auch hier tut sich eine weitere aufschlussreiche Parallele zum Werk Adelma von Vays auf.

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## **Adelma von Vay iz Slovenskih Konjic v kontekstu sodobnih avstrijskih pisateljic**

Svoj čas znana spiritualistična pisateljica in zdravilka Adelma von Vay je svoje plodno življenje preživela na južnem Štajerskem. Zdaj je njeno delo ponovno deležno pozornosti v Sloveniji: v zadnjih raziskavah je njeno delo umeščeno v lokalno mrežo in v globalne ezoterične reference. Za razumevanje Vayeve pa je prav tako razkrivajoče osvetliti specifičen položaj pisateljic v Donavski monarhiji njihovega časa in Vayeve v tem kontekstu. Ta članek to počne s predstavitvijo splošnega položaja intelektualk in s primerjavo Vayeve z osrednjimi avtoricami tistega časa. Pri tem je mogoče predlagati nekaj možnih razlag za njen lastni proces pisanja.

**Ključne besede:** spiritizem, spiritualizem, avtomatsko pisanje, magnetizem

## **Adelma von Vay from Slovenske Konjice in the Context of Contemporary Austrian Women Writers**

The spiritualist author and healer Adelma von Vay, who was well-known in her time, spent her productive life in southern Styria. Now her work is receiving renewed attention in Slovenia: in recent research, her work is placed in local networks and in the context of global esoteric references. To understand Vay, however, it is just as revealing to shed light on the specific situation of women writers in the Danube Monarchy of their time, including Vay. This article places her in this context by presenting the general situation of intellectual women and by comparing Vay with the central women authors of the time. In doing so, some possible explanations for her own writing process can be suggested.

**Keywords:** spiritism, spiritualism, automatic writing, magnetism



## ***La villa sur le lac* de Boris Pahor en italien et sa traduction indirecte en français : le cas des *realia***

*Adriana Mezeg, Anna Maria Grego*

### **Résumé**

Le présent article<sup>1</sup> se propose d'observer la traduction des *realia* dans les versions italienne et française du roman *Vila ob jezeru* (respectivement *La villa sul lago* et *La villa sur le lac*) de Boris Pahor. *La villa sur le lac* représente à ce jour le seul roman de Pahor à ne pas avoir été traduit vers le français du slovène, mais par l'intermédiaire d'une autre langue, à savoir l'italien. Après une courte présentation de l'œuvre et du concept de traduction indirecte, l'article se focalise sur les stratégies de traduction des mots ou expressions typiques du littoral slovène et de son arrière-pays, qui constituent la langue de Pahor, pour découvrir si ces éléments culturels, qui représentent un véritable défi de traduction, ont été gardés ou perdus non seulement dans la traduction indirecte en français, mais aussi, vu les contacts géographique, linguistique et culturel étroits entre la Slovénie et l'Italie, dans la traduction directe en italien.

**Mots-clés :** Boris Pahor, *La villa sur le lac*, traduction indirecte, *realia*, stratégies de traduction

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1 L'article repose sur le mémoire de master « Perdu ou changé dans la traduction – La traduction italienne du roman de Boris Pahor *La villa sur le lac* et sa traduction indirecte en français », écrit par Anna Maria Grego et dirigé par Adriana Mezeg.

## INTRODUCTION

Boris Pahor, un des auteurs contemporains slovènes les plus traduits et de plus grande renommée internationale (Mezeg et Grego 2022), est souvent considéré comme un des plus remarquables écrivains d'après-guerre à avoir exposé publiquement les atrocités vécues à l'époque des grands systèmes totalitaires et dans les camps allemands. Né et vivant quasiment toute sa vie à Trieste, il traite dans ses œuvres les difficultés de la minorité slovène de cette ville maritime, située au nord-est de l'Italie. Malgré les conditions de vie difficiles pour les Slovènes habitant sur le sol italien (ibid. ; Rojc 2013), cet « écrivain triestin de langue slovène » (Bernard 2002, 548) est resté fidèle à sa langue maternelle durant toute sa vie, bien qu'il ait reçu une formation de la langue slovène plutôt chaotique, raison pour laquelle il l'a apprise en autodidacte. De là est né ce grand désir et ce grand besoin de s'exprimer en slovène : pour lui, en effet, c'était « la source d'inspiration », « la motivation première de tout son œuvre », et son utilisation « la principale exigence éthique de l'homme » (ibid., 554–555).

Pour Pahor, ce « slovène de Trieste » n'était pas seulement une grande valeur, mais aussi sa marque distinctive. L'influence italienne se manifeste surtout dans le vocabulaire et dans la syntaxe (Skubic 1984). Selon Skubic (ibid., 318), l'auteur utilise des expressions italiennes, hybrides (italo-slovènes) et du dialecte triestin (parfois même du vénitien), dans le but de reproduire l'atmosphère de la ville cosmopolite de Trieste et de son arrière-pays. Parmi ces expressions nous pouvons trouver des *realia*, i. e. des mots ou expressions qui désignent des éléments spécifiques à une culture et représentent d'habitude un défi important en matière de traduction.

Jouant un rôle important en littérature, la traduction nous permet de connaître un éventail d'écrivains provenant d'autres réalités. La traduction littéraire en particulier est un enjeu puisque le traducteur ne traduit pas uniquement les mots du texte source et le style de l'auteur, mais aussi toute une culture.

L'article<sup>2</sup> se propose d'observer la traduction des *realia* dans la version française de la *Vila ob jezeru* (*La villa sur le lac*), le troisième roman de Pahor qui a été traduit en français et le seul qui a subi une traduction indirecte à travers la version italienne (*La villa sul lago*) par Marija Kacin, professeure, écrivaine et traductrice d'origine slovène, née à Gorizia et vivant à Trieste. Le texte italien signé par Kacin est paru chez Nicolodi (2002, cop. 2004), chez Editoriale FVG (2004) et chez Zandonai (2007, cop. 2008).<sup>3</sup> Le nombre d'éditions en Italie témoigne que *La*

2 Le présent article a été rédigé dans le cadre du programme de recherche numéro P6-0265 financé par l'Agence nationale pour la recherche de la République de Slovénie (ARRS).

3 La version d'Editoriale FVG est presque identique à celle de Nicolodi, tandis que la version de Zandonai a été soumise à de nombreux changements par rapport à la traduction parue chez Nicolodi en 2002 (cf. Mezeg et Grego 2022, 44–45).

*villa sul lago* a suscité pas mal d'intérêt auprès du public italien, ce qui représente un succès incontestable pour Pahor qui était longtemps complètement négligé en Italie (cf. Mezeg et Grego 2022, 40).

Bien que la traduction française par Benito Merlino, compositeur, écrivain et traducteur italien vivant en France, soit née par l'intermédiaire de la traduction italienne, elle a été publiée par la maison d'édition Bartillat en 1998, à savoir quatre ans avant la traduction italienne, parue pour la première fois en 2002 auprès de la maison d'édition Nicolodi. Malgré les recherches approfondies, nous n'avons pas réussi à découvrir la raison du retard de la publication italienne, mais une analyse préalable (Mezeg et Grego 2022, 45–50) montre des écarts lexicaux importants entre la traduction italienne et le texte source, tandis que la traduction française est plus proche de l'original slovène<sup>4</sup> (ibid., 50). Cela confirme les paroles de Marija Kacin<sup>5</sup> que Boris Pahor a garanti à l'éditeur français Bartillat que la version de *La villa sul lago* rendue par la traductrice à l'éditeur Nicolodi était parfaitement conforme au texte source et qu'elle servait de base à la traduction française (ibid.).

D'après Pahor et le traducteur de l'italien,<sup>6</sup> la traduction française a été proposée par l'éditeur de la maison d'édition Bartillat, qui avait bien aimé l'histoire en italien, à l'époque encore sous forme de manuscrit. Boris Pahor nous a raconté que l'éditeur l'avait contacté pour lui demander s'il était d'accord avec le fait que la version française de ce roman serait née par l'intermédiaire de la langue italienne, et pas directement du slovène. L'auteur était d'accord, principalement parce qu'il était touché par l'intérêt que ce roman avait suscité en France, ne pensant probablement pas aux pertes que puisse causer la traduction indirecte. D'ailleurs, à l'époque, seulement deux de ses œuvres sont parues en français (i. e. *Pèlerin parmi les ombres* (1990, cop. 1996) et *Printemps difficile* (1995) ; cf. Mezeg et Grego 2022, 42), Pahor se frayant encore le chemin sur la scène littéraire internationale.

Quoi qu'il en soit, d'après une analyse préliminaire de la traduction italienne parue en 2002 et les entrevues avec Pahor et Kacin (Grego 2021 ; Mezeg et Grego 2022), le manuscrit italien par Marija Kacin a évidemment subi les corrections dont la traductrice n'était jamais informée. Comme Benito Merlino a reçu le manuscrit en italien, selon Pahor fidèle au texte source, peu de temps après avoir été rendu par Marija Kacin, la traduction française devrait globalement correspondre à l'original slovène.

4 Par exemple, le prénom de Carmen est changé en Bruno dans la version italienne, tandis que Carmen est gardée dans la traduction française. À propos de la traduction des noms propres, voir aussi Mazi – Leskovar 2017.

5 Lors d'une entrevue téléphonique à des fins de cette recherche courant 2021.

6 La communication se faisait en 2021 : avec Boris Pahor par téléphone et avec Benito Merlino par courriel.

Or, comme les références culturelles représentent un des plus grands défis dans le domaine de la traduction en raison de leur singularité, cet article a pour objectif d'observer leur équivalence ou divergence par rapport au texte source. Nous allons observer trois textes (i. e. le texte source ultime (*Vila ob jezeru*) paru en 1993 chez Mohorjeva založba, la traduction italienne parue en 2002 (*La villa sul lago*, éditions Nicolodi) et la traduction française (*La villa sur le lac*) parue en 1998 chez Bartillat), nous concentrant sur la comparaison entre l'original slovène et la traduction italienne, entre les versions italienne et française, et entre le texte source slovène et la traduction française. Ainsi pourra-t-on, entre autres, constater des pertes éventuelles causées par la traduction indirecte. Traduite par l'intermédiaire de l'italien, nous supposons que *La villa sur le lac* a subi des altérations et changements au niveau de la traduction des *realia*, c'est pourquoi elle est, à cet égard, assez éloignée du texte source slovène. De l'autre côté, nous croyons que la traduction française est fidèle à la version italienne entre lesquelles la traduction littérale s'impose, car celle-ci est très fréquente entre les langues de la même famille (dans notre cas l'italien et le français).

## À PROPOS DU ROMAN

Dédiée à sa sœur Evelina, la *Vila ob jezeru* de Boris Pahor a déjà été publiée en 1955 par la maison d'édition Obzorja. Il s'agissait en effet de la nouvelle *Laneni kosmiči v laseh* (littéralement *Les flocons de lin dans les cheveux*) qui paraissait, en 1950, dans la revue littéraire *Razgledi* de Trieste (numéros 10 et 11–12) et que Pahor a plus tard remaniée et développée (Ahlin 1973, 1, 8 ; Jevnikar et Cenda 2013, 64). Le roman est ensuite paru en 1993 chez Mohorjeva založba à l'occasion du quatre-vingtième anniversaire de l'écrivain. La version de 1993 n'est pas une simple réimpression, mais plutôt une nouvelle édition où on peut noter de nombreux changements lexicaux et syntaxiques par rapport à la version de 1955 (cf. Mezeg et Grego 2022, 44). Comme les traductions italienne et française ont été faites d'après cette version (ibid., 50), elle nous servira de base dans l'analyse.

Récompensé par l'Association des écrivains slovènes, le deuxième roman de Pahor est une histoire d'amour qui sert de base pour régler les comptes avec le passé. Nous suivons l'architecte slovène de Trieste Mirko Godina, un ancien déporté de trente ans qui revient en 1948 sur les bords du lac de Garde où il avait fait son service militaire en 1941. Il passe trois jours dans les lieux idylliques et symboliques autour du lac de Garde où se trouve la villa de Mussolini à laquelle réfère le titre du roman. Trois ans après la guerre, la villa représente toujours une sorte d'ombre sinistre du totalitarisme et de l'idéologie destructive qui contrôle le cœur et les pensées de nombreuses personnes (Čuk 1993, 15). Pendant ces quelques

jours, Mirko fait la connaissance de Luciana, la fille de la *signora* Amalia, la patronne d'une ancienne auberge qui défend avec ténacité et une certaine nostalgie l'époque de Mussolini, qu'elle admire, plaint et déplore. Élevée dans une école, famille et société fascistes, Luciana admire naïvement Mussolini, tandis que Mirko déteste les dictateurs. Au fil de longues promenades à la campagne et au bord du lac, Mirko et Luciana tombent amoureux, ce qui leur permet, peu à peu, d'envisager un futur et de renaître après la « barbarie ». Cette forte liaison amoureuse permet à Mirko de faire prendre conscience à Luciana de ce qu'était le fascisme et des atrocités commises par les partisans de ce régime. Pas à pas, Mirko réussit à convertir non seulement Luciana, qui jette symboliquement dans le lac la photo du dictateur, mais aussi soi-même. Rentré du camp malade et démoralisé, il vainc la mort en lui et retrouve l'espoir en la vie et en l'homme.

## LA TRADUCTION LITTÉRAIRE INDIRECTE

La traduction est la forme la plus importante de médiation interculturelle d'une œuvre littéraire. Elle contribue fondamentalement à la formation des cultures, permettant ainsi de connaître et de comprendre la multiculturalité. Par ailleurs, de nombreux critiques littéraires attribuent plus de pouvoir et d'influence à la traduction qu'au texte original. C'est parce que le texte original n'atteint que les locuteurs de la langue source, tandis que les traductions atteignent les locuteurs de langues différentes. C'est la raison pour laquelle la traduction est très souvent envisagée non comme un texte subordonné, mais plutôt comme un texte capable de prendre vie indépendamment de l'original (Grosman 1997, 11–12).

La traductibilité de la littérature est fortement liée à l'idée que toute traduction doit être idéalement fidèle et aussi le plus possible proche du texte source. Des comparaisons précises avec le texte source montrent que les traductions apparemment « idéales » sont en réalité très rares, car dans la majorité des traductions, nous pouvons observer des changements et des pertes à des différents niveaux ; cela peut être dû, entre autres, à une lecture inattentive ou inexacte de l'original. Pour cette raison, en traduction littéraire, la lecture, la compréhension et l'interprétation du traducteur sont tous des facteurs fondamentaux qui doivent être pris en considération à côté d'autres facteurs, par exemple la situation socioéconomique du traducteur, sa formation et ses expériences personnelles (ibid., 18).

La traduction indirecte fait référence à une chaîne d'au moins trois textes qui produisent une traduction finale effectuée à partir d'une autre traduction : texte source ultime > texte intermédiaire/de médiation > texte cible ultime (Assis Rosa et al. 2017, 115). En d'autres termes, c'est la « traduction d'une traduction » (Wasbourne 2013, 608). Au fil du temps, une multitude des termes a été suggérée

pour décrire cette activité, créant, par conséquent, un certain désordre conceptuel (Pym 2011, 80). Parmi les termes les plus utilisés, mentionnons la « traduction intermédiaire » (angl. *intermediary translation* ou *intermediate translation*), la « traduction médiée » (angl. *mediated translation*), la « traduction par relais » ou « traduction-relais » (angl. *relay translation*) qui suit le modèle de l'interprétation par relais, la « retraduction » (angl. *retrotranslation*), ou encore la « traduction de seconde main » (angl. *second-hand translation*) qui est peut-être la moins utilisée vu sa connotation d'infériorité (ibid., 82 ; Washbourne 2013, 608). Pym (2011) suggère d'utiliser l'appellation « traduction indirecte » afin d'éviter toute confusion (cf. aussi Assis Rosa et al. 2017, 115).

Quoique la traduction indirecte soit pratiquée depuis la nuit de temps, elle est encore aujourd'hui dépréciée. En traduction littéraire, elle est considérée comme une mauvaise pratique et son emploi est découragé, même presque interdit, excepté dans la mesure où cela s'avère absolument nécessaire (cf. Unesco 1976), comme lorsqu'il n'y existe pas de traducteur d'une langue source vers une langue cible. Dans le cas de *La villa sur le lac* ceci n'était pas le cas, car il y avait des traducteurs du slovène vers le français.<sup>7</sup> En effet, la traduction indirecte était le choix personnel de l'éditeur français qui comprenait l'italien et non pas le slovène, le choix que Pahor a approuvé.

*La villa sur le lac* n'est pas uniquement la seule œuvre de Pahor qui était soumise à la traduction indirecte, mais aussi une des très rares œuvres slovènes à avoir été traduite en français à travers une langue intermédiaire (Mezeg 2020b, 252). Dans la partie suivante, nous allons observer la traduction des *realia* vers le français à partir de la traduction italienne. Selon Kavalir et Chudoba (2020, 548), la traduction indirecte « est généralement considérée comme néfaste à la qualité du texte, particulièrement en termes de transmission d'éléments culturels », ce que nous nous proposons de vérifier ci-après.

## LA TRADUCTION DES *REALIA*

En traductologie, le terme de *realia*, également connu sous l'expression « cultu-rème » ou « référent culturel », se rapporte à des éléments ou traits spécifiques à une culture. Les *realia* peuvent désigner des noms propres (ex. *la Tour Eiffel*) ou des noms communs (ex. *une baguette*) (Mezeg 2020a). Transmettant une connotation locale et de l'exotisme, leur traduction est un grand défi lors des différences culturelles ou de manque d'équivalence entre deux langues ou cultures (ibid., 433). Le traducteur peut opter pour une approche sourcière (l'étrangéisation) ou cibliste

7 Par exemple, Andrée Lück-Gaye qui avait précédemment traduit deux œuvres de Pahor du slovène vers le français, i. e. *Pèlerin parmi les ombres* (1990) et *Printemps difficile* (1995).

(la domestication) (Ladmiral 1986 ; Venuti 1995). Dans la traduction sourcière, le référent étranger est conservé dans le but de produire un effet exotique, surprenant et innovateur (Dawood 2018, 86), tandis que la traduction cibliste vise à produire un texte fluide dans la langue d'arrivée et à donner l'impression d'un texte écrit directement dans la langue d'arrivée. L'approche cibliste n'introduit ni de nouvelles connotations ni des images surprenantes ou inconnues (ibid., 85), et elle sacrifie la forme au profit du sens (ibid., 82).

Il existe toute une série de procédés applicables à la traduction des référents culturels, par exemple l'emprunt, l'équivalence culturelle, la traduction fonctionnelle ou descriptive, la traduction littérale, etc. (cf. Vinay et Darbelnet 1958 ; Newmark 1988 ; Baker 1992 ; Vaupot 2015, 2020 ; Mezeg 2020a). Ci-après, nous allons révéler les procédés utilisés lors de la traduction des référents culturels de la version italienne du roman de Pahor vers le français, et déterminer des pertes éventuelles dans les traductions italienne et française par rapport à l'original slovène.

## ANALYSE ET DISCUSSION

Le roman *Vila ob jezeru* est écrit en slovène standard, entremêlé, entre autres, d'archaïsmes, d'expressions dialectales et familières, et de mots liés à la région du Karst ou provenant de l'italien. D'habitude, Pahor utilise les référents culturels dans les descriptions des circonstances ou des faits d'arrière-plan, c'est-à-dire qu'ils font surtout partie du décor afin de reproduire l'atmosphère de l'arrière-pays. Nous allons observer la traduction de quelques mots d'origine italienne (ex. *polenta*, *burja*) de même que des mots de la région du Karst et du littoral (ex. *baladur*, *gmajna*, *pašten*) qui ont, aussi grâce à Pahor, entré le dictionnaire slovène (*SSKJ<sup>2</sup>*) et sont classifiés comme des mots familiers ou des régionalismes.

Dans l'*Exemple 1*, trois mots ont attiré notre attention : *gostilna*, *polenta* et *prozorna verona*. Dans l'original slovène figurent quatre occurrences du mot *gostilna*, toujours traduites en italien comme *trattoria*, ce qui correspond à une traduction correcte, tandis que dans la version française, le traducteur a parfois opté pour l'équivalent culturel *auberge*, parfois pour un terme plus générique, le *restaurant*, qui ne véhicule pas la même idée que *gostilna* et entraîne une perte sémantique par rapport au texte source.

## Exemple 1.

| Texte source slovène (1993)                                                                                               | Traduction en italien (2002)                                                                                                                        | Traduction indirecte en français (1998)                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| /.../ <b>gostilna</b> pa je bila vsa polna alpincev, ki so oteпали <b>polento</b> in pili <b>prozorno verono</b> . (p. 6) | /.../ e <b>la trattoria</b> era piena zeppa di alpini che mangiavano di gusto <b>la polenta</b> e bevevano <b>il limpido verona</b> ; /.../ (p. 12) | <b>L'auberge</b> était alors pleine à-craquer de chasseurs alpins qui mangeaient avec appétit <b>une polenta</b> accompagné d' <b>un claret de Vérone</b> . (p. 11) |

Ensuite, le substantif *polenta* (cinq occurrences dans le roman), emprunté à l'italien, est bien évidemment toujours gardé en italien. En français aussi, le traducteur a souvent (3 exemples) opté pour l'emprunt *la polenta* qui se trouve dans les dictionnaires français généraux. En outre, nous avons découvert une omission de la traduction du mot *polenta* et une généralisation, i. e. le remplacement de *la polenta* par *repas*,<sup>8</sup> ce qui éloigne la traduction française du texte source slovène et aussi de la traduction intermédiaire en italien.

Pour ce qui concerne le syntagme *prozorna verona*, correspondant à une sorte de vin léger et peu coloré de la région de Vérone, il s'agit de la traduction littérale de l'italien *il limpido verona* (*une vérone limpide*) que le traducteur français n'a pas décidé de garder. En effet, il a opté pour la traduction par couplet, une méthode de traduction qui consiste à combiner deux ou plusieurs procédés : dans ce cas, la naturalisation (l'adaptation du mot *verona* à l'orthographe français : *de Vérone*) et la description (*claret* dans le sens d'un vin léger, peu coloré), produisant ainsi la traduction adéquate *claret de Vérone*.

Le mot *burja* (Exemple 2 ci-dessous), issu de l'italien *bora*, représente un exemple intéressant : il est utilisé trois fois dans la version italienne et omis une fois, notamment du fait de la non-traduction ou omission (involontaire ?) d'un paragraphe d'environ neuf lignes (à la fin de la page 123). Par conséquent, la traduction du paragraphe correspondant et donc d'une occurrence de *bora* ne figure pas dans la version française (à la fin de la page 147). À part une pronominalisation (*lui* pour *bora* dans l'Exemple 2), les deux autres occurrences du mot *bora* n'ont pas été traduites vers le français par l'emprunt *la bora*, un terme de géographie d'après *Le Robert*, mais par *le vent du nord*, ce qui est une expression trop générale parce qu'on connaît d'autres types de vents du nord, par exemple *le mistral* et *la tramontane* qui diffèrent bien évidemment de *la bora*. Ainsi le lecteur cible est-il privé des images précises peintes par l'auteur du texte source ultime à travers la narration.

8 En slovène : *kubala je imenitno polento* (p. 8) ; en italien : *cucinava dell'ottima polenta* (p. 15) ; en français : *elle /.../ leur cuisinait d'excellents repas* (p. 13).

## Exemple 2.

| Texte source slovène (1993)                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Traduction en italien (2002)                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Traduction indirecte en français (1998)                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Naša dežela je dežela borov, ki jim je <b>burja</b> upognila vratove.«<br/>         »Pa je zares tako strašna, vaša <b>burja</b>?«<br/>         »Zares. Če ne bi bilo <b>burje</b>, bi imeli célo leto pomlad.«<br/>         (p. 197)</p> | <p>/.../ il nostro, è il paese dei pini cui <b>la bora</b> ha piegato le cime.”<br/>         “Ma è davvero così tremenda, la vostra <b>bora</b>!”<br/>         “Davvero. Se non ci fosse <b>la bora</b>, avremmo tutto un anno di primavera.” (p. 201)</p> | <p>Et il y a beaucoup de pins partout, c'est le pays des pins dont <b>le vent du nord</b> a plié les cimes.<br/>         – Il est si terrible que ça, votre <b>vent du nord</b> !<br/>         – Sans <b>lui</b>, on aurait le printemps toute l'année. (p. 244)</p> |

Ensuite, dans le récit de Pahor, nous avons remarqué (*Exemple 3*) quelques expressions architectoniques typiques pour la région du Karst : *portali*, *kolone* et *baladurji*. Elles sont toutes d'origine latine, adaptées à l'orthographe slovène, les deux dernières étant, d'après le *SSKJ*<sup>2</sup>, des dialectismes ou régionalismes. Quant à l'expression *portali*, celle-ci a été traduite littéralement en italien (*portali*) et aussi en français (*portails*). Ensuite, le mot *kolona* désigne un « arc en pierre » et non pas une « colonne », s'agissant donc d'une expression qui prête à confusion. Dans la traduction française, nous pouvons noter l'usage du syntagme nominal *ses colonnes* qui équivaut à un faux ami, utilisé à cause d'une traduction littérale erronée en italien (*le colonne*). Enfin, le mot *baladur* désigne un couloir ou un balcon avec escalier à l'extérieur d'une maison typique du Karst. En italien, il a été traduit par son équivalent culturel *ballatoio*, dont la traduction est omise en français. L'omission peut être due à une difficulté de compréhension ou bien de traduction. En effectuant une recherche dans des textes parallèles italiens-français dans le dictionnaire en ligne *Glosbe*, nous avons remarqué que dans ce contexte, l'expression italienne *ballatoio* pourrait être traduite en français par *galerie* ou *coursive*.

## Exemple 3.

| Texte source slovène (1993)                                                                                                                                                | Traduction en italien (2002)                                                                                                                                                                       | Traduction indirecte en français (1998)                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>/.../ Kras je imel zadosti arhitektonskih prvin s svojimi <b>portali</b>, <b>kolonami</b> in <b>baladurji</b>, ki so vse čakale, da bi jih kdo izkoristil. (p. 116)</p> | <p>/.../ il Carso però con i suoi <b>portali</b> le <b>colonne</b>, i <b>ballatoi</b>, offriva elementi architettonici sufficienti, tutti in attesa di dare l'ispirazione a qualcuno. (p. 123)</p> | <p>/.../ le Karst, avec ses <b>portails</b>, ses <b>colonnes</b>, offrait assez d'éléments pour donner de l'inspiration à qui que ce soit. (p. 147)</p> |

Dans l'exemple 4, l'accent est mis sur le mot slovène *gmajna* qui signifie « lande, friche, pâtis », i. e. une terre pierreuse inculte, à la végétation pauvre, destinée au pâturage. Souvent, il est accompagné de l'adjectif *kraški* qui est traduit en italien comme *del Carso* et comme *du Karst* en français. À part une omission du syntagme entier *kraška gmajna* dans la version italienne et, en conséquence, française, la traductrice italienne a traduit le lexème *gmajna* de différentes manières : le plus souvent par l'équivalent culturel *landa*, parfois accompagné de l'adjectif *pietrosa*, mais aussi en utilisant un équivalent fonctionnel descriptif pour éviter la répétition au sein d'une phrase (*pascoli carsici* dans l'Exemple 4) ou varier le vocabulaire (*terreno pietroso*), s'éloignant ainsi de l'écriture de Pahor. Littérale, la traduction française est fidèle à la version italienne (respectivement *lande*, *lande pierreuse*, *prés du Karst*, *terrain pierreux*), sauf dans un exemple où *la landa* est remplacée par un mot plus général, *le pré*, signe de simplification.

Exemple 4.

| Texte source slovène (1993)                                                                                                                                                               | Traduction en italien (2002)                                                                                                                                                                                | Traduction indirecte en français (1998)                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Da, a še prej, ko so slovenski fantje stopali med fašisti po <b>gmajni</b> , so se njihove oči prav gotovo ustavile tudi na kamnih, s katerimi je posejana <b>kraška gmajna</b> . (p. 68) | Sì, ma ancora prima, quando attornati dai fascisti i giovani sloveni attraversavano <b>la landa</b> , i loro occhi si erano posati di certo sulle pietre disseminate per i <b>pascoli carsici</b> . (p. 75) | Oui, mais encore avant, quand les jeunes Slovènes, cernés par les fascistes, traversaient <b>la lande</b> , leurs yeux s'étaient sûrement posés sur les pierres éparées dans <b>les prés du Karst</b> , /.../ (p. 92) |

La généralisation ou la simplification peut aussi être observée dans le cas de la traduction des mots *borjač* et *pašten*, les deux appartenant au dialecte de la région du Karst ou du littoral slovène.

Dans l'original slovène, nous avons trouvé une occurrence du mot *borjač* (Exemple 5) qui désigne une cour typique du Karst, entourée de maison d'habitation et d'installations agricoles, et d'un mur et porte à l'entrée (*SSKJ<sup>2</sup>*). Cette *realia* a été transmise en italien et, par conséquent, en français par un mot moins précis ou bien un équivalent fonctionnel selon Newmark (1988), à savoir *cortile* ou *cour*, les deux signifiant *dvorišče* (*la cour*) en général. Faute d'un équivalent en italien et sous peine de perte complète d'élément culturel source, la traductrice vers l'italien aurait pu se servir d'une traduction descriptive ou garder le mot slovène source en ajoutant une note en bas de page.<sup>9</sup>

9 Par exemple, un *cortile chiuso* (une cour fermée), *il tipico cortile carsico* (une cour typique du Karst), *il tradizionale cortile della tipica casa carsica* (une cour traditionnelle d'une maison typique du Karst).

## Exemple 5.

| Texte source slovène (1993)                                                                             | Traduction en italien (2002)                                                                                      | Traduction indirecte en français (1998)                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| »Kakor drevesa so rasli [oleandri] z <b>borjača</b> do oken, cveti pa so bili nenavadno veliki. (p. 12) | «Crescevano come alberi, dal <b>cortile</b> fino alle finestre ed i fiori erano d'una grandezza insolita. (p. 19) | – Ils [les lauriers-roses] poussaient comme des arbres, de la <b>cour</b> ils montaient jusqu'à l'étage, et les fleurs étaient d'une grosseur exceptionnelle. (p. 19) |

*Pašten* (Exemple 6), de l'autre côté, désigne au dialecte du littoral slovène une terrasse de vignes (*SSKJ<sup>2</sup>*), mais dans la *Vila ob jezeru* il semble être utilisé surtout dans le sens de *terrasse*, i. e. « terrain, espace en gradins » (*Le Robert*), car, selon le contexte, il peut se rapporter à des terrasses d'oliviers, d'oranges ou bien de vignes. D'ailleurs, Pahor utilise le mot *terasa* (*la terrasse*) plus souvent que *pašten* (vingt-six occurrences contre douze). Vu la difficulté de garder le caractère dialectal dans la traduction, il n'est pas surprenant que dans la version italienne et, par conséquent, française, l'emploi des mots standard prévaut. À l'exception d'une omission de traduction dans les deux versions, *pašten* a le plus souvent été traduit comme *terrazza* (7 occurrences en italien) ou bien *terrasse* (6 occurrences en français et une pronominalisation). Quelques occurrences du mot *pašten* ont subi une traduction descriptive (*terrazzi a filari di viti/étagements de vignes*), en français aussi une simplification (*terreno a terrazzi* (deux occurrences)/*terrasses* ou *terrain*), tandis qu'une solution (*campo/champ*) est assez éloigné du mot source et n'exprime pas l'idée de gradins. Comme en témoigne l'analyse, le traducteur français est pour la plupart fidèle aux solutions de la traductrice italienne.

## Exemple 6.

| Texte source slovène (1993)                                                                                                                                | Traduction en italien (2002)                                                                                                                                                            | Traduction indirecte en français (1998)                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Od zemljepisnih posebnosti je vzel v pošte v predvsem dve: <b>paštne</b> , ki se v stopnicah vzpenjajo od morja gor po bregu, ter <b>doline</b> . (p. 116) | Delle peculiarità geografiche due soprattutto erano quelle prese in considerazione : il <b>terreno a terrazzi</b> che dal mare s'inerpica su per la china e le <b>doline</b> . (p. 123) | Des caractéristiques de ce terrain, deux surtout étaient à prendre en considération : les <b>terrasses</b> qui grimpaient de la mer et les <b>dolines</b> . (p. 147) |

Enfin, toujours dans l'exemple 6, nous pouvons noter l'emploi du mot *doline* (*dolina* au singulier), un terme de géographie désignant une « petite dépression fermée caractéristique des régions de relief karstique » (*Larousse*). Figurant dans des dictionnaires italiens et français, les deux langues romanes ont emprunté ce mot au slovène (respectivement *dolina* et *doline*).<sup>10</sup> Aussi n'est-il pas surprenant que le mot slovène a été maintenu dans les deux versions cibles observées.

## CONCLUSION

Après avoir brièvement présenté le style de Pahor, son roman *Vila ob jezeru* et les éditions italiennes et française, nous avons expliqué les termes clés de cet article : la traduction indirecte et les *realia*. En effet, notre objectif était d'observer la traduction des *realia* de la *Vila ob jezeru* dans la version italienne par Marija Kacin ainsi que dans la version française par Benito Merlino, effectuée uniquement à partir de l'italien, pour pouvoir déterminer des écarts éventuels par rapport au texte source ultime.

Basée sur une dizaine d'exemples<sup>11</sup> de référents culturels source, l'analyse a révélé les stratégies employées et les effets produits. À propos de la version italienne, nous pouvons tout d'abord constater que les dialectalismes ou régionalismes ont en majorité été gommées, remplacées par des mots ou expressions standard, plus généraux et neutres (le cas des mots *borjač*, *pašten* et partiellement *gmajna*), tandis que quelques-uns ont été traduits par un équivalent culturel (par exemple *gostilna*, *baladur* et partiellement *gmajna*). À part quelques omissions et de rares équivalents culturels (*auberge* et *lande*), la majorité de ces occurrences ont été traduites vers le français littéralement, par un équivalent fonctionnel standard ou bien une expression générale (par exemple *cour*, *restaurant*, *terrasse*), ce qui a entraîné une perte sémantique et éloigné le texte français du texte source ultime.

Ensuite, lorsque Pahor utilise une expression d'origine italienne (par exemple *polenta* ou *burja*), l'équivalent correspondant est évidemment employé dans *La villa sul lago* (par exemple *polenta*, *bora*). Dans la version française, l'emprunt à l'italien n'a été noté que dans le cas du mot *polenta*, *bora* étant simplifié par *le vent du nord*. L'expression *prozorna verona*, issue de l'italien *limpido verona*, n'a, curieusement, pas été traduite littéralement vers le français, mais moyennant la naturalisation et la description (*un clairot de Vérone*). Enfin, les mots d'origine latine (par exemple *portal*, *kolona*) ont littéralement été traduits vers l'italien et aussi vers le français, ce qui a produit une mauvaise traduction à cause d'un faux ami (*kolona/colonne/colonnes*), tandis que le terme géographique *dolina* a été préservé dans les deux langues (*dolina/doline*).

10 Contrairement à l'italien (*una dolina*), la désinence en français change en -e (*une doline*).

11 Au total, nous avons analysé trente-cinq occurrences.

Les stratégies utilisées dans la version française ne sont donc pas complètement identiques à celles découvertes dans la version italienne, mais elles sont très similaires. Dans la version italienne, l'équivalence fonctionnelle (28 %), culturelle (22 %) et l'emprunt (25 %) prédominent. En français, l'équivalence fonctionnelle (47 %) l'emporte sur l'omission (14 %), l'équivalence culturelle et l'emprunt (chacun 11 %).

D'après l'analyse, nous pouvons confirmer notre hypothèse que la traduction française est assez fidèle à la version italienne, son texte source, et que de nombreux mots observés de *La villa sul lago* ont été traduits littéralement vers le français. De manière générale, le texte source ultime a subi quelques omissions et de nombreuses altérations et changements au niveau lexical déjà dans la traduction italienne, et aussi dans la version française parce que Merlino ne s'est jamais référé au roman slovène.<sup>12</sup> Pourtant, la simplification des expressions observées est encore plus évidente dans *La villa sur le lac*, c'est pourquoi la traduction française est encore plus cibliste que la traduction italienne.

Dans le cas de la traduction indirecte, il est inévitable que des informations soient perdues. Par rapport aux textes étudiés, de grands écarts vis-à-vis le roman slovène ont déjà été notés dans la version italienne, c'est pourquoi des pertes n'auraient pas pu être évitées en français. En effet, souvent, « la traduction de seconde main échoue ou les erreurs de la première traduction sont reportées sur toutes les autres faites sur la base de la première » (Markič 2006, 136). Par conséquent, à moins d'un traducteur compétent pour une paire de langues concernées, la littérature devrait, idéalement, être traduite directement de la langue source ultime plutôt qu'intermédiaire. Si tel avait été le cas, la traduction française de la *Vila ob jezeru* aurait toujours été la même ?

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## ***Vila ob jezeru* Borisa Pahorja v italijanščini in njen posredni prevod v francoščino: primer kulturnospecifičnih izrazov**

Članek obravnava prevajanje kulturnospecifičnih izrazov v italijanski (*La villa sul lago*) in francoski (*La villa sur le lac*) različici Pahorjevega romana *Vila ob jezeru*. Gre za edini Pahorjev roman, ki je bil v francoščino preveden prek posrednega jezika, in sicer italijanščine. Po kratki predstavitvi dela in pojma posrednega prevajanja se članek osredotoči na strategije pri prevajanju besed in izrazov, značilnih za slovensko primorje z zaledjem, ki jih uporablja Pahor. Raziskava poskuša ugotoviti, ali je kulturna specifika besedišča, ki predstavlja resničen prevajalski izziv, ohranjena ali izgubljena ne samo v posrednem prevodu v francoščini, temveč tudi v neposrednem prevodu v italijanščini glede na tesne geografske, jezikovne in kulturne stike med Slovenijo in Italijo.

**Ključne besede:** Boris Pahor, *Vila ob jezeru*, posredni prevod, kulturnospecifični izrazi, prevodne strategije

### ***The Villa by the Lake* by Boris Pahor in Italian and Its Indirect Translation into French: The Case of the Realia**

This article examines the translation of *realia* in the Italian and French versions of the novel *Vila ob jezeru* (*La villa sul lago* and *La villa sur le lac* respectively) by Boris Pahor. *The Villa by the Lake* is so far the only novel by Pahor translated into French from an intermediate language, namely Italian. After a brief presentation of the work and the concept of indirect translation, the article focuses on the strategies of translating words or expressions typical of the Slovenian coast and hinterland that constitute Pahor's language, in order to find out whether these cultural elements, which represent a real challenge for translation, have been preserved or lost not only in the indirect translation into French but also in the direct translation into Italian, given the close geographical, linguistic and cultural contacts between Slovenia and Italy.

**Keywords:** Boris Pahor, *The Villa by the Lake*, indirect translation, *realia*, translation strategies



# Literary Translation as an Instrument of Slovenian Cultural Diplomacy with Particular Regard to Translations in German

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## Abstract

The article discusses translation policy in Slovenia as part of the country's cultural diplomacy. Translations of Slovenian literature, especially into German and English, are among the goals of the country's cultural policy, in part because of Slovenia's upcoming role as Guest of Honour at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2023. The article analyses the role of the financial support for and promotion of translations from Slovenian into foreign languages by the Slovenian Book Agency and the Trubar Foundation. The study of subsidies for translations into German, English, French, Italian, Croatian, and Hungarian shows that while the number of subsidies for translations into German and English is high, as expected, Croatian takes the leading role among the target languages studied. This underscores the importance of the still-vibrant social and political ties stemming from the historical context of Yugoslavia. In addition to the crucial role of subsidies in exporting literature from a peripheral language such as Slovenian, the translation process and the promotion of literature depend to a considerable extent on other market actors—as the interviews with three literary experts showed.

**Keywords:** literary translation, translation policy, cultural diplomacy, subsidies, Slovenian Book Agency (JAK)

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS<sup>1</sup>

This study examines the role of translation policy in the context of cultural diplomacy of the Republic of Slovenia. Countries develop their own cultural policies to exert influence abroad, including through the translation of their literature into foreign languages. The study focuses on how state, as well as non-state actors, select and regulate the export of Slovenian literature and what this can tell us about the relative degree of power of certain target languages in comparison to each other and compared to the source language. Slovenian has the role of a peripheral language in the international translation system (Heilbron 1999, 433; Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič 2019, 42). Moreover, Slovenia is classified as a small state due to its limited influence in world politics (Požgan and Bojinović Fenko 2012, 39–40). For small states, culture is the most appropriate tool to increase their international visibility in foreign policy relations (*ibid.*, 40) and to shape their own policy of prestige (Udovič 2017, 200). Although languages and translations play a crucial role in international affairs and in any form of diplomacy, research in the field of Translation Studies on cultural diplomacy is still relatively scarce (Flotow 2018, 193, 200). In Slovenia, cultural diplomacy and soft power have only been studied in the field of foreign policy and international relations (Podgornik and Udovič 2012; Bojinović Fenko 2014) as well as in connection with transculturality (Žigon, Kondrič Horvat, and Udovič 2020), while a study within Translation Studies has not yet been conducted.

The present study has three main objectives. The first objective is to define what role translation plays as a means of Slovenia's cultural diplomacy and how translation policy in relation to literature export is defined in the state's main strategic documents for culture. The second goal is to find out what the state support of the Slovenian Book Agency (JAK) and the Trubar Foundation for Slovenian literature in translation reveal about the power relations between the selected languages (German, English, French, Italian, Croatian, Hungarian). Finally, the study aims to identify the main actors (institutional and others) involved in the selection and promotion of translations (national institutions, authors, translators, editors, etc.).

## CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AND TRANSLATION

As an integral part of foreign policy and public diplomacy (Požgan and Bojinović Fenko 2012, 32), cultural diplomacy is considered an instrument that is part of soft power (Hill 2003, 135; Nye 2004). Language and translation play an important

1 The article was written in the framework of the research program P6-0265, financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (ARRS).

role in cultural diplomacy, as translation is a tool through which cultural elements of the country of origin, along with its literary and intellectual traditions, enter the target country (Flotow 2018, 197; cf. Udovič 2020). Translation initiatives can be used for political reasons and to achieve certain effects related to the image of a particular country abroad (Maack 2001; Flotow 2018, 197; Heilbron and Sapiro 2018, 185).

Cultural diplomacy can be implemented by different types of actors. On the one hand, there are state actors, e.g., foreign ministries, cultural attachés, and diplomatic and consular representations. One of the oldest forms of supporting and practising cultural diplomacy is represented by national cultural institutes such as the British Council, the Alliance Française, and the Goethe-Institut etc. (Bučar 2007, 45–50). Apart from the Slovenian Culture and Information Centre (SKI-CA) in Vienna and the Slovenian Cultural Centre Berlin, Slovenia has no other cultural centres or cultural attachés abroad, unlike other, comparable countries. Slovakia, for example, has eight cultural institutes/centres abroad (Udovič and Podgornik 2016, 126), while the Danish Cultural Institute is currently present in at least nine countries worldwide (Danish Cultural Institute 2022). Nevertheless, the implementation of cultural diplomacy is also in the hands of non-governmental organisations as well as individuals, such as artists and musicians or, in the field of translation, publishers, editors, writers, translators, etc. (Institute for Cultural Diplomacy n.d., 11).

## TRANSLATION POLICY AND TRANSLATION FLOWS

In the field of Translation Studies, the concept of translation policy has been defined and discussed by various scholars, such as Holmes (1988), Meylaerts (2011), and Gonzáles Núñez (2016). In this article, the concept of translation policy will be understood as defined by Meylaerts (2011, 163), who relates translation policy to different types of settings that include both institutional organisations and a wide range of relatively informal decisions related to ideology, strategies of translators, editors, and publishers, prizes, grants, subsidies, and translator training.

States can be recognised as the central actors in regulating translation flows and shaping translation practices, as they influence publishing and encourage or inhibit translation through subsidies or other forms of support or, on the other hand, through the imposition of restrictions and censorship (Heilbron and Sapiro 2018, 184; cf. Rude-Porubská 2010). Institutional organisations have a significant impact on the export of cultural capital<sup>2</sup>, of which translations are a crucial part, through national policies that include financial support. Subsidy systems namely

2 Here the term cultural capital is used as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (1986).

“spring from cultural policies that attempt to incorporate certain cultural goods into the national patrimony” (Heilbron and Sapiro 2007, 100). Translation policy can therefore be seen as an instrument of national cultural policy<sup>3</sup> used to promote a country abroad (cultural diplomacy).

Translation flows between language groups form the core of the analysis of the international system of translation introduced by Johan Heilbron (1999, 432). In this hierarchical but at the same time very dynamic system, language groups occupy a hyper-central, central, semi-peripheral or peripheral position. English occupies a hyper-central position since 50–70% of literary translations in the world are from English. With a share of 10–12% each in the same global system of literary translation, French and German occupy a central position, while some languages such as Italian, Spanish, Czech, Polish, Russian, etc. are classified as semi-peripheral. All other languages (including Slovenian) belong to the peripheral group; the share of literary translations from these languages in the system is less than 1% (Heilbron 2000, 14). Thus, the “availability or absence of translations from different languages in different book markets reflects existing cultural and political power relations,” which are furthermore linked to economic and symbolic capital (Hertwig 2020, 6; Sapiro 2008, 159).

## METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, first, the last three National Programmes for Culture (2008–2011, 2014–2017, 2022–2029) and the Slovenian Book Agency Strategy 2020–2024 (JAK 2019b) were examined to see if Slovenian cultural diplomacy initiatives emphasise translation as part of cultural export and as a tool to promote Slovenia’s image and culture.

Second, the subsidies for translations into selected languages (German, English, French, Italian, Croatian, Hungarian) provided by the main institutions supporting and promoting Slovenian literature abroad—the Slovenian Book Agency<sup>4</sup> and the Trubar Foundation<sup>5</sup>—were quantitatively analysed from 1991 to May 2021 to determine how the subsidies differ according to the languages chosen for translation. This period was chosen because preliminary research showed that

3 Cultural policy should be understood as a “sum of government’s activities” regarding arts, the humanities, and heritage (Mulcahy 2006, 320).

4 JAK was established in 2009 by the Slovenian government and is the main public institution supporting the production and promotion of books abroad.

5 The Trubar Foundation was established in 1992 as “a joint venture of the Slovenian Writers’ Association, Slovenian PEN, and the Centre for Slovenian Literature (supported by the Slovenian Book Agency)” (JAK 2019a, 42). Since 2020, financial support from the Trubar Foundation has been entirely under the auspices of JAK (Slovene Writers’ Association 2014).

translation activity has been most vibrant since the independence of the Republic of Slovenia. Data were collected from the official websites of the Slovenian Book Agency (JAK 2015) and the Trubar Foundation (Društvo slovenskih pisateljev 2014). The criteria for selecting the above-mentioned languages are based on Heilbron's international translation system—as outlined in the National Programme for Culture 2014–2017, central German and hyper-central English are considered the languages into which Slovenian literature should be comprehensively translated in the years of preparation for the Frankfurt Book Fair. French was chosen because of its central position in the global translation system, to draw comparison with German. It seemed reasonable to consider Italian, Croatian, and Hungarian as well, since they are official languages in Slovenia's neighbouring countries, which have close cultural and political ties to Slovenia. Moreover, Italian and Hungarian are recognised as official languages of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic minorities in Slovenia, while Slovenian is also recognised as a minority language in both countries.

These subsidies were further investigated for the case of translations into German, as the Slovenian language area is historically, culturally, and politically most closely connected to the German-speaking area (Kocijančič Pokorn 2008; Žigon 2020; Rozman, Žigon, and Mezeg, in print). Moreover, German is the second most common source and target language for literary translations to and from Slovenian (Zlatnar Moe, Strsoglavec, and Žigon 2017, 172; JAK 2019a, 24). The analysis of subsidies for translations into German in the last ten years (2011–2021) was conducted to make comparisons on two levels: a) the share of financially subsidised translations in the total number of literary translations in the same period, and b) the most represented literary genres of Slovenian literature in German translation compared to literary genres promoted by state subsidies. First, literary translations from Slovenian into German were recorded using the extensive Slovenian library information system COBISS and supplemented by other relevant bibliographies and catalogues (Vavti 2006; *Karlsruher Virtueller Katalog*). In addition to grants from JAK and the Trubar Foundation, other private or public grants were also considered if information about them was available in COBISS.

Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with three important actors in the Slovenian and German-language literary fields. Interviewee 1 is a Slovenian literary translator with more than 20 years of experience translating mainly from German and Spanish into Slovenian. He/she has translated more than 30 books. Interviewee 2 is a German writer, poet, and literary translator who translates mainly from Slovenian and English into German and has translated more than 28 books. Interviewees 1 and 2 have received numerous literary awards. Interviewee 3 specialises in the international promotion of Slovenian literature and humanities books at JAK, while Interviewees 1 and 2 also work closely with

JAK as literary experts. The questions focused mainly on the criteria for selecting Slovenian books for translation and consequently for financial support from the state, the reasons for the discrepancies between the target languages, the promotion strategies for Slovenian literature on the German-language literary market, and the main actors involved in the export and promotion of Slovenian literature.

## RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### Translation policy in the Slovenian National Programmes for Culture

The National Programme for Culture is the main strategic document of Slovenian cultural policy. In all three National Programmes, separate chapters are devoted to books and the Slovenian language. The goals include the translation of literary and humanities works by excellent Slovenian authors and their systematic promotion abroad. International cooperation between publishers is also recognised as an important goal, while special attention is given to Slovenian publishers operating in neighbouring countries and Slovenian language courses abroad, which contribute significantly to the promotion of Slovenian literary production. The impact of these measures should be visible in the increase of translations of Slovenian literature into foreign languages and their publication by renowned publishers abroad, the establishment of Slovenian authors abroad and their presence at important literary festivals.

In the National Programme 2008–2011, the number of translations into foreign languages co-financed by the Ministry of Culture is more precisely defined and amounts to at least 30 translations per year. While the National Programme 2008–2011 and the National Programme 2022–2029 do not refer to the specific target languages of translations, the National Programme 2014–2017 specifies that the main target language for translation of Slovenian literature should be German. This can be partly attributed to Slovenia's role as the Guest of Honour at the world's largest book fair in Frankfurt in 2023. The decision of the Slovenian government on the country's candidacy was implemented in 2014, while the contract between the Republic of Slovenia and the Frankfurt Book Fair was signed in 2018. Preparations for the Frankfurt Book Fair are mainly led by JAK. The National Programme 2014–2017 and the Slovenian Book Agency Strategy 2020–2024 show that German is perceived as a language through which Slovenian literature and culture can gain wider international recognition. In addition to German, English is also mentioned as a target language in the preparations for Frankfurt, most likely due to its hyper-central position in the global translation

system. Therefore, the goal formulated in the National Programme 2014–2017 is to increase the number of Slovenian books translated into German and English by 30% per year. The current National Programme 2022–2029, while less specific about target languages, implicitly emphasises the importance of translations of Slovenian literature into German when it mentions Slovenia's crucial role as Guest of Honour at Frankfurt 2023.

## **Subsidies for translations from Slovenian into foreign languages**

The results show that especially German, but also English, received an increasing number of subsidies from JAK in 2011–2021 compared to previous years (Figs. 1, 2, and 3), which can be explained by the preparations for Frankfurt. One of the requirements for the role of Guest of Honour is the publication of 100–150 translations into German in the last five years (Interviewees 1 and 2). Therefore, JAK has offered additional financial support for translations into German, which, in addition to translations, partially covers printing costs, promotion, and literary events. This offer is very popular among German publishers, who would otherwise probably not have chosen Slovenian authors to the same extent (Interviewee 1).

Another interesting fact is that the language with the highest number of subsidies from the Trubar Foundation and cumulatively (Fig. 3) is Croatian, with a total of 165 subsidies over 30 years. According to Interviewee 1, 70% of the requests for co-financing of translations at JAK are for the languages of the former Yugoslavia (e.g., Croatian, Bosnian, Serbian, Macedonian), a country to which Slovenia belonged from the end of the First World War until its independence in 1991. This trend shows that the links between the literary field of Slovenia and that of the other countries of the former Yugoslavia are still very strong due to the common socio-political and historical context (Interviewees 1 and 3). As the same interviewees point out, the presence of Slovenian literature on the Croatian literary market is definitely very important, as Croatian is still a language with more speakers than Slovenian. However, all interviewees emphasised that a book translated into Croatian probably has a lower chance of being translated into many other languages, while an excellent translation into German, English, or French is also an opportunity for Slovenian literature to enter other markets.

Considering the central role of French in the global system of literary translation, it is surprising that the number of subsidies for translations into French is so small. The same concern was expressed by Interviewee 1, who admitted that some partners at JAK would like to see more translations into French or Spanish, and that they had organised special initiatives for translations into French in previous years, but these had met with little interest. Interviewee 3 confirmed that it is very

difficult to enter the French market and that only the most prominent authors have managed to do so, e.g., Vladimir Bartol, Boris Pahor or Drago Jančar (cf. Mezeg 2020; Mezeg and Grego 2022).

Both semi-peripheral Italian and peripheral Hungarian have received more subsidies overall than French (Italian almost twice as many as Hungarian), which could be explained by their geographical, cultural, and social proximity to Slovenia. The relatively high number of subsidies for translations into Italian could also be due to the preparations for Slovenia's role as Guest of Honour at the 2024 Bologna Children's Book Fair. However, this hypothesis would need to be explored as part of a more detailed analysis of all literary translations into Italian, not just those that are subsidised. As confided by Interviewees 1 and 3, the applications for public tenders for financial support largely reflect the field of publishing and the interest of foreign markets in Slovenian literature. The different shares of subsidies between languages could indicate actual translation flows between the selected languages, but this hypothesis would need to be tested using data on the actual number of translations from Slovenian into each language, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

Figure 1. *Subsidies from the Trubar Foundation (1991–2021).*

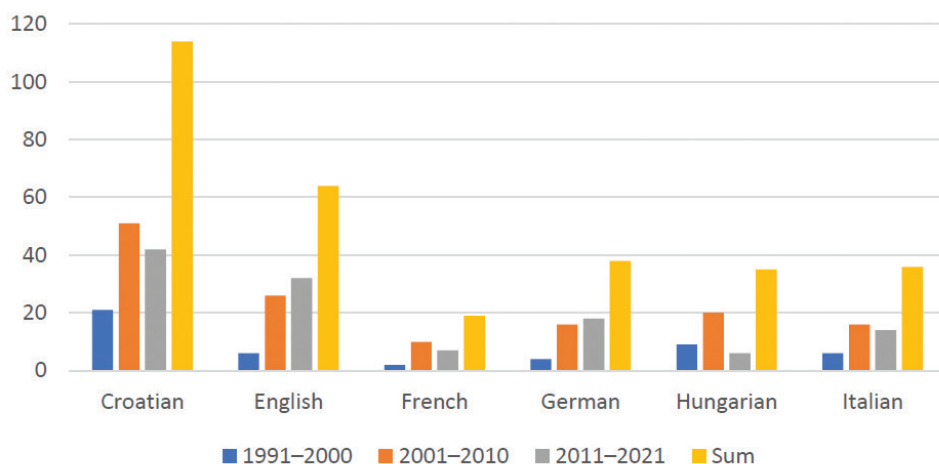
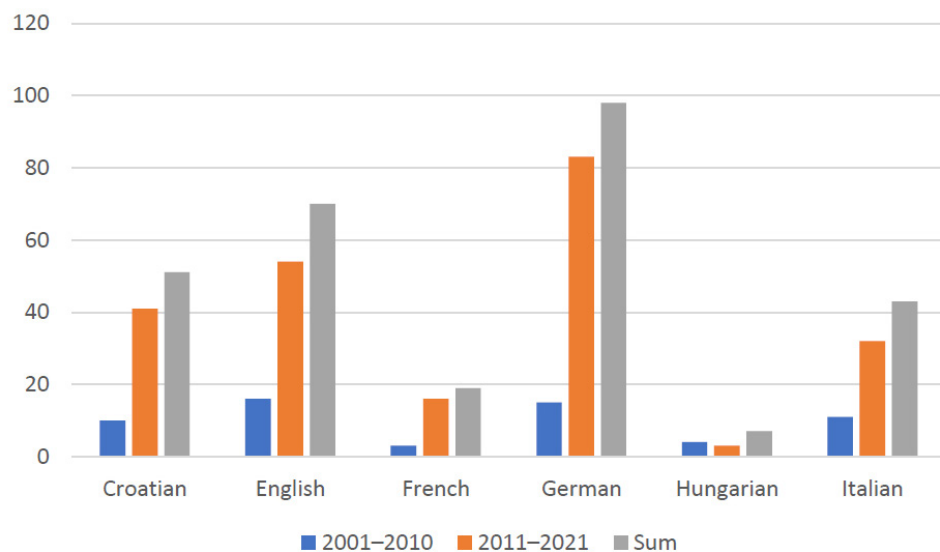
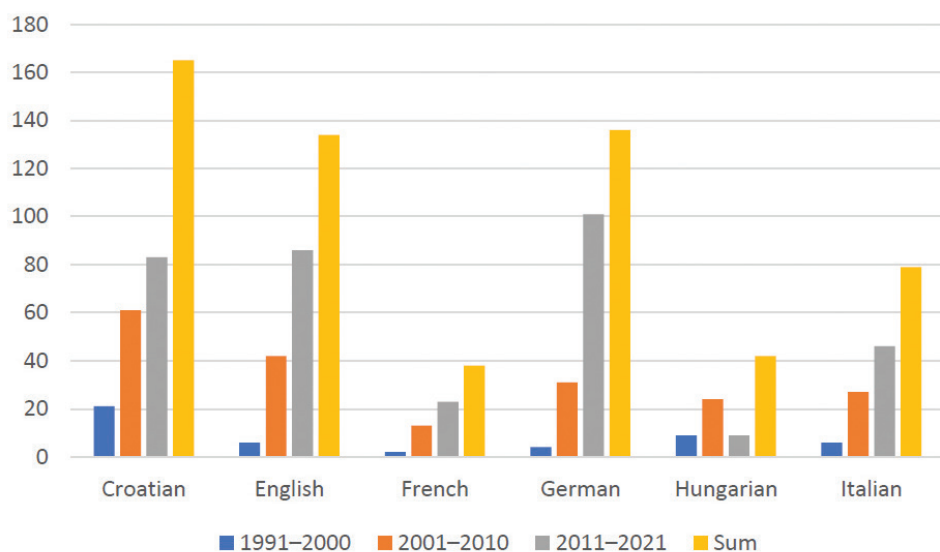
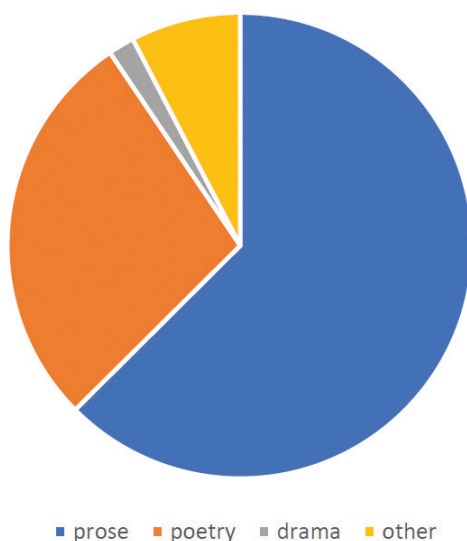


Figure 2. *Subsidies from JAK (2009–2021).*Figure 3. *Subsidies from the Trubar Foundation and JAK (1991–2021).*

## Literary translations from Slovenian into German (2011–2021)

Below (Fig. 4) is an overview of literary translations from Slovenian into German from 2011 to May 2021. The translations have been categorised according to literary genre (prose, poetry, and drama) and the category “other,” which includes mainly anthologies of mixed literary genres.

Figure 4. Translations of Slovenian literature into German (2011–2021).



As can be observed, the predominant literary genre exported to German in the years studied is prose, with 172 works or 62.5% of the total literature translated. Poetry ranks second among the genres with 77 works (28%), while the number of translations of plays is the lowest (five). The predominant role of prose works can be explained by the expectations and requirements of the target literary field. According to all three interviewees, German and other international publishers are strongly interested in novels, while this genre is not one of the strongest assets of the Slovenian literary scene. According to Interviewees 1 and 2, the problem with Slovenian prose is that the role of the editor is underdeveloped. In Slovenia, books are written faster than in Germany and authors are less open to changes in the content of the book. Poetry, on the other hand, is perceived as the strongest part of Slovenian literature. However, poetry is not very popular with publishers, as it is read much less than prose and therefore sells less. The

most convenient way to promote poetry is often to publish it in anthologies (Interviewees 2 and 3).

## **Subsidies for translations from Slovenian into German**

Among the studied Slovenian literature in German translation in the period 2011–2021, a total of 73 works were found that received subsidies, i.e., 26.5% of the total Slovenian literature translated into German in the observed period. It is important to emphasise that this figure does not match the total number of subsidies for this period by JAK and the Trubar Foundation presented in the section Subsidies for translations from Slovenian into foreign languages (pp. 329–331), as that analysis also included non-literary works and may have included books that had already received financial support but had not yet been published by May 2021.

Of the 73 co-funded books, most (48) were supported by JAK, nine were supported by the Trubar Foundation, and seven books were supported jointly by both. The remaining nine books were published with the help of various funders, such as the Slovenian Government Office for Slovenians Abroad, the Austrian Ministry of the Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport, the Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, and other cultural departments in various Austrian provinces (e.g., Carinthia, Styria) or cities (e.g., Vienna, Klagenfurt), etc. This shows that government agencies other than JAK also consider literature as an important element of promoting the country abroad.

The analysis has also shown that the literary genre that has received the most subsidies is prose (57 books), followed by poetry (13 books), drama (two books) and “other,” which includes works from different literary genres (one book). The distribution of subsidies by literary genre corresponds to the general distribution of literary genres in German translations (cf. Section 5.3), i.e., prose works received the most subsidies, followed by poetry, drama, and “other.”

## **The role of the main actors in the selection and promotion of translations**

Until the establishment of JAK in 2009, the promotion of Slovenian literature abroad depended heavily on non-state actors, such as authors, translators, etc. (Blatnik 1995, 7). Even today, some authors are very active and successful in independently finding publishers abroad and promoting themselves (Interviewee 1). However, most authors depend to a large extent on their translators, who play the role of literary agents, a profession that has never really developed in Slovenia (Interviewees 1 and 3; cf. Maček 2018). Moreover, translators are trusted not only

because of their extensive knowledge of the current literary scene and the publisher's catalogue, but also because their advice is considered less influenced by the economic constraints faced by the agents or publishers of the originals (Društvo slovenskih književnih prevajalcev 2021).

As for the German-speaking market, many deals and recommendations for translations are based on the trust and cooperation of actors who have already worked together and trust each other's opinions, as all three interviewees confirm. Therefore, when selecting Slovenian books for translation and publication, German publishers often turn to experts in the Slovenian literary field who have already proven themselves to be professional and consistent in terms of quality, such as successful writers, translators, employees of JAK, or independent literary critics. In recent years, JAK has increased the number of professional trainings for publishers and agents, as well as the number of meetings with German agents and publishers. Several Slovenian publishers, such as *Mladinska knjiga*, *Cankarjeva založba*, and *Goga*, have begun to assign special staff to sell translation rights abroad, and this area is developing more and more (Interviewee 1).

A preliminary analysis of publishers of translations into German (1991–2021) shows that most books are published by the Carinthian bilingual publishers *Draava*, *Mohorjeva družba*, and *Wieser Verlag*, which play an important role in introducing Slovenian literature to the German-speaking world (cf. Köstler and Leben 2014, 213). However, Interviewee 2 suggested that the promotion of Slovenian literature abroad could be more successful if the strategy focused on larger publishers in German-speaking countries that could reach a wider audience.

As for the criteria for co-funding translations, the interviewees pointed out that authors' success in Slovenia and abroad, literary prizes, or previous publications with the same publisher can bring additional points. The main criterion is, however, the quality of Slovenian authors, translators, and publishers, who also take care of distribution and organisation of events. However, quality alone does not guarantee the success of a particular book abroad. The book should be published in the right context, promoted consistently, and direct contact and discussion with the public should be established (Interviewee 2).

## CONCLUSION

Translation in the sense of exporting literature by Slovenian authors is included in Slovenia's main strategic documents on cultural policy, which means that the promotion of Slovenian authors and books should also be considered part of the country's cultural diplomacy. JAK has proven to be one of the most important state actors controlling the selection and promotion of Slovenian literature

abroad, as subsidies attract foreign publishers. In addition, over the years, individual experts in Slovenian publishing have established their own connections with foreign publishers and act as market actors promoting Slovenian literature abroad. Some authors, but especially translators, are also recognised as intermediaries who propose literature for translation, while publishers are often involved in promotional strategies. This preliminary study of translation flows based on subsidies shows how other factors, such as geographic proximity and historical, political, and cultural ties, may influence Heilbron's theory of translation flows. In the future, a more comprehensive comparative analysis of translation flows from peripheral Slovenian into other more central languages could reveal other important factors influencing translation activity. Furthermore, more interviews could be conducted to better understand the role of state and market actors.

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## **Književno prevajanje kot sredstvo slovenske kulturne diplomacije s posebnim ozirom na prevajanje v nemščino**

Članek obravnava prevodno politiko v Sloveniji kot del slovenske kulturne diplomacije. Prevajanje slovenske književnosti, predvsem v nemščino in angleščino, je med cilji kulturne politike države, med drugim tudi zaradi vloge Slovenije kot častne gostje na mednarodnem knjižnem sejmu v Frankfurtu leta 2023. Pričujoči članek analizira vlogo finančne podpore za nastanek in promocijo prevodov iz slovenščine v tuje jezike, ki jo nudita Javna agencija za knjigo Republike Slovenije in Trubarjev sklad. Študija subvencij za prevode v nemščino, angleščino, francoščino, italijanščino, hrvaščino in madžarščino je pokazala, da medtem ko je število subvencij za prevode v nemščino in angleščino pričakovano visoko, vodilno mesto med proučevanimi ciljnim jeziki zavzema hrvaščina. To poudarja pomen še vedno tesnih družbenih in političnih vezi, ki izhajajo iz zgodovinskega konteksta Jugoslavije. Intervjuji s tremi literarnimi strokovnjaki so pokazali, da sta poleg odločilne vloge subvencij pri prevajanju književnosti iz perifernega jezika, kot je slovenščina, prevajalski proces in promocija književnosti v veliki meri odvisna tudi od drugih tržnih akterjev.

**Ključne besede:** književno prevajanje, prevodna politika, kulturna diplomacija, subvencije, Javna agencija za knjigo Republike Slovenije (JAK)

