Cultural Intertexts

Year 2
Volume 3/ 2015

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

* The contributors are solely responsible for the scientific accuracy of their articles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Editor's Note

The present volume of the Cultural Intertexts series includes articles by specialists from partner universities, doctoral schools and academic research centres, as well as a selection of papers presented at the third edition of the Scientific Conference organised by the Doctoral Schools of "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati (4-5 June 2015), section 6: "Cultural Spaces: Retrospective and Prospective Views". Two book reviews are added to round up the collection.

Its publishing was made possible by the sustained efforts of the editorial team of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, and benefitted from the financial support provided by the SOPHRD/159/1.5/S/138963 Project, "Sustainable Performance in Doctoral and Postdoctoral Research" (PERFORM).

We are especially grateful to the scientific advisors for their valuable contribution to the volume, for their suggestions and commentaries on the coherence, consistency, relevance and originality of the papers they kindly accepted to review.

Michaela Praisler

Shakespeare, the Musical and Political Humour
in *Kiss Me, Kate* Revived

Gabriela Iuliana COLIPCĂ-CIOBANU[*]

Abstract:

The present study focuses on Michael Blakemore's turn-of-the-millennium revival for Broadway and the London stage of the 1948 musical comedy Kiss Me, Kate *by Cole Porter (music and lyrics) and Bella and Samuel Spewack (book). The metatheatrical structure of Blakemore's revival of this famous adaptation of Shakespeare's* Taming of the Shrew *impresses, among other things, by the multiplication of intertextual links as it projects Porter and the Spewacks' as well as Shakespeare's 'battles of the sexes' against the realistically 'painted' background of a world populated by actors, gangsters and, as an element of novelty, politically-involved US army representatives. Thus, Blakemore's directorial perspective on the text(s) in performance turns out to be thought-provoking, drawing the present-day audience's attention to a wider range of gender, culture and power-related forms of conflict, and making excellent use of subversive humour, the mechanisms of which this study will explore, to subtly comment on history-shaping political 'games'.*

Keywords: adaptation, intertextuality, performance, humour, gender, politics

Introduction

Though often evaluated in negative terms as a second-rate, inferior cultural practice, adaptation is one of the basic manifestations of intertextual dialogue and a more or less controversial mechanism of creation within and/or across artistic genres and media. Interpreted from a prejudiced perspective as "minor and subsidiary and certainly never as good as the 'original'" (Hutcheon 2006: xii), adaptation – the product and/or the process – may yet reveal, on closer scrutiny, a very interesting and challenging object of study which requires, for a fair assessment,

> [an] exploration of what can happen when stories "travel" – when an adapted text migrates from its context of creation to the adaptation's context of reception. Because adaptation is a form of repetition without replication, change is inevitable, even without any conscious updating or alteration of setting. And with change come corresponding modifications in the political valence and even the meaning of stories (Hutcheon 2006: xvi).

---

[*]Associate professor, PhD. "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania
gabriela.colipca@ugal.ro

Adaptations of William Shakespeare's plays have not been an exception from this general principle. Plays, operas, ballet performances, paintings, children's fairytales or films which adapted and updated Shakespeare's texts in different media for different audiences in different cultural contexts have systematically 're-mediated' the meanings of the Bard's heritage in the larger context of culture dynamics. The musical comedy *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* by Cole Porter (music and lyrics) and Bella and Samuel Spewack (book), is a relevant case in point. It provides fruitful ground for the discussion of the art of adaptation, of the intertextuality or rather transtextuality that characterises it (Genette 1997), as well as of the changes that the Shakespearean hypotext undergoes when recycled, elaborated upon or extended in new directions in hypertexts that simultaneously foreground issues of interest for the context of reception. With its wonderful mélange of sparklingly witty dialogues, various music styles, songs and dancing, *Kiss Me, Kate* has the merit of updating the Shakespearean representation of the battle of the sexes while adapting it to the tastes of the mid-twentieth-century lowbrow American audiences. The metatheatrical framework in which a performance of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* is skilfully embedded is used as a pretext to cast new light on gender relations, with a focus on women's "dilemma of marriage versus career" (Dash, 2010: 49), while their re-contextualization in a world of actors, gangsters and politicians serves both to project a much expected illusion of reality and to make a political stand (more subtly when it comes to racial emancipation[1], more overtly with regard to power games at the top of the American society[2]). It is precisely on the political dimension illustrative, at the same time, of gender policies and of the race for power that opposed the Democratic Party to the Republicans on the year of one of the greatest upsets in American political history that the turn-of-the-millennium revival of the musical for Broadway and for the London stage focuses upon. Michael Blakemore's staging of *Kiss Me, Kate* (filmed for television and released on DVD in 2003) boldly adds, through its performing style and slight modification of the original script, prominent polemical touches to the representation of political competition in the 1948 musical. Its critical look at American political life provides the researcher interested in the study of the mechanisms of political humour a wealth of examples in which the skilful play upon the public and the private contributes to enriching the original (Shakespearean) investigation of the clash between appearances and reality. Thus, setting the discussion of the revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* against the larger background of Shakespearean adaptations for the musical theatre stage, the present study aims at exploring, through close analysis, the intertwining of gender differences and political 'games' in dialogue instances that carry a significant political dimension. It hopes, hence, to reveal how the comic strategies of the play gain in complexity in the process of re-interpretation to the point that the political, initially a rather marginal aspect, emerges as a central source of humour, next to the gender

conflicts that dominate the offstage/onstage (i.e., framework/ Shakespeare-based play-within-the-play) dynamic.

Shakespeare and the Musical

Many present-day studies on Shakespearean texts in performance regard the process of proliferation of Shakespeare-based productions, which has eventually brought about the globalisation of the Bard's cultural influence, as essentially resulting from two paradigmatic shifts. One of them is related to the "dramatic changes in the organization of production and social relations" (Burnett 2006: 133) that implicitly favoured the development of cultural divisions and the competition between highbrow and lowbrow cultural practices. The other concerns translation, understood as cross-linguistic and cross-cultural transfer of meaning, but also, to use Jakobson's terms (1959), as intersemiotic transposition, which particularly gained ground over the last century with the rise of film industry.

From this perspective, the early decades of the twentieth century represented, for the American cultural space, a turning point that, according to Lawrence Levine, Shakespearean drama in performance was a relevant symptom of. Throughout the early part of the nineteenth century, "Shakespeare *was* popular entertainment (…) presented [to the American theatregoers] as part of the same milieu inhabited by magicians, dancers, singers, acrobats, minstrels, and comics" (Levine 1990: 21, 23). Yet, during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, the gradual emergence of a more rigid cultural hierarchy caused Shakespeare to be regarded "as an elite, classic dramatist, to whose plays the bulk of the populace [did] not or [could] not relate" (Levine 1990: 34), since they reacted only to "unsophisticated" action and oratory, and could not fully appreciate 'sophisticated' dramatic and poetic artistry, which, therefore, appealed only to the "small refined element" (Levine 1990: 34-5). About the same time, the newly-rising art of cinema, which instantly turned to Shakespeare for inspiration[3], posed a serious challenge to the stage. What contributed to maintaining live theatrical performance in competition with the increasingly popular film industry and to fighting back the impending crisis of the theatre, intrinsically related to the general opinion that this institution had grown too elitist for the masses to get access to it or to understand it, was the successful re-fashioning of live musical theatre. Combining popular music styles and songs, dancing and dialogue in more and more carefully thought-out plots, musical plays became the 'living proof' that theatre, owing to its diversity of practices, could appeal to different levels of response and could be re-integrated in the lowbrow, popular culture with which it seemed to have lost its connection. Under the circumstances, American mass audiences were invited to re-discover Shakespeare in musicals which 're-loaded' his plays in innovative ways.

Like some of the films which they competed against, several 'Golden Age' Broadway musicals (produced between the 1920s and the 1960s[4]) resorted to

Shakespeare for inspiration. Thus, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Romeo and Juliet* got back in the top of lowbrow American theatregoers' preferences re-shaped as *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938), *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) and *West Side Story* (1957). However, by the late 1960s, it had already become obvious that cinema had won the race against live musical theatre in many respects and, in particular, in re-embedding Shakespeare in the popular culture.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, the interest in Shakespeare as a cultural icon and in his cultural capital seemed to drop in both rivalling performance arts, i.e., musical theatre and cinema (though it did not entirely die out[5]). Yet, if, after this pause, it seemed inevitable that "Shakespeare should gravitate again to Hollywood, and vice versa" (Burnett 2007: 3), hence the rising tide of Hollywood/ Hollywood-inspired turn-of-the-millennium productions aimed at capturing Shakespeare on film, in the world of the American musical theatre, which started suffering from the anxiety of recession, there was no return to Shakespeare. Production costs for glamorous productions on Broadway increased, style began to prevail over substance and audiences shrank. Musical producers and directors either turned to film for inspiration or came to "depend more on [Broadway's] past glories" (Everett and Laird 2008: xl)[6]. Therefore, some of the above mentioned Shakespearean adaptations were revived in an attempt at keeping alive the memory of the 'good days' of the musical as an iconic form of entertainment in the American popular culture. By far the most successful, the only Tony Award Winner for the Best Revival (in 2000), was Michael Blakemore's revival of Porter and the Spewacks' *Kiss Me, Kate*. Throughout two impressively long series of successful performances – first on Broadway (Martin Beck Theatre 1999-2001) and then, across the Atlantic Ocean, at West End (Victoria Palace Theatre – 2001-2002) – it managed to bring musical and Shakespeare lovers back into the auditoria. Moreover, its broadcasting on television (*PBS – Great Performances*) and its release on DVD (2003) served not only strictly consumerist purposes, but also encouraged the reconsideration of "Shakespeare as a performative property" (Burnett 2007: 9) as well as that of the cultural heritage of the musical theatre tradition, in the larger context of the constantly re-negotiated relationship between the local and the global, high and low culture, mass-media technologies and live theatrical performance.

Kiss Me, Kate: A Case Study

With an impressive record of 1,077 performances over the nineteen months that followed its premiere on Broadway in December 1948, *Kiss Me, Kate* confirmed Cole Porter as one of the leaders of a Golden Age of the musical and marked his triumph in the competition with other great names of the moment, like Rodgers and Hammerstein (*Oklahoma!*, 1943). Its "tuneful, varied score, wonderful book, and lively dances" made it "one of the best integrated musical plays of the period" (Everett and Laird 2008: 175). Taking their inspiration from Shakespeare and the contemporary world of the theatre[7], the

book writers Bella and Sam Spewack created lively, realistic characters, while Porter's outstanding skill in combining "the vaudeville, jazz, operatic lyricism, and comic patter" provided the perfect binding for the two parallel worlds which were thus united in "a tumult of theatrical invention and irresistible, energetic fizz" (Coveney 2003), appreciated by theatregoers and, after 1953, by cinemagoers as well[8].

Most likely, audiences and critics reacted, first of all, to the foregrounded story of old and new love relationships in the world of entertainment. Their 'stars' are: the vain self-complacent actor and musical director Fred Graham; the 'shrewish' film and musical actress, Fred's ex-wife Lilli Vanessi; the promising, yet gambling-addicted actor Bill Calhoun; and the sexy, though not very talented starlet Lois Lane. The love triangles they get entangled in comically overlap: Fred flirts with Lois, while he is secretly still in love with Lilli; Lilli brags about her influential fiancé Harrison Howell to make Fred jealous; and Lois flirts shamelessly with Fred because she hopes he will help her become a star, but she is romantically interested in Bill. Misunderstandings and funny coincidences further contribute to complicating this level of the plot: Lilli believes the bouquet she receives from Fred is a proof of his still having feelings for her, but she discovers in the middle of the show that it was actually meant for Lois; Fred is threatened by a pair of gangsters who come to collect a gambling debt, an IOU actually signed in his name by Bill Calhoun, and decides to use them to prevent Lilli from leaving him and the show. All these unmistakably stir laughter while inviting a more serious meditation on gender roles and other issues of interest in the American society of the 1940s. Thus, the appeal of the show must have been enhanced by an already increasing curiosity of the public at large about the private lives of VIPs, including actors and politicians, while the introduction of gangsters as characters must have added to its illusion of reality at a time when underground economy flourished, with organised crime syndicates expanding their operations and transforming 'sinful pleasures' like gambling into their illegal monopoly (Barker and Britz 2000: 29-40).

However, it seems that both audiences and critics tended to disregard the fact that this musical in which the battle of the sexes is skilfully knit into an intricate pattern of power 'struggles' goes far beyond the mere exploitation of tempestuous relationships which eventually come to a happy end. The choice of a double-layered structure with a play-within-a-play embedded in a more general frame, that parallels that of *The Taming of the Shrew*, and the adaptation of the Shakespearean original in a musical version reminiscent of the once popular performances animated by actors, dancers and singers, are indicative of the dialogue that *Kiss Me, Kate* engages with the Shakespearean hypotext in an attempt at addressing "a preoccupation with a distant and unmanageable Bard" and at deconstructing the myth of his "works' impenetrability" (Burnett 2007: 12). *Kiss Me, Kate* is at once meant to remind the American audiences that

"Shakespeare was not a highbrow" (Dover Wilson qtd. in Leavis 2006: 17) and, as such, should be re-integrated into the lowbrow American culture, as well as to draw attention to the theatre as an art form. Thus, the curtain rises to reveal an entire world of directors and stage managers, leading and supporting actors, dancers and singers who daily participate in a collaborative effort meant to ensure the success of the live theatrical performance on stage[9].

When the musical was revived at the turn of the millennium, in a context in which the crisis of the theatre worsened to the point that "the place of the stage has been compromised, with plays and players, in Baz Kershaw's formulation, having become a 'marginal commodity in the capitalist… marketplace'" (Burnett 2007: 9), *Kiss Me, Kate* was regarded as a cultural product to be re-examined, the expression of a past that could be used to make sense of the present. Though he remained largely faithful to Porter and the Spewacks' original, making rather minor script changes and musical insertions, Michael Blakemore approached the play from the perspective of the adapter who hoped to cast new light on a former musical blockbuster while addressing issues relevant to the postmodern audiences. The 'old' rivalry between cultural phenomena in which Shakespeare's and the musical's heritage seems to have remained trapped, as well as gender relations evolving out of the clash of patriarchy and feminine emancipation, still provide the core thematic pillars of this revival. But the director's choice of transforming the character of Harrison Howell into an army general with political ambitions favours a shift in its topicality, allowing him to simultaneously re-visit one of the most controversial moments in American political history, the 1948 presidential elections, and scrutinise, through the comic lens, the ethics–politics connection which lies at the heart of present-day political debates as well.

Political Humour in *Kiss Me, Kate* Revived

Throughout the introductory part of Act I (scenes 1 and 2 in the revised script, henceforth cited as KIR – Prompt Book 2000), stress seems to be mostly laid on the battle of the sexes and the world of the theatre. However, the first encounter in private between the Shakespearean performance protagonists and former spouses Lilli Vanessi and Fred Graham (Act I, scene 3 – KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 18-29) reveals, besides the existence of love triangles that both Lilli and Fred can hardly cope with, subtle connections between the world of public entertainment (theatre/cinema) and the political circles of the time. Relying initially on the visual humour stirred by the two actors' 'war' of noises made by things flung down on the table (which Lilli loses to her disappointment), the resumed argument over Lilli insulting Fred in front of the whole cast causes the latter to eventually cross the boundary between their private spaces and attack the former on her own territory. Though Lilli desperately tries not to pay attention to Fred and continues to nervously powder her face, Fred makes his first 'stingy' move when he ironically raises a very sensitive issue for

Lilli's career, namely her moderate success as a Hollywood actress: "So much for a Hollywood name. Your fans must have heard you were appearing in person" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 19/ 0:16:25-30). Uttered from a position of superiority, made visually obvious by his standing whereas Lilli sits on a chair, Fred's sarcastic remark could be interpreted as illustrative for two aspects that lie at the heart of *Kiss Me, Kate*: gender relations and the theatre/cinema competition. Thus, Fred simultaneously voices his sense of superiority as a man and a live performance actor (while very conveniently casting all the blame for a potential failure of the current performance on Lilli). His tendentious, cynical statements may, to some extent, be indicative of his envying Lilli for her Hollywood career. (Blakemore takes care to stress that out by having one of the walls in Lilli's dressing room dominated by the poster of *The Winged Lady* in which she starred together with Robert Newton.) On the other hand, they could also point to his belief in the theatre as a 'school' for really talented actors. As a matter of fact, Fred praises several times in the play the ephemeral and sometimes not very profitable theatrical performance over Hollywood film, since acting live on the stage implies not only a demonstration of artistic skills, but also requires spontaneity and the ability to improvise on which the success of a show may occasionally depend. And he proves indeed a well-accomplished and versatile performer who most ingeniously manages to save face in front of the audiences under different circumstances. (e.g. when the too temperamental Lilli, deeply hurt by the discovery that the bouquet was not addressed to her but to her younger rival Lois, can no longer refrain and bursts out in rage on the stage; or, when, in his desperate attempts at preventing Lilli from leaving the show, Fred plays the 'master puppeteer' and manipulates both the two gangsters disguised as pages and his 'shrewish' ex-wife, without ruining the performance.)

As the phone starts ringing, Fred challenges Lilli with the same condescending (and, at the same time, jealous) attitude to pick up the receiver. She eventually says hello in an angry voice only to immediately adopt a considerably honeyed tone, when she discovers that the interlocutor is her fiancé. It is this conversation over the phone with Lilli's "mysterious new admirer" that suddenly shakes Fred out of his aggressively humorous mood and first signals the connections, to be further developed in the play, with the world of highly influential politicians:

> *Lilli* (*into the phone*): Hello! Hello darling! I thought you'd be here by now. Oh you're still at the White House? (Upon hearing the last words, Fred freezes for a moment.)[10] He is? He's taking your advice? Well, of course. Who doesn't? What? The President wants to talk to me? To unimportant, little me - but what'll I say? Good evening, Mr. President!
> *Fred takes the phone from Lilli and speaks into it.*
> *Fred*: Is it true you've declared Baltimore a disaster area?[11]

> *Lilli* (*pulling the phone away*): Damn you! (She laughs nervously, while desperately trying to save face.) Mr. President! I apologise. Can you come to see my performance in Baltimore? Oh – security?
> *Fred* (shouting from his chair where he had been skimming through a magazine): You'll be perfectly safe. Miss Vanessi keeps the theatre empty.
> *Lilli* (looking at Fred in anger and trying again to save face): Ha, ha, ha! That was no one, Mr. President. Just an actor. Not a real man like you. Like him. He is wonderful, isn't he? (The President probably passes the receiver back to her fiancé.) Hello dearest! The President just said how wonderful you were. I miss you so much… I know you have no time to see my little performance in my little show, but when will I see you? You have big news? It's top secret? I can't wait… (pausing and getting serious) Yes, darling… no, darling. Yes, darling. No, no. Yes, love. I love you. I'm blowing you two kisses: mwa, mwa. (laughing) Yes, darling. I adore you…. (*She hangs up*.)
> *Fred*: I adore you. Who are you seeing? God? (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 19/ 0:16:40-0:18:08)

Fred's confidence in his superiority over Lilli is suddenly shaken by his hearing about his rival's connections at the White House. No hints are provided at this point regarding the identity of Lilli's fiancé, but his 'intimacy' with the president, who asks for his advice in state affairs and to whom he introduces his bride-to-be, suggests that he is an influential government official. Lilli's 'little performance' on the phone shows her, on the one hand, trying to comply with her position in the patriarchal system as an obedient wife-to-be, whose activities must be confined, provided her fiancé allows it, to the artistic environment, if not, to the domestic sphere. Her (alleged) conversation with the President is therefore reduced to small talk as Lilli is denied access to 'top-secret' state affairs. On the other hand, she puts on the exaggeratedly happy mask of the loving bride-to-be, who misses her fiancé and who is very proud of him, to make Fred jealous. Hence, instances of self-deprecating humour, like "The President wants to talk to me? To unimportant, little me –", acquire in the context of the performance quite opposite connotations. The same adjective, 'little', is later repeated in two noun-phrases ("my little performance in my little show") by means of which Lilli describes her current preoccupation, in which one can detect the same double-edged intention: she deliberately abases herself to satisfy the ego of her 'macho' fiancé and uses repetition as an instrument of persuasion, while, at the same time, stressing out for Fred, that this is *her* show, *she* is the real star, so, she is *not little* at all. The aggressive humorous attack, through which she vents her anger on Fred and which helps her face the unpleasant situation he created, without becoming overwhelmed by it, seems to function as a defence mechanism (Martin 1998: 19; Popa 2005: 81) and goes as far as questioning Fred's masculinity, when she remarks addressing the President: "That was no one, Mr. President. Just an actor. Not a real man like you. Like him." Here,

implicitly, political power and public notoriety are the features that define the ideal of masculinity, not the artistic talent.

Despite the fact that Lilli does most of the talking throughout this part of the scene, Fred's short interventions, which make up a bridge, in a broader sense of the term (Attardo 2001: 88), sustain much of its humour. Perhaps, partly not entirely convinced that Lilli is talking to the president himself, partly acting out of a natural inclination to disrespect for the authority, Fred addresses to the President the question: "Is it true you've declared Baltimore a disaster area?" The intensity of the statement's incongruity can be perceived only if the spectators take into account the larger context of the scene: since Fred systematically mocks at Lilli's talent as an actress, he anticipates that the performance might be a 'disaster' because of her. As a matter of fact, the audience might understand better the extent to which Fred exaggerates in envisaging the 'disaster' if they were familiar with the history of Baltimore City, to be more specific, with the Great Baltimore Fire which destroyed thousands of buildings during the first decade of the century (1904) and caused most of the city to be rebuilt (Rodgers 2005: 80-93). That Lilli does understand Fred's use of intertextual humour (Attardo 2001: 87) is proven by her angry response – she curses while pulling the phone away – and by her resorting to rather forced laughter to cover up her outburst of negative emotion. She will do the same when Fred puts her, a second time, in a difficult situation by his ironic comments ("You'll be perfectly safe. Miss Vanessi keeps the theatre empty."), which the President can hear over the phone and in which he mocks again at her talent and popularity as an actress.

Ultimately, in response to her attack on his masculinity which, she implies, must be defined by the features [+POWER], [+INFLUENCE], [+CONTROL], Fred resorts to an intentional pun (Simpson 2003: 17-29), drawing on the secular and religious meanings of the verb 'to adore', i.e., to love somebody very much and to worship the divinity. Thus, he proves to have understood her ambiguous reference to what makes a 'real man', and he preserves the semantic features [+POWER], [+INFLUENCE] and [+CONTROL] but chooses to go for a hyperbolic exaggeration of the target of Lilli's affection to pay her back for the prior insult.

Hattie's arrival with a bunch of roses for Lilli causes Fred to leave Lilli's dressing room in a hurry because he is allergic to roses. Lilli's irony-charged reaction – "Hattie, take these roses to Miss Lane's dressing room with my compliments." (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 19/0:18:13-17) – tells a lot about the reasons behind her hostility towards Fred and reinforces the idea that, in fact, both Lilli and Fred are caught between old and new loves.

Finally, engaging in witty repartee in a way that somewhat reminds of Katherina and Petruchio's exchanges in the Shakespearean hypotext, Lilli and Fred temporarily conclude their 'battle' before they start remembering their happy days as a couple and end up discovering they still have feelings for each other:

(Lilli ostentatiously flashes her ring to make sure Fred notices it.)
Fred: I see it! I see it! Is it real?
Lilli: Oh, it's real.
Fred: Is that the Hope Diamond? The one with the curse?
Lilli: It was his mother's engagement ring. And now it's mine.
Fred: His mother must have worn it on her big toe. Who is he? The Aga Khan?
Lilli: No. But he is a jewel. Dear sweet man. He's very big.
Fred: Fat?
Lilli: Historically big.
Fred: George Washington?
Lilli: Does the phrase "Second World War" mean anything to you?
Fred: You're dating Adolf Hitler? A match made in heaven. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 19-20/0:18:18-45)

Always speaking from a power position, Fred manages to surprise and to embarrass Lilli with his jab lines (Attardo 2001: 82-3), the incongruity of which cannot be fully appreciated unless the spectator possesses thorough knowledge of the cultural and historical context in which the play was written. Of perfect quality and an impressive size, the blue Hope Diamond owes much of its fame, as Finlay (2006) points out, to the legend according to which a curse befell on it when it was stolen from India from the statue of a Hindu god(dess). Fred's reference to it and special stress on the curse seems to anticipate the end of Lilli's career and of her life as an independent woman once she marries her 'mystery man'. While Lilli seems more concerned about her fiancé's sense of family tradition, Fred cannot refrain from being critical about the opulence of the ring, in itself indicative of the taste for ostentation of the one who offered it, hence the reference to the Aga Khan, the leader of the Ismaili Imamat. Like Shakespeare's Petruchio, Fred will not refrain from retorting, taking up a word/phrase from Lilli's previous turn to 'recycle' it in a pun; hence, the play on the denotative and the connotative meanings of the epithet "big". Lilli's attempts at clarifying the meaning she attaches to the word seem futile and engender further humorous situations as Fred chooses to move between extremes: he first goes for the denotative ("big" as "fat"), but even when he veers to the connotative, he uses exemplification metonymically to obliquely hint at the man's megalomania and political ambition which cause him to aspire to the title of 'the father of the nation' (accounting for the reference to the first American President George Washington) or to equal, in his reckless race for power, Adolf Hitler himself. Fred's mean punch line (Attardo 2001: 83) – "a match made in heaven" – suddenly reveals Lilli as the butt of his joke, as he tries to preserve his position of superiority and ridicules Lilli for her ambition and tendency towards affectation.

Putting together hints provided by this dialogue, an alert spectator could already sketch out a profile of the character to which the political dimension of

the play is mostly related: egocentric, ambitious, with megalomaniac tendencies, a politician with direct access to the White House. This is, as Act II will show, Harrison Howell, Lilli's fiancé, a "depressingly dull, obtuse, and sedentary" (Dash 2010: 55) Republican millionaire in the original play metamorphosed into a caricature of General Douglas MacArthur in Blakemore's revival. Considering details provided by the play, like, for instance, Lilli's reference to World War II, Blakemore saw in Harrison Howell a potential source of intertextual humour. That implied rewriting certain lines of the original script, but also gave more depth to the political dimension of the text in accordance with the specificity of the political and historical context in which the play was written.

Given the significant role of contextual factors in shaping up humorous acts, a digression focusing on General Douglas MacArthur's personality, his tense relationship with President Harry Truman (which ultimately led to his dismissal from the position of a commander of the US/UN forces in North Korea) and, in particular, on the 1948 elections for presidency that opposed them on account of their different political affiliations (Truman was a Democrat, MacArthur a Republican) might be useful and shed more light on Blakemore's turning MacArthur into the target of parody in his revival.

Many documents of the time and witness testimonies by members of Douglas MacArthur's staff portray the general as a man of a strong but strange personality, who would not show, whether in public or in private, his "little human failures", prone to rapid mood changes from optimism to pessimism, which would justify, in Pearlman's terms, a 'diagnosis' of the "Dr. Jekyll – Mr. Hyde syndrome. […] Even when a Dr. Jekyll seemed present, a Mr. Hyde lurked behind MacArthur's curtain" (2008: 2-3). Though he occasionally appeared as an "epitome of courtesy, consideration and sympathetic understanding", there were moments when he could no longer control his temper and then he would burst into discharges of anger, "regular shouting tirades", as Dwight Eisenhower, who was for a while the general's chief of staff, put it (qtd. in Pearlman 2008: 2, 7).

It seems that Douglas MacArthur's behaviour was to a large extent motivated by his believing that he had a special destiny, just like other members of his family, namely his mother's brothers, officers in the Army of Northern Virginia, and his father Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur. These models that the young Douglas MacArthur emulated as well as his mother's influence, "instilling goals befitting some kind of superman", definitely shaped up the future general's character and may be, in part, seen as "the root of [his] least admirable traits: hypersensitivity to criticism and hostility toward potential competitors" (Pearlman 2008: 3).

In many respects, Douglas MacArthur followed in his father's footsteps, clashing with civilian authorities and stubbornly clinging to the idea that the western Pacific area (here including the Philippines) was more important than Europe. Not even throughout World War II, when he was a

commander of the American troops in the Philippines, did this "Napoleon of Fuzon" (Pearlman 2008: 6) change his attitude towards Washington or the fellow officers who dared challenge or disagree with him. His egocentric nature surfaced in statements for the press in which issues of national security were presented in very personal terms as "the enemy and I [MacArthur]", whether the enemy was Japan or the Washington administration, which MacArthur thought, "would rather see [him] lose a battle than America win a war" (Pearlman 2008: 12). During Truman's presidency, he was systematically 'at war' with the Washington government, and many of his statements regarding the President himself were highly offensive[12]. That caused certain Washington politicians to advance the assumption that General MacArthur suffered from "an acute persecution complex at work", which earned him the nickname of "Mr. Prima Donna, Brass Hat Five Star MacArthur" (Pearlman 2008: 13).

Despite mutual animosity, Truman was less explicitly critical in his relationship with MacArthur, probably because of the personal experiences that moulded his personality over the years. In particular, his attitude towards the army seems to have been definitely shaped by his experience as an artillery captain in World War I which convinced him of "the virtue of the citizen soldier": "he never doubted the need for military power in a world that settled important issues by force" (Hamby 2000: 435). Furthermore, his readings in history taught him that "politicians have no business interfering with military operations"; hence, his more 'indulgent' attitude towards General MacArthur who mixed "ambition, apprehension, and calculation with self-absorbed bravado" (Pearlman 2008: xviii, 16).

1948, the year of the US President elections, found Truman and MacArthur in opposite political camps. In the contest for the Republican nomination, MacArthur was among the nominees. "He toured the nation, where he was met by enormous crowds cheering his every move", but "he was not popular enough to receive the party's presidential nod" (Grossman 2007: 207), and was eliminated from the presidential run. In the 1948 Republican Convention in Philadelphia, the majority voted for the Governor of New York, Thomas E. Dewey, whom political experts unanimously saw as almost certainly a winner over the rivalling Democrats.

The rates in the polls (e.g. the Gallup Poll) in favour of the Republican candidate actually reflected the public reaction to the tense relations within the Democratic Party. Faced with the challenge of his former secretary of commerce, Henry Wallace, who announced his candidacy for president as a member of the Progressive Party, Truman had to deal with the disagreement of the conservative, southern wing of his party with his policy of support for black civil rights. That caused the southern Democrats to form their own party, the States' Rights Party, with its own nominee for presidency, Governor Strom Thurmond. Nonetheless, Truman's strategy of "mobilizing key groups in the

Democratic coalition" (supporting organised labour as well as black civil rights) and his denunciation of the 80th Republican Congress ("which he accused of wanting to repeal the New Deal") eventually turned out successful (Hamby 2000: 444-447). At the end of a long campaign during which he toured the country, speaking to the people without hesitating to criticise his political opponents – unlike Dewey who "spoke in bland generalities" (Hamby 2000: 447) – with a bit of luck, Truman won the elections against all odds.

The political background of that election year which 'awarded' Truman one of the greatest comeback victories in American history is touched upon in the revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* with specific reference to General MacArthur's involvement with the 1948 political circles. In an attempt at raising questions with regard to the general's "ambiguous legacy" (Grossman 2007: 207), in Act II, scenes 4 and 5 (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 76-88) draw the spectators' attention to the general's personality while bringing to the foreground his participation in the contest for presidency.

From the first moment when General Harrison Howell, MacArthur's lampoon, appears on the stage, the striking similarity between this fictitious character and his real-life counterpart invites visual humour. He steps on the stage with the authoritarian attitude of the military leader who treats the theatre personnel, Fred included, as if they were his soldiers: "*General* (*taking off the sun-glasses*): And you're the civilian who assaulted my fiancée? […] I'll have you court-martialled, Graham. I'll have your guts for garters" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 77/1:45:54-1:46.00). The threats that he professes in half military jargon, half slang, do not have, however, an intimidating effect on Fred, who instantly devises a strategy that will reveal the 'real man' behind the general's mask. Therefore, Fred tempers the two gangsters in disguise, who are ready to take action to defend his 'honour', and resorts to irony and innuendo. He mockingly flatters the general's ego: "The general is a very distinguished man" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 77/1:46:12-14). Sensing that he deals with a proud traditionalist believer in the values of patriarchy that proclaim women as utterly inferior to men, he tries to trivialise what is otherwise a serious situation: Lilli is kept on stage under gunpoint by two thugs. He blames it on the whims of women who expect, at least before marriage, to be treated courteously and spoiled: "You fail to take into account the caprices of a woman of talent and beauty. She may even say to you tonight, 'General, darling, I am playing this show under duress. Call the FBI.'" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 77/ 1:46:30-41). Fred proves to be a shrewd manipulator as he appeals simultaneously to the general's pride as a man, the 'owner' of a beautiful objectified woman, and as a military leader, by evoking the rival state security organisation, obliquely implying the FBI might be more efficient in ensuring Lilli's security than the whole US army; hence, the general's show of self-bravado and hostility towards his competitors: "Why the FBI? She has the entire US army at her disposal" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 77/1:46:42-45).

Fooled by Fred's acting – "The fair sex, who can understand them?" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 78/1:46:58-59) – the General actually fails to see in it an expression of hostility and comes to take his rival in love matters for a 'tough guy' like him. So he confides in him, appealing to Fred's sense of 'brotherhood' among men:

> *General* (*in confidence, man to man*): Now, see here Graham. You're a man of the world. We both know women need a firm hand from time to time. In fact, between you and me, they like it!
> *Fred*: "Women should be struck regularly like gongs?"
> *General*: Who said that?
> *Fred*: Noël Coward.
> *General*: There's a man I'd like to meet! A straight talker…
> *Fred*: Well, not exactly. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 78/1:47:00-24)

Intertextual humour is used here to draw the spectators' attention to several 'deficiencies' of the General's character: his misogyny, as, despite his apparent courtesy, he thinks the use of physical violence on women is a must; his narrow-mindedness and lack of subtlety; and, last but not least, his illiteracy when it comes to drama and performance (otherwise, the very essence of his fiancée's profession). Fred's epigrammatic response actually reproduces a famous line – "Women should be struck regularly like gongs" – from Noël Coward's play *Private Lives* (1930). Howell's enthusiastic approval of the idea of 'disciplining' women and his wish to meet the wise man who advanced it emphasise that he stands for the traditional patriarchal type of 'real man' in whose mind woman is associated "with nature, the body, the physical, as matter to be tamed and domesticated" (Caufman-Blumenfeld 1998: 22). He looks upon women as if they were mere puppets that he could manipulate into obediently assuming the role of either wife (Lilli) or whore (Lois, whom he meets backstage by coincidence and with whom he would not hesitate to renew his affair only three months after his wedding with Lilli, as Act II, scene 4 suggests). This dialogue is a perfect illustration of the differential humour competence of the interlocutors (Raskin 1985: 58; Willis 2002). Since they do not actually belong to the same "identification group", contrary to the General's belief, they judge the "reference group" (Raju 1991 qtd. in Willis 2002) of women by different standards, which explains their different understanding and appreciation of the idea of subjecting women to violence. The incongruity between Fred's and the General's mental software and the General's lack of the necessary background knowledge regarding the original context of the sentence in question make the General laughable as he fails to understand Fred's ironic remark as well as his intentional pun on "coward": a. (capitalized) the English playwright Noël Coward, particularly appreciated for his wit and sophistication; b. a bully who harms those who he thinks are weaker than him.

The characters' next turns develop along the same lines, but they gain in their polyphonic structure owing to the juxtaposition of different social dialects like military jargon, electoral speech and patriarchal idiom:

> *General*: But chastising the little woman is the sacred privilege of a husband and no one else. You were out of line there, soldier.
> *Fred* (saluting): Yes sir, General!
> *General*: Restoring family discipline, Graham. Cherishing our women no matter what it takes. (He makes a punching gesture) That is my message to the American people. That is why I'm letting Miss Vanessi make her farewell appearance in this little show of yours. *The Taming of the Shrew*. I like the title and I like what it has to say.
> *Fred* (in soldier-like position, hands behind his back): The chain of command in family life.
> *General*: Right again, Graham. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 78/1:47:27-1:48:01)

The dialogue is noteworthy from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it exposes the 'ugliness' of the General's Mr. Hyde-like misogynistic and violent nature hidden behind the mask of courtesy and consideration, the monstrous incongruity of the General transferring the rules of life in the army upon husband and wife relations, mimicked by Fred who ridicules him in his wisecracks. On the other hand, it satirises (again) the General's complete ignorance when it comes to drama: he knows nothing about the Shakespearean comedy and judges it simply by its title.

One particular sentence in the dialogue above discloses the incongruity between the General's and Lilli's perspectives on their relationship. Lilli assumes that she is appreciated by her fiancé for her talent as an actress and speaks of the performance, though somewhat egocentrically, in terms of "*my little* performance in *my little* show" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 19/0:17:39-my emphasis). The General, though, boasts about his already having Lilli under control and stresses that her participation in a performance that must be man-centred anyway (it is Fred's "*little* show"[13]) is entirely determined by whether he gives her the permission to do so or not. That subtly suggests that Lilli and the General are not a good match, and anticipates their separation in the end of the play, as Lilli decides to return to Fred and to the stage. Furthermore, the hypocritical nature of his electoral message to the American people which apparently promotes love-based gender relations while subtly inviting the proliferation of domestic violence signals the inappropriateness of his political platform and anticipates his failure in the elections.

While waiting for Lilli in her dressing room, the General takes advantage of the time at his disposal to plan the events for the next day, calculating each step of the wedding ceremony as if it were a strategic move on the battlefield, and bursting in angry shouts at his major's least attempt at contradicting him:

> *General*: Major Rogers?... Change of plans, Major. The wedding's tomorrow... No buts, Major. Thinking on your feet, that's the essence of command. Now, take this down. Wedding party, mobilize at 1400 hours. Guests assemble at the Cathedral at 1430 hours. Over the top with the Bishop; 1500 hours. Press conference, 1530 hours; then onward to LaGuardia. Depart, 1630. Got that? Arrive Washington and advance on White House, 1745 hours. Give President decision and honeymoon with wife. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 83/1:55:49-1:56:19)

The incongruous use of the condensation specific to the military jargon and his treatment of the wedding as if it were a military campaign stir the spectators' laughter, just like his stupidly refusing to see the evidence, that Lilli is the two gangsters' hostage. That shows him a pathetic dupe in his over-confidence in the 'brotherhood' of men and in their superiority over women. Seeing in their disagreement an opportunity to prove to Lilli who the General actually is, Fred suddenly changes strategy, to the amazement of his two gangster 'helpers':

> *Fred*: General, allow me. Lilli, you want to go? Very well then. Go! Leave the theatre. If that's what you want. And I can't say I blame you. After all, what is there to hold you here? What's ten percent of the gross compared to regular housekeeping and a dress allowance?
> *General*: A generous dress allowance, Graham. People respect a uniform.
> *Fred*: Hear that, Lilli? And all that meaningless excitement – the thundering applause of the crowd, the pictures in the papers, the parties, the adoration. I can't say I blame you for leaving all that, when you've got a chance for happiness – real happiness – under the General.
> *General*: Good thinking, Graham. I believe I know what it takes to make a woman happy.
> *Fred*: God bless you, sir. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 84-85/1:57:51-1:58:26)

Lilli is offered the possibility of choosing between confining herself, for the rest of her life, to the domestic sphere, forced to fit into the stereotypical mould of the obedient housewife, entirely dependent on her husband, the object-woman the beauty of which the husband can boast about, and carrying on as a successful actress, a VIP, appreciated and loved by all her fans. Fred tries to subtly push Lilli into opting for the second variant by resorting to irony built on incremental repetition – "a chance for happiness – real happiness…" – with an emphatic stress on the variable (the epithet "real"), and on the double meaning of the pun – "under the General…" – which mingles sexual innuendo and an allusion to submissiveness. The humorous effect of the General's interventions results from two particular aspects: on the one hand, he is incapable of grasping the gist of Fred's argumentative strategy as, in his egocentric mind, the woman is naturally just a pretty ornament/accessory that can be successfully used to save the appearance of respectability and, therefore, coming in very handy for an election campaign. On the other hand, it is the larger co-text provided by the previous exchanges with Fred on the issue of how women should be treated by men,

concluded in an apology for domestic violence, that causes the General's remark "I believe I know what it takes to make a woman happy" to appear as totally incongruous and rightfully censured by Fred's 'bathtub placed' punch line (Attardo 2001: 91), in "God bless you, sir".

Unfortunately, Lilli is too angry with Fred to listen to anything he has to say. Besides, she lacks enough knowledge of her fiancé's 'real' personality. So she rashly decides to leave the theatre and hopes to begin a new and happy life by the General's side: "I never want to see the theatre again! Or you again. I've got a new life now with the most adorable man in the world!" (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 85/1:58:27-34). The spectators are most likely to laugh at her portrait of the General which, aware of the discrepancy between appearances and reality, they perceive, unlike Lilli, as ironically false.

It is precisely at this point that, overconfident in his ability of winning everybody on his side, the General discloses what should have been 'top secret':

> *General*: And the President of the United States agrees with you, dearest one. Truman has asked me to be his running mate in November.
> *Lilli*: Oh, darling! You said 'Yes'?
> *General*: Hold your horses. Dewey's also asked me to be his running mate.
> *Lilli*: Dewey or Truman! What a decision!
> *General*: I told Dewey 'Yes'. I know a winner when I see one. And I want you there on the campaign trail beside me, my little running mate.
> *Fred*: Running here, running there.
> *General*: Dewey will do one term. I'll do the next. Thank you, Graham. I think I can make the little woman happy. (He sings the introductory part of the song *From This Moment On*) Now that we are close, /No more nights morose,/ Now that we are one,/ The beguine has just begun./Now that we're side by side,/ The future looks so gay,/Now we are alibied/ When we say:/From this moment on,/ You for me, dear,/Only two for tea, dear,/ From this moment on./From this happy day,/ No more blue songs,/Only whoop-dee-doo songs,/From this moment on.
> *Lilli*: Darling, I can't wait. I think I'll probably do some work for the UN. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 85-86/1:58:35-2:00:06)

Obviously, in his parodic intention, Blakemore had the historical truth slightly distorted: neither Truman nor Dewey asked General Douglas MacArthur to run for vice-president in the 1948 US Presidential elections. As a matter of fact, as a newspaper of the time (*St. Petersburg Times* 1947) claimed, both Dewey, MacArthur's Republican fellow, and Truman, the Democrat President, sought, prior to the 1948 elections, to keep MacArthur away in Asia since he was the best man for the "China job", actually to eliminate a potential candidate for presidency[14]. Even if MacArthur eventually took part in the election campaign of the Republican Party as one of the candidates for presidency to satisfy his ambition for supreme power in the state, as the dialogue in the play obliquely implies too, he was not successful enough to win. Neither was his Republican

rival, Thomas Dewey, despite all the favourable estimations of the election polls. Placed in this larger contextual frame, Harrison Howell's justification for his running on the Republican side – "I know a winner when I see one" – results in another case of incongruity stirring the audiences' laughter. Anyway, his political ambitions seem to be 'contagious' and Lilli herself hopes to get an important position in an international organisation like the UN. It is obvious, however, that both her words and her exaggerate gestures (that add visual humour to the verbal one) are a form of releasing the anger she feels for being humiliated by Fred and a tendentious way of aggressively getting back at him, proving that she has more significant chances to greatness than he has:

> *Fred*: For the first time I tremble for the world.
> *Lilli*: Sneer, Fred. I always knew I had a date with destiny. I thought for a foolish time it was the theatre. Then the cinema. But Harrison's given me a whole blazing new world. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 86/2:00:07-21)

As Fred, unfortunately, finds no other way to deal with her anger but by ridiculing her in his conversational witticisms, she is determined to carry on with her plans of marrying an egomaniac who is incapable of loving anybody else but himself.

(General) Harrison Howell's ridiculous political ambitions acquire special comic overtones owing to the song *From This Moment On*, originally written by Cole Porter for the show *Out of This World*, then integrated in the 1953 filmic version of *Kiss Me, Kate* (Hischak 2009: 242) and preserved in Blakemore's revival of *Kiss Me, Kate.* This very romantic love song voicing hopes of happiness for the future actually becomes, when performed by the General and Lilli in the revival, a mad combination of military march, a ridiculous 'avalanche' of terms of endearment, onomatopoeia and violent embraces, all culminating with the General on top of the sofa posing as a glorious climber who has just conquered a great mountain peak and is ready to mark it with a flag that he grabs from one of the gangsters. Lilli holds his hand from her obviously lower position, indicative again of the patriarchal hierarchy that the General scrupulously believes in, and ends up with her face covered by the General's wavering flag, the corner of which she has to lift to finish her song with a rather desperate expression (1:59:14-2:02:00). The General's pose can also be given a second interpretation in the light of the propensity for tyranny of the historical figure here parodied, i.e., Douglas MacArthur. Taking into account that one of MacArthur's nicknames was "Napoleon of Fuzon", Blakemore might have thought of enhancing the visual humour of the performance by having Harrison Howell/Douglas MacArthur assume an attitude similar to Napoleon's as represented by Baron Antoine Jean Gros in his painting *Napoleon Bonaparte on Arcole Bridge*. All in all, the incongruity between the message of the song and the way in which it is performed betrays the intention of obliquely satirising

patriarchal attitudes and megalomaniac manifestations which are thus defamiliarised and revealed in all their gruesomeness.

Lilli's illusion of happiness is, nonetheless, short-lived and she is soon given a measure of the General's way of 'cherishing' her. When she carries on with her game of mimed pre-marital bliss, she counts on her fiancé to support her. Nonetheless, she is surprised to discover in him not a partner, but a 'master' who already imposes various constraints on her. Thus, her hopes for a romantic dinner by candle light are brutally dashed by the General's refusal sustained by another 'lesson' that the army taught him: "Lilli, if the War taught me anything, it was no rations after 2100 hours. Be good to your liver and your liver will be good to you." (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 88/ 2:02:25-32) The incongruity of this piece of epigrammatic wisdom, which puzzles Lilli and stirs the audience's laughter, confirms once again the General's inappropriate juxtaposition of the two frames of reference of gender relations and army organisation: convinced that all levels of life must be structured according to a very well established hierarchy, the General would engage in the battle of the sexes from the same commanding position which he assumed in the battles fought by his army during the War and expects to exert the same undisputed authority on his 'subordinates' (here on Lilli). His political ambitions make him even more demanding:

> *Lilli*: But I bought this enchanting little hat just to go out with you tonight. It's French.
> *General*: Lilli, fancy, foreign headwear? That's not what America expects to see on top of a future First Lady! […]
> *Lilli*: But darling, my entire wardrobe is Dior. And come November in Nebraska, I'm going to need my New Look mink.
> *General*: Forgive me, my dear, but what the voters will want to see you in is a good old Republican cloth coat. Now, let's get moving, dearest one. Tomorrow's our wedding day, and it's going to be a long, hard slog. (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 88/2:02:39-56, 2:03:08-31)

The General's concern with keeping up appearances and building up the profile of a 'true-born', honest American that would answer his Republican voters' expectations – reminiscent of the famous 1952 Checkers/Fund speech of the Republican candidate for vice-president, Richard Nixon (Ambrose 1988: 281) – causes him to dismiss all Lilli's attempts at pleasing him and satisfying her own vanity. It is not enough for the beauty of the objectified woman to flatter his ego, it must also be instrumental in manipulating the public opinion in the political game in creating an image of honesty and integrity. For Lilli, this is yet another warning which the play script constructs around the symbolism of the change of dress: her marriage with the General will reduce her to the status of a plain housewife and a useful 'accessory' in a future election campaign meant to distract the attention from the hypocritical nature of the politician who does not practice what he preaches, but who dreams of the presidential chair. Harrison

Howell conceives marriage not as a union of hearts to be candidly and romantically looked forward to, but, judging by his incongruous choice of informal, more like army-jargon, terms ("a long, hard slog"), as another step taken towards achieving his political goals. One might suspect, in this respect, a further departure from the parodic model provided by General Douglas MacArthur and the development of the intertextual reference to Richard Nixon, one of "the most controversial American political figure[s] since World War II" (Hoff 2000: 520): though he managed to successfully defend himself against the accusation of corruption in 1952 when he ran for vice-president, he ended his career as an American President resigning in disgrace in 1974 because of the Watergate scandal, accused of the cover-up of the "break-in and bugging at the Democratic National Committee headquarters", and of "related corrupt or criminal political activities" (Hoff 2000: 517).

Not only does this scene resort to intertextual humour to actually provide the audiences with food for thought regarding key moments in American political history, in particular, and the ethics – politics relation, in general, but it also serves to reinforce, in a quite unexpected but highly creative manner, the link between the Shakespearean hypotext and the musical hypertext at a discursive level. As in other previous cases, much of the humour of the scene lies with Fred ironically 'backing up' the General in everything he says. At this point, accompanied by the gangster 'choir', Fred launches his subtle satirical stings reciting offstage lines from the very play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, in which he performed on stage:

> *General*: Lilli, if the War taught me anything, it was no rations after 21.00 hours. Be good to your liver and your liver will be good to you.
> Fred: The General's right. "For it engenders choler, planteth anger,/ And better 'twere that both of you did fast."
> *Lilli*: But I bought this enchanting little hat just to go out with you tonight. It's French.
> *General*: Lilli, fancy, foreign headwear? That's not what America expects to see on top of a future First Lady.
> *Fred*: "Why, thou say'st true, it is a paltry cap./ I love thee well in that thou lik'st it not."
> *Second Man*: "'Tis lewd and filthy."
> *First Man*: "Begone, (trying to take Lilli's hat off) take it hence."
> *Lilli*: But darling, my entire wardrobe is Dior. And come November in Nebraska, I'm going to need my New Look mink.
> *General*: Forgive me, my dear, but what the voters will want to see you in is the good old Republican cloth coat. Now, let's get moving, dearest one. Tomorrow's our wedding day, and it's going to be a long, hard slog. (*The General exits.*)
> *Fred*: "He who knows better how to tame a shrew,/ Now let him speak."
> *Fred and the Two Men (to Lilli):* "'Tis charity to show." (KIR – Prompt Book 2000: 88/2:02:25-2:03:40)

The lines from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act IV, Scenes 1 and 3, that Fred and the gangsters selectively recite (with minor improvisations[15]) add to the oblique references to Nixon's speech to point to textual hyperdetermination (Attardo 2001: 100) resulting from the simultaneous presence of different sources of humour that intertextually sustain the main themes of the battle of the sexes and political competition. The comb (Attardo 2001: 87) that these displaced lines make up ends with a Petruchian punch line meant to proleptically announce Lilli's ultimate change of heart. She leaves the theatre and Fred to follow her "man of destiny", as Fred sarcastically calls the politician whom he has repeatedly exposed as being "as much of an actor as [he is]", or even worse, "a bad actor" (KIR –Prompt Book 2000: 92, 93/2:09:23; 2:10:26-30), but she reconsiders her decision and finally makes the right choice: she returns to the theatre, where she can continue to build her artistic career, and to Fred, in whom she finds a partner. Lilli/Katherina is Fred/Petruchio's equal in a "select society" whose members "freely choose and change their roles in order to avoid the narrow, imprisoning roles society would impose upon them" (Huston 1981 qtd. in Yachnin 1996: 2.22).

Concluding Remarks

Michael Blakemore's revival of *Kiss Me, Kate* was not intended as a fully-fledged adaptation of the 1948 original. Nevertheless, it could be said to have come halfway between mere presentation and adaptation: it did not aim at slavishly re-staging a now great classic of the American musical theatre, but at re-interpreting the message of the play in order to cast a fresh look on key issues – gender relations, political manoeuvres, art-form competition – specific to the period when it was produced and to simultaneously reveal something of the discourses in circulation at the moment of the revival.

The dialogue that the revival encouraged among the Shakespearean hypotext, Porter and the Spewacks' original hypertext and Blakemore's re-reading of it has allowed for the proliferation and diversification of humour-engendering mechanisms, chief among which intertextuality holds a very special place. Much of the combination of verbal and visual humour of the turn-of-the-millennium production relies on both the audiences' familiarity with Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and their knowledge of American civilisation, in general, and of the cultural and political background of the late 1940s and early 1950s, in particular.

With *Kiss Me, Kate* revived, a new niche has been created for the rediscovery of the cultural heritage of a more recent (the 'Golden Age' of the musical in the twentieth century) or distant (the 'Golden Age' of Elizabethan drama in the second half of the sixteenth century) past, for the critical re-investigation, through a comic lens, of American political history after World War II, for the dialogue between generations, as well as for the renegotiation of

the relationship between competing cultural phenomena in the contemporary context.

Notes

[1] It is worth noticing that, in the 1948 performance of Porter's and the Spewacks' *Kiss Me, Kate*, the musical number opening Act I ("Another Op'nin', Another Show") and the dancing number opening Act II ("Too Darn Hot") had a mixed cast in which the leading figures, Hattie (Lilli Vanessi's maid) and Paul (Fred Graham's assistant), with the three original dancers, were black performers. As Irene Dash puts it, that suggests that "*Kiss Me, Kate* was in the vanguard in its treatment not only of women but also of race. It reflects the optimistic years just after World War II (…). *Kiss Me, Kate* is one of the earliest examples of racial integration on the stage" (2010: 69).

[2] When adapted for the screen in 1953, the musical comedy underwent significant changes, chief among which the transformation of Lilli Vanessi's fiancé from a presidential adviser to a Texas cattle baron called Tex Calloway.

[3] As Russell Jackson points out, especially "before synchronised dialogue complicated the business of adapting poetic drama for the screen – there were more than 400 films on Shakespearean subjects", the success of which was ensured by their eliminating language barriers and their "providing an easily transportable rival to the pictorial, melodramatic mode of popular theatre" (2007: 2). For more details on silent films based on Shakespeare's plays, see also Brode (2000).

[4] A narrow definition of the so-called Golden Age of Broadway would limit the discussion to the musicals produced in the 1940s-1960s. However, as certain studies on musical theatre history suggest, a broader interpretation would be more appropriate taking into account that it was actually the merit of such great composers as George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart of having initiated, in the 1920s-1930s, an "unflagging campaign of rethinking, rebuilding, reinventing" the musical (Mordden 1983: 82), which paved the way for the musical theatre boom of the next decades.

[5] By the late 1960s and early 1970s, American musical aesthetic changed incorporating rock music and approaching sensitive issues like minority rights, homosexuality, the Vietnam War, and so forth. These thematic changes may account for the temporary reorientation towards sources of inspiration other than Shakespeare that followed such great productions as *Your Own Thing* (1968), an adaptation of *Twelfth Night* played off-Broadway, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1971), the Broadway adaptation of the Bard's early comedy of the same title. (See Everett and Laird 2008: 152, 294-5, 381-2) Over the next decades, attempts at adapting Shakespeare for the musical theatre were made mostly on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean and reference could be made, in this respect, to *Return to the Forbidden Planet*, a Jukebox musical based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, performed in various British playhouses in the 1980s.

[6] In an interview with Frank Rich, Stephen Sondheim, whom Rich calls "Broadway musical's last great artist", voices his disappointment with the turn-of-the-millennium trends in the evolution of musical theatre, i.e., "revivals and the same kind of musicals over and over again, all spectacles", hence, the feeling of "liv[ing] in a recycled culture" (2000: 1). Somewhat similar scepticism is voiced by John Kenrick who assesses the condition of the Broadway musical at the beginning of the twenty-first century as "uncertain", "after flourishing for more than a hundred and fifty years" (2008: 370).

[7] *Kiss Me, Kate* reveals its intrinsic intertextuality if one considers not only its being an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, but also its relationship to "one of its theatrical predecessors: the 1935 Alfred Lunt – Lynn Fontanne production of *The Taming of the Shrew*" (Dash 2010: 62). Tracing back the idea of *Kiss Me, Kate* as a play on relationships, Raymond Knapp attributes it the producer Arthur Saint-Subber, who was inspired by the tempestuous relationship, both on and off stage, of Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. (Interestingly, Knapp remarks that the task of writing the script of the musical comedy was assumed by "Bella and Sam Spewack, a married writing team whose work on the show would bring them back together after a separation (in close parallel to the show's main action)") (2006: 274-275). Going beyond such trivia, Irene Dash makes a convincing demonstration of how the 1935 Lunt – Fontanne performance "set the pattern for *Kiss Me, Kate*" in terms of acting style, costumes, settings, and staging techniques (2010: 62-65).

[8] The quality and popularity of Porter's show, confirmed by its winning the Tony Award for the Best Musical in 1949, determined the MGM film producers to adapt it for the big screen in 1953.

[9] For an extensive analysis of how Cole Porter's songs, grouped in "a comprehensive set of 'doubles'", contribute to stressing out, through significant parallels or contrasts, the relationships between the central characters as well as between their onstage and offstage personalities, see Knapp 2006: 273-284.

[10] Given the indissoluble 'bond' between visual and verbal humour that seems essential for both the success of the performance and the understanding of Blakemore's interpretation of character development and interactions in *Kiss Me, Kate*, most of the samples selected for analysis from the play script are accompanied by (hopefully) relevant descriptions of the characters' actions and reactions as noticeable in the filmed version of the revival (2003). To distinguish between the stage directions as given in the prompt book of *Kiss Me, Kate* revised (2000) and extra-details provided on the basis of the 2003 filmed version, the former will be written in italics whereas the latter will be in regular font and always placed between round brackets.

[11] Irene Dash's comments on the original 1948 performance of *Kiss Me, Kate* reveal an interesting alteration operated in the revival script that is directly related to the representation of political life at the White House in the play. It seems that Fred's original line was: "Ask him [the President] if they serve borscht at the White House". According to Dash, "Harry Truman's informality and candour colour this exchange. Earlier drafts of this section mention Margaret Truman and her piano playing, but the collaborators must have decided that a reference to a Jewish soup would bring more laughs. The line also reflected Truman's liberalism, as well as his fame as the president of the first country to recognise Israel as a Jewish state at the United Nations" (2010: 58).

[12] To exemplify General MacArthur's virulent attacks on Washington politicians, Pearlman quotes some of his statements. For instance, in September 1945, the General is known to have told to one member of the executive branch: "I have absolutely no use for the people in Washington, including the [new] President." Moreover, referring to President Truman, MacArthur vented his rage claiming that: "We're even worse off with that Jew in the White House" (2008: 13).

[13] The interpretation of the possessive "your" as a reference to Fred alone rather than to Fred and Lilli as a couple of actors may be accounted for, on the one hand, by Fred's being not only the leading star but also the one who 'conceived, delivered and

directed' the production *The Taming of the Shrew. The Musical*, and, on the other hand, by Harrison Howell's typically patriarchal perspective on gender relations according to which men should control all activities circumscribed to the public sphere, even those which the General condescendingly treats as 'unimportant', like acting.

[14] In an article for *St. Petersburg Times*, dated 30 November 1947, Lowell Mellett commented on the following statement on American policy regarding China made by Thomas Dewey: "We need a man to run the job in China, who not only knows China but who has the broad economic, social and governmental training so essential to a task of this magnitude." The journalist speculated that the man Dewey had in mind for the "China job" was, most likely, General Douglas MacArthur, considering less the appropriateness of such a choice and more Dewey's interest (similar to Truman's, otherwise) in keeping at bay a potential rival for presidency: "MacArthur would be over there. He wouldn't be over here, getting into mischief – such as running for president."

[15] For comparison with the Shakespearean original, see Petruchio: "For it engenders choler, planteth anger,/ And better 'twere that both of us did fast." (4.1.159-60); "He that knows better how to tame a shrew/ Now let him speak: 't is charity to show." (4.1.197-8); "It's lewd and filthy." (4.3.65); "Why, thou say'st true. It is a paltry cap./ (…)/ I love thee well in that thou like'st it not." (4.3.81,83); "Go take it hence; be gone, and say no more" (4.3.162).

References

Ambrose, S. E. (1988) *Nixon. Volume I – The Education of a Politician 1913-1962*. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo: Simon and Schuster Inc.

Attardo, S. (2001) *Humorous Texts: A Semantic and Pragmatic Analysis*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter

Barker, Th. and Britz, M. (2000) *Jokers Wild: Legalized Gambling in the Twenty-first Century*. Westport: Praeger Publishers

Brode, D. (2000) *Shakespeare in the Movies. From the Silent Era to Shakespeare in Love*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press

Burnett, M. T. (2006) 'Globalization: Figuring the Global/Historical in Filmic Shakespearean Tragedy'. in *A Concise Companion to Shakespeare on Screen*. ed. by Henderson, D. E. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 133-154

Burnett, M. T. (2007) *Filming Shakespeare in the Global Marketplace*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Caufman-Blumenfeld, O. (1998) *Studies in Feminist Drama*. Iași: Polirom

Coveney, M. (2003) 'A Smashing Revival.' *Great Performances PBS* [online] 26 February 2003. available   from <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/shows/kissmekate/essay1.html> [3 July 2007].

Dash, I. G. (2010) *Shakespeare and the American Musical*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Everett, W. A. and Laird, P. R (2008) *Historical Dictionary of the Broadway Musical*. Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Finlay, V. (2006) *Jewels: A Secret History*. New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks

Genette, G. (1997) *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. transl. by Newman, C. and Doubinsky, C. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press

Grossman, M. (2007) *World Military Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*. New York: Facts On File Inc.

Hamby, A. L. (2000) '33. Harry S. Truman 1945-1953'. in *The American Presidents*. ed. by Urofsky, M. I. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 433-453

Hischak, Th. S. (2009) *Broadway Plays and Musicals: Descriptions and Essential Facts of More Than 14,000 Shows through 2007*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers

Hoff, J. (2000) '37. Richard Milhous Nixon 1969-1974'. in *The American Presidents*. ed. by Urofsky, M. I. New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 505-523

Hutcheon, L. (2006) *A Theory of Adaptation*. New York, London: Routledge.

Jackson, R. (2007) 'Introduction: Shakespeare, films and the marketplace'. in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare on Film*. ed. by Jackson, R. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-12

Jakobson, R. (1959) 'On Linguistic Aspects of Translation'. in *On Translation*. ed. by Brower, R. A. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 232-239

Kenrick, J. (2008) *Musical Theatre. A History*. New York, London: Continuum

Sidney, G. (dir.) (1953) *Kiss Me, Kate*. [DVD] USA: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM)

Blakemore, M. and Hunt, Ch. (dir.) (2003) *Kiss Me, Kate*. [DVD] USA: Educational Broadcasting corporation, The Performance Company and NHK

Knapp, R. (2006) *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press

Leavis, F. R. ([1933] 2006) 'Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture'. in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture Reader.* Third edition. ed. by Storey, J. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited/Prentice Hall, 12-19

Levine, L. W. (1990) *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press

Martin, R. A. (1998) 'Approaches to the Sense of Humor: a Historical Review'. in *The Sense of Humor: Explorations of a Personality Characteristic*. ed. by Ruch, W. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 15-60

Mellett, L. (1947) 'Thinks Dewey's Man for the China Job May Be General MacArthur'. *St. Petersburg Times* [online] 30 November 1947. available from <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=888&dat=19471130&id=Vr4KAA AAIBAJ&sjid=404DAAAAIBAJ&pg=2794,5873753> [30 October 2009]

Mordden, E. (1983) *Broadway Babies. The People Who Made the American Musical*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Pearlman, M. D. (2008) *Truman and MacArthur: Policy, Politics, and the Hunger for Honor and Renown*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press

Popa, D. E. (2005) *Expounding on Humour Theories. A Linguistic Approach*. Bucureşti: Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică

Porter, C. (music and lyrics), Spewack, S. and Spewack, B. (book) ([1948] 2000) *Prompt Book – Kiss Me, Kate* [revised]. Directed by Blakemore, M., choreographed by Marshall, K., book revisions by Elias, A. and Elias, L. New York: Tams-Witmark Music Library Inc.

Raskin, V. (1985) *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor.* Dordrecht/ Boston/ Lancaster: D. Reidel Publishing Company

Rich, F. (2000) 'Conversations with Sondheim'. *The New York Times Magazine* [online] 12 March 2000. available from <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/12/magazine/conversations-with-sondheim.html#>;

<http://partners.nytimes.com/library/magazine/home/20000312mag-sondheim.html> [23 December 2008]

Rodgers, M. E. (2005) *Mencken: The American Iconoclast*. New York: Oxford University Press

Shakespeare, W. (1981) *The Taming of the Shrew*. ed. by Brian Morris. London: Thomson Learning [The Arden Shakespeare. Second Series]

Simpson, P. (2003) *On the Discourse of Satire. Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company

Willis, K. (2002) 'Making Sense of Humour: Some Pragmatic and Political Aspects'. *Pragmatics Humour* [online]. available from <http://www.pragmaticshumour.net/ makingsenseofhumour/contents.htm> [15 October 2009]

Yachnin, P. (1996) 'Personations: *The Taming of the Shrew* and the Limits of Theoretical Criticism'. *Early Modern Literary Studies* [online] 2.1, 1996, 2.1-31. available from <http://purl.oclc.org/emls/02-1/yachshak.html> [15 March 2005]

The Tragedies of Yorùbá's Spiritual Space

Daniela-Irina DARIE[*]

Abstract

In his play The Road, *written in 1965, Wole Soyinka, the 1986's winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, addresses in sombre shades not only to the historical tragedies of the Nigerian space, but also to an obsolete cosmology unable to balance the social structures born in the postcolonial aftermath. Its engagement with rituals and masks, with the distortion of the Christian religion - forcedly imposed within a collective mind not prone to it - transforms the African cosmology in a haunting turmoil of trials and errors. In 1970, after his imprisonment during the Nigerian War, the Nigerian playwright creates a God-like figure in* Madmen and Specialists, *a tragedy considered one of the gloomiest collections of representations in the history of the African theatre. We will argue that both plays advance proposals of hybrid gods, and both plays end by envisioning failures and death. Through these forms of death, the complex creations of an alienated collective mind strain to shape a space in which the ancient cyclic pilgrimage of old gods and the linear progressive design of the modern gods share a dimension of death and revival around which a new social identity could be interwoven.*

Keywords: *Obatala's myth, chthonic space, African tragedy, egungun masquerade, Christian religion*

Madmen and Specialists is one of Soyinka's four major plays written after his imprisonment (1967-1969) during the Nigerian Civil War. The anomy in which the Nigerian society performs destroys the system in which the history of the country channelled the memory of Nigerian people. Left without landmarks and anchors in this ever-changing habitat, Soyinka's characters turn to gods, only to find them as ineffective as their destroyed philosophy of life. So they attempt to construct a new god, a new language through which to make sense of the uncanny world facing them. For a god made of words, Soyinka employs "a play of words rather than action," as Frances Harding observed (1991: 87-98), and *Madmen and Specialists* translates this very process. The series of dialogues, fragmented by songs and gigs, evolves in a staged discourse in which each stage enriches the previous one, triggering a re-evaluation of the worldview and religious view resonating in each character.

Old Man's son, Dr. Bero, the Specialist (in Intelligence), decided to detain his father in his former surgery and is trying hard to find the meaning of "As", his father's cult, invented by Old Man. The four Mendicants – Old Man's disciples - are physically challenged and social pariahs, therefore prone to embrace any

---

[*] "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Doctoral School of Philological Studies, Iaşi, Romania.

theory, religious or otherwise, which could bring them meaning and a sense of participation, accepting passively anything the power of authority would find useful for them to receive. Old Man tried to teach them how to think, and in doing so, challenged these alienated human fragments to redefine themselves. His attempts bring the retaliation of his son, because, as Bero comments,

> BERO: Father's assignment was to help the wounded readjust to the pieces and remnants of their bodies (*not their minds*, our emphasis). (…) Instead he began to teach them to think, think, THINK. Can you picture a more treacherous deed than to place a working mind in a mangled body? (Soyinka, 2009: 242)

The new god of a broken world, a world populated by the mangled, deconstructed bodies of the Mendicants, finds its expression in a fragmented language, and new words are invented, defining the god As. Later in the play it becomes apparent that As is a collection of odd words, signifying bits and pieces of concepts and images.

As a social context of As' becoming, the four Mendicants observe and comment, becoming at once passive and active agents, powerful and peripheral (Harding 1991: 89). They are victims, but learn how to become oppressors. They are tragic figures, but in the sadness of their consciousness, they learn how to turn their destiny into a game of fatalities. As Dele Layiwola underlined: "[…] there is no greater delineation of fatalism in the odds and bits of human figures who thrive on the futility of their own drudgery as when they speak and sing and play their antics" (1996: 38).

Amidst these fatalities of the postcolonial world, Old Man acknowledges that he is no longer looking for an entity, already validated, called the Word, instead he strives to create his own self-defining system starting from the "word-ly" deity As, a fierce gloomy god, as Bero explains to his sister, from which escape is impossible, not with a sane mind. "Don't come out," he says, "don't come out from where you're safe. [Quietly.] Or sane" (Soyinka 2009: 241). The fragments of human bodies coagulate in an incongruous dictionary describing this fear of losing the sense of reality, the fear of transforming something known, something tangible through testimonial experience into something akin to a godly birth.

One of the most disturbing images whose representation, even acceptance, becomes possible under the rule of As, is the breach of the cannibalistic taboo. And this breach becomes an exhortation, a ritual, in the name of As.

> SI BERO: But at least tell me why? In God's name why?
> BERO: No, not in God's name – in the name of As!
> SI BERO: What?
> BERO: The new god and the old – As.
> SI BERO: What are you trying to be, Bero – evil?
> BERO: Does it sound that bad? It was no brain-child of mine. […] I'll *bless* (our emphasis) the meal, he said. And then – As Was the Beginning, As is, As Ever shall be… world without… We said Amen… (Soyinka 2009: 241).

Old Man's god is a self-creating god, suffering from the same fragmentation as the language it elicits. Its definition is a series of words, based on abstract concepts, turned over by the world, but accepted and "translated" in fragments of thought, as of bodies, by the Mendicants.

> AAFAA: A. As is Acceptance, Adjustment. Adjustment of Ego to the Acceptance of As… B… [His eye roams over the room for inspiration, falls on the Blindman.] Of course, B, Blindness. Blindness in As. I say this unto you, As is all-seeing; All shall see in As who render themselves blind to all else (Soyinka 2009: 246).

Acceptance, adjustment for the Nigerian, the alignment to the new order and levelling the African discourse to the cultural shock of the West, all invest a message, and Soyinka's message is terrifying. Align or perish, seems to demand his newly created God. In order to survive, Africans must renounce and denounce their Ego and become a fragment of the chaos in order to understand the chaos.

> AAFAA: C… C? […] No, nothing from you lot this time. An't see how I can ask the flock to get crippled for some reward in As. […] D-good-I don't have to go far for that. D, Divinity. Destiny is the Duty of Divinity. D-D-D-Destiny in 3-Dimension. We the Divinity shall guide the flock along the path of Destiny (Soyinka 2009: 246).

Old Man's language ironically mimics the Christian credo, believing without searching that this man-created Divinity will fulfil the duty of harbouring Africa, a three-dimensional understanding of the pain a body (a society) suffers when broken in unrecognisable fragments of thought and dead believes.

> AAFAA: E…
> BLINDMAN: Epilepsy? […]
> BLINDMAN: For your Divinity to have control, the flock must be without control. Epilepsy seems to be the commonest form.
> GOYI: I know what you mean. Taken by spirit, they call it. It's a good circus turn any day (Soyinka 2009: 246).

Soyinka employs these "parodies of Christian liturgy and African ritual idioms" (Jeyifo 2003: 122), elaborating a game of religious control which will prove to be the unstable realm in which "fundamentalist or absolutist modes and system of thought […] work to normalize warfare, warmongering and gross abuses of power" (122).

The deities of the Yorùbá mythos collapse into an "ironic deflation" (Jeyifo: 122), the new god As, a caustic appraisal of motivating and even ritualizing the hunger for power of the new generation of African leaders. As Biodun Jeyifo argues, "this is the reason why, of all of Soyinka's plays, «Madmen and Specialists» is about the only drama in which the use of festive, carnivalesque modes has a completely unrelieved sardonic edge on it"(122).

Madmen and Specialists poises a certain difficulty for its analysts associated with Soyinka's two-fold approach of the myth, as a concept: the "pristine", autochthonous flowing of mythical discourse, and the universal ritual matrix. Rising between them, searching to balance the void and to mediate in a continuous struggle, the "old ways" of praying, chanting, dancing and impersonating of the egungun performance masks inform the new god, a flowing of words and sounds which transforms a living spectator into a dead ancestor. Old Man, in his attempts to legitimize his god As, cherishes this transition, a "collusion of the audience which effects the transition from representation to reality – from «as» to «is»," as Frances Harding explains (1991: 95).

The second proposal of a god is to be found in modern Nigeria, more specifically, in its roads, as true death traps. The number of victims claimed by the rough and uncared system of transportation amounts to tens of thousands (Wimborne 1989). The legislation governing the circulation is as frail as the asphalt from which the roads are built, creating the conditions for an underground "industry" of forgery and bribe. Along these roads, thousands of lorries run at dangerous speeds, from and to the market. Old, rusted and on the point of breaking down, they are driven by individuals not rarely without a valid licence (Gibbs 1995).

Against this background, the free-lance drivers of *The Road* inhabit a night-shelter over which an eccentric man, called Professor, reigns with authority. He provides licences, food, palm-wine, hemp, and a purpose to this forlorn and strange human collection. Professor is a former member of the Christian Church, accused of embezzling the Church's funds, and banished from the congregation. He is surrounded by acolytes, who assist him in the scheme he has elaborated for providing some money. He steals the road signs or misplaces them in order to provoke accidents which force the drivers to resort to his spare parts shop. He is also a forger, falsifying driving licences and official documents of transportation. At first sight, Soyinka proposes a whole universe of sins and disrespect for others.

The Road is a dense theatrical fabric in which the protagonist's inner questionings and obsessions are interwoven with elements of harsh African realities, in a coalescence of multi-layered actions and symbols, the road being the most pregnant, not only as a marker of the journey through life, but also as a signal for the social impact of technology upon everyday Nigerian life.

This rite of passage begins in a shack, and round the corner from a church. "The closed stained-glass window" of the church rests on an inscription: AKSIDENT STORE – ALL PART AVAILEBUL (Soyinka 1973: 151).

The lives of Professor's drivers and his mute protégée Murano, whom he had saved from a wrecked hearse, are a continual waiting. They wait for contracts and for the palm-wine bootlegger due in the evening, and meanwhile gossip, or recount the road's sagas, the great names sacrificed on the shrine of the road. Within this time circle, not unlike the waiting of Beckett's characters in *Waiting for Godot*, in the early hours of the morning, Professor returns to the shack, "in a high state of excitement, muttering to himself: Almost a miracle… dawn provides the

greatest miracles but this… in this dawn has exceeded its promise." (Soyinka 1973: 157). The wonders and the miracles of Professor's mystical visions will continue throughout the play, and as in *Madmen and Specialists*, nothing happens to bring a closure to the search for meaning. The relevance of the character resides not in his becoming as a theatrical figure, but in his former belonging to a Christian rite. A religious individual, as Soyinka constructs him, Professor is deeply committed to substitute a religion for another. And his religion, his god, is the Word, which he describes in a powerful representation, hidden in the fabric of a car accident:

> PROF.: There are dangers in the Quest I know, but the Word may be found companion not to life, but Death. Three souls you know, fled up that tree. You would think, to see it that the motor-car had tried to clamber after them. […] They all died, all three of them crucified on rigid branches. I found this word growing where their blood had spread and sunk along plough scouring of the wheel (Soyinka 1973: 159).

The Road elicited a powerful answer as a critique of Christianity as an agent of change. Most certainly, the character of Professor is as caustic and unforgiveable as any scientist on the verge of lecturing against the dogmatism of religion. As Izevbaye argues, Professor is "trapped in his verbal inquiry into two conflicting theologies of transition, the «Word made flesh» of Christian doctrine, and the «flesh dissolution» of the *agemo* cult." (2004: 480). The road, a hungry and terrifying god, needs sacrifices. As Samson "despondently" urges, "Kill us a dog Kotonu, kill us a dog. Kill us a dog before the hungry god lies in wait and makes a substitute of me." (Soyinka 1973: 198).

The metaphysical death and the transition from a state of individuality to a state of community are both anchored in and translated through the social imbalance and the new psychological and sociological order derived from the transformed Nigeria of the beginning of the 1960s.

The insatiable Nigerian highway, a road to hell and beyond, is appropriated to Ogun, the Yoruba god of iron, the destructive force of a destabilized sense of invasion, an invasion which enrages the desecration of the ritual sites. Within the call of Ogun's destructive forces, a new cult will be born, a cult of death and denial, which proceeds from denying the Western Christian doctrine. As Killam and Kerfoot posit, "the conversion outside of church doctrine" transforms the road in a god and its cult at the same time (2008: 262).

The recourse to ritual has a "therapeutic" effect, a cleansing of the societal psyche in order to alleviate the ordeals of transition from the realm of the dead into the world of the living. As Manjula noted, "Yorùbá culture retains the collective experience as a living reality"(84).

Again, akin to *Madmen and Specialists*, as Soyinka explains in his note "For the Producer," *The Road* employs the masque idiom, "strange to many" (Soyinka 1973: 149). An underlying belief of masquerade resides in the possession of the masquerader by the spirit of the deceased. The dance becomes a waving medium,

at the height of which a true Egungun translator speaks with the voice of the spirit. This cult of the ancestors is envisioned by Soyinka as "a visual suspension of death accomplished through dance" (Soyinka 1973: 149). In the same way, Murano, the mute, translates spoken language in movements, becoming "a dramatic embodiment of this suspension" (149).

In a way, Murano represents a fixed moment in time, a moment in which nothing happens, but which is, nevertheless, crucial for the evolution of the others characters. They all return to Murano as to the origin of time, the suspension between life and death, the moment from which life or death will come. As Soyinka writes: "[Murano] functions as an arrest of time, or death" (Soyinka 1973: 149). His "agemo" phase, the phase of "flesh dissolution," represents his choice, death, or "the transition from the human to the divine essence." This transition, as Soyinka underlines, is a core concept of the Ogun festival.

Viewed this way, Professor's Quest symbolizes also a philosophy of death, or better said, of reclaiming its essence. Professor's search for meaning and a new god ends up in death and tragedy, and one reason for Soyinka's choice would be Professor's involvement in orchestrating the egungun masquerade, ascribed and restricted to the will of the ritual representatives. But Professor's hunger for knowledge is overwhelming, and as he himself puts it:

> PROF.: I only sought to make my meaning clear, and I could not escape the source of my own sense of wonder…" (222)

Professor's firm belief that death cannot be the ultimate answer, that death's revelation is not necessarily "total or not at all" (227), borders a sacrilege in the eyes of the established gods, becoming a ritualistic performance challenging the laws of the ancestors and their deities.

The ritual is interrupted, seemingly due to mere chance, when Kotonu, following the intervention of "a miracle," escapes death by the rotten bridge, drives his wagon into the celebrating participants at Ogun's festival and hits a possessed Murano, deeply under the effect of his egungun mask.

An eccentric mind and attitude, not formally educated, but in the usage of convoluted words, and exhibiting an assuredness masquerading knowledge, Professor is "a recognizable Nigerian comic type" (Crow, Banfield 1996: 90-92). He is the "authentic" seeker of knowledge and the wisdom coming with it, but also prone to a "high state of excitement", psychologically permeable to "almost a miracle…" or, in another reading, to that mysticism he claims to have abandoned. Used to "a mystery in everything a new discovery every hour" (Soyinka 1973: 157), what creates his sense of wonder, of being the chosen one, is his investment with the power of translating the happenings of the miraculous type, as he himself ascertains:

> PROF.: I should be led to where this was hidden, sprouted in secret for heaven knows how long… for there was no doubt about it, this word was growing, it was growing from earth until I plucked it… (Soyinka 1973: 157)

His quest for the Word transforms reality into merely (pathological) dreaming, for "indeed anything is possible when I pursue the Word" (157). His assertion is, as Brian Crow and Chris Banfield underline,

> emblematic of the complexity of visionary questing, both for the character and his audience. Professor is indeed in the right place, but has been deceived by appearances,- on the other hand, having «sight and vision only for the Word», he is quite likely to lose his way, as he himself admits (Crow, Banfield 1996: pp. 90-92).

The audience is conjured to accept the authenticity of Professor's inner construction of a philosophic fabric, which is meant to sustain his godly Word, his quest for the meaning of life and death. For Professor, the Word is not only a god, it is a religion, with disciples and human shrines in which the Word resides. And such a shrine becomes Murano, because he is without a tongue, "deep, silent but deep" (Soyinka 1973: 186). But, as Professor warns:

> PROF.: Oh my friend, beware the pity of those that have no tongue for they have been proclaimed sole guardians of the Word. They have slept beyond the portals of secrets. They have pierced the guard of eternity and unearthed the Word, a golden nugget on the tongue. And so their tongue hangs heavy and they are forever silenced (Soyinka 1973: 186).

In his journey, Professor searched for the Word within so many spaces and contexts, and his final speech is the profession of his credo, and, at the same time, a legacy; a legacy attesting for the birth of a new way of perceiving the world and of achieving a level of knowledge which transcends the void separating life from death, the dream from the road. Facing death, Professor "makes a vague gesture of the hand, like *a benediction* (our emphasis)" and proclaims:

> PROF.: Be even like the road itself. Flatten your bellies with the hunger of an unpropitious day, power your hands with the knowledge of death. In the heat of the afternoon when the sheen raises false forests and a watered haven, let the event first unravel before your eyes. Or in the dust when ghost lorries pass you by and your shouts your tears fall on deaf panels and the dust swallows them. Dip in the same basin as the man that makes his last journey and stir with one finger, wobbling reflections of two hands, two hands, but one face only. Breathe like the road. Be the road. Coil yourself in dreams, lay flat in treachery and deceit and at the moment of a trusting step, rear your head and strike the traveller in his confidence, swallow him whole or break him on the earth. Spread a broad sheet for death with the length and the time of the sun between you until the one face

> multiplies and the one shadow is cast by all the doomed (Soyinka 1973: pp. 228-229).

So become the serpent, the python celebrated at the end of Soyinka's novel, *The Interpreters*, the sculpture of a man in search for the determinants of his destiny, and a way to escape the cyclic concept of history. The ouroboros, the tail-devouring snake, marks the "doom of repetition," as the Quest of the Word would bring only the repetitive death. The murder of the archetypal father – the mentor, the provider – and with it, the sin of questioning the right of being a god are driven by fear, the fear for seeing too closely things believers in old gods should not see. The ultimate secrets of life, including the unknown of death, the essence of the Word, mean the annihilation of any creative act. Therefore, when Say Tokyo Kid kills Professor in a ritualistic anguish, he becomes Ogun's seeker, the creative force rising against the self-destructive principle. Professor's Quest dies with him because his Word is "the smear of blood on [one's] brain", because it is marred by the tracks of lorries "pregnant with still-borns." (Soyinka 1973: 195, 196)

His Word proves itself to be linked to death and earth, and is to be found "where ascent is broken and a winged secret plummets back to earth." (Soyinka 1973: 180), in those horizons where new gods such as As and the Word try to dance the same old ritualistic dances only to end sacrificed to the circular anomy of a disintegrated Nigeria. Soyinka's characters' aborted attempts to return to the safety of their past define and translate in the modern rituals of the road the tragedies of Yorùbá's spiritual space.

Soyinka's two plays, *Madmen and Specialists* and *The Road*, present distinctive perspectives not only on the conflict between the religious philosophy of the West and of the Nigerian space, but also on the coping processes redefining the post-colonial society. Meanings are to be found by the seekers of knowledge, argues Soyinka, by the African scientists and thinkers, in the ritualistic world of the Yorùbá exhortation of old gods and in the adjustment of the social to a changed system of creeds.

One answer to the dissolution of the old world, of the pre-colonial Africa, is a redefinition of the concepts and the re-creation of a new philosophy of life, meant to make space for technological progress, represented by the road, the new god of death, and for the quest itself, but without forgetting the roots nourished by the ancestors, whose power to retaliate remains unchallenged.

The second answer employs the recognition of death as a phase of life, through which the thinker must discern and engage the fragments of reality between death as complete absence and death as perpetual beginning. Both answers are answers of words, not of action, and their meaning is either lost, beaten by the sheer sound of them, as in *Madmen and Specialists*, or a forced mystical commixture striving to become the language of a new god as in *The Road*.

Professor of *The Road* explores both the Christian religion, and the egungun mask, in his rich register of prophetic resolutions. An insane researcher of the essence of death, and as such, of the meaning of life, Professor challenges the

attempts of Old Man at reconstructing the new from the ancient. As James Gibbs underlines, "the Word is therefore connected with death and the earth" (1996: 95).

Both main characters of Soyinka's plays are perceived as psychotic, but their abnormal psychic seems to be the only one capable of reaching beyond the realities of the road, and the sufferings of the ordinary man, two faces of the same post-colonial reality, which Eldred Durosimi Jones called "the erosion of humanity in a well-organized, tightly controlled authoritarian society" (1973: 91).

The significance of the egungun masks and the arresting stage of the ritualistic dance mandate a separate analysis, but undeniable is their usefulness in describing what Wole Soyinka named "The Fourth Stage" of an act of creation, the stage in which the testimony of the ancestors becomes the language in which the present African thought is translated. This stage of temporal transfixion is the medium in which the new gods could be born or made, but the mistake of minimizing or transgressing the voice of the old gods brings the abortion of any attempt and a death sentence for Soyinka's "spiritual voyagers", as Derek Wright names Old Man and Professor (1993: 90).

Modern African philosophy charges the African intellectuals with promoting the nostalgia of ancient myths of "primitive cultural unanimity and for opposing false unitary, totalitarian concepts of African society to the West pluralisms" (Hountondji 1976: 161-66).

Soyinka's characters counter-attack by transforming the ritualistic chaos of the anomic African space in a realm of searches and reformulations. Even if they end in death, their proposals for an authentic post-colonial pantheon ultimately represent choices, attempts to understand the alienating experiences Nigeria has suffered.

References

Beier, U. (1970) *Introduction to African Literature*, Northwestern University Press, cited in VN Manjula, *Song for the Road Wole Soyinka's Imagery and Tradition*, Language in India www.languageinindia.com

Crow, B., Banfield, Ch. (1996) *Wole Soyinka and the Nigerian theatre of ritual vision. An introduction to post-colonial theatre*, New York: Cambridge University Press

Durosimi Jones, Eldred (1973) *The Writing of Wole Soyinka*, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd

Gibbs, J. (1995) The Writer and the Road: Wole Soyinka and Those Who Cause Death by Dangerous Driving, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, http://www.jstor.org/stable/161486, 469-498

Gibbs, J. (1996) *Critical Perspectives on Wole Soyinka*, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

Harding, F. (1991) Soyinka and Power: Language and Imagery in Madmen and Specialists, *African Languages and Cultures*, Vol. 4, No. 1, The Literature of War, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1771684, 87-98

Hountondji, Paulin (1983) *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, London: Hutchinson

Izevbaye, D. (2004) *West African literature in English: beginnings to the mid-seventies*, in F. Abiola Irele, Simon Gikandi (eds.), *The Cambridge History of African and Caribbean Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 480-510

Jeyifo, B. (2003) *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics and Postcolonialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Killam, D., Kerfoot, A. (2008) *Student Encyclopedia of African Literature*, Westport-London: Greenwood Press

Layiwola, D. (1996) The Philosophy of Wole Soyinka's Art, *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Spring 1996, 38-48

Manjula, VN *Song for the Road Wole Soyinka's Imagery and Tradition*, Language in India www.languageinindia.com

Soyinka, W. (2009) *Madmen and Specialists. Collected Plays 2*, New York: Oxford University Press, 215-276

Soyinka, W. (1973) *The Road. Collected Plays 1*, New York: Oxford University Press, 147-233

Wimborne, N. (1989) A Poet Fights Nigeria's Heavy Road Carnage, *The Western Mail*, July 1989

Wright, Derek (1993) *Wole Soyinka Revisited*, New York: Twayne Publishers

Western Political Philosophy in J. M. Coetzee's
Diary of a Bad Year

Oana-Celia GHEORGHIU✶
Michaela PRAISLER✶

Abstract

This paper aims at evaluating J. M. Coetzee's Diary of a Bad Year – *a novel which, for the time being at least, has received much less critical assessment than the writer's widely-acknowledged masterpieces – from the perspective of the intertextual relation it establishes with Western philosophers in point of political thinking, but also from that of its own politics of writing, which have geared the author towards experimenting with the traditional, feminine and introspective, diary mode in view of forwarding his opinions on perennial, yet acutely contemporary issues such as the state and the constraints it incurs, democracy, anarchism, terrorism, doctrine; on breaking news issues like avian influenza or Al-Qaida; but also on lighter topics such as music, the body, tourism, language use or authority in fiction. On the one hand, the reading thus discloses Coetzee's affiliation to certain patterns of Western philosophical thinking, which he either follows closely, or confutes passionately. On the other hand, a further focal point in the present undertaking concerns the experimentalist-like innovation in point of form: the multi-layered diegetic scaffolding and the polyphony of the narrating instances.*

Keywords*: politics of the novel, diary, contemporary issues, polyphony, intertextuality*

The assessment of the South-African (now Australian citizen) J. M. Coetzee as one of the most important contemporary novelists worldwide can hardly be questioned judging by the two Booker Prizes he was awarded –in 1983, for *Life & Times of Michael K*, and in 1990, for *Disgrace*, novels rooted in the (post)apartheid South-African socio-political environment – and by the Nobel Prize for Literature received in 2003. Today, Coetzee's novels are impatiently awaited both by the academia and by the general public, who usually welcome them with due regard. Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that the release of his latest novel, *The Childhood of Jesus* (2013), has brought rumours of considerations for an unprecedented third Booker Prize.

Nevertheless, his last but one novel, *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), under focus in this paper, has received much less critical attention than his widely-acknowledged masterpieces. Of course, it could not escape the attention of David Attwell, Professor at University of York, a former student of Coetzee's, editor of a book of essays and interviews with the South-African author (*Doubling the Point*,

---

✶ PhD Student, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania, Oana.Gheorghiu@ugal.ro
✶ Professor, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania, Michaela.Praisler@ugal.ro

1992), and probably the greatest authority in the critical evaluation of the latter's literary output. *Diary of a Bad Year* was also included in the *Cambridge Companion to J. M. Coetzee* by the reputed British critic of contemporary literature, Dominic Head, who describes it as a "challenging metafiction, breaking its fragile novelistic frame in extravagant fashion" (2009: 90). The name of the novel's first part also provides the title of an excellent collection of essays on authority in fiction: *Strong Opinions: J. M. Coetzee and the Authority in Contemporary Fiction*, edited by Chris Danta, Sue Kossew and Julian Murphet (2011). Already singled out as a significant contribution to the resurrection of the (debate on the) novel, *Diary of a Bad Year* remains to make history, just as it remakes the history of the genre.

Generally speaking, all the critics account for four defining aspects of *Diary of a Bad Year*. It is seen as a metafictional, autobiographical, political and philosophical piece of writing which, as Dominic Head maintains, "at first glance, […] can seem more of a treatise on fiction than a work of fiction in itself" (2009: 93), practically rounding itself up as a complex cultural intertext centred on western political philosophy.

Unlike his earlier fiction, where the metafictional component results from placing the various "links between colonial fictions, history and exploitation" (Kossew 1996: 33) under the interpreter's lens, Coetzee's 2007 novel lays emphasis on fiction in general as a convenient disguise for considerations on contemporary history. In other words, the diachronic approach is replaced by the synchronic one, yet the preoccupation with politics and poetics is not given up. The diegetic scaffolding is multi-layered in both cases and the polyphony of the narrating instances, though understated, is preserved.

In Part One of *Diary of a Bad Year*, 'Strong Opinions' (very probably inspired from Vladimir Nabokov's 1990 collection of interviews, articles and editorials), history becomes his-stories, being dissected in distinct and monologic, short and effective political essays delivered in the voice of a fictional auctorial narrator, which build the foundation of Coetzee's house of fiction and contribute to the overall polyphony of the novel discourse. Architecturally placed on top are two successive storeys / private stories: J.C.'s and Anya's diary entries on the self, the other and the universe. The structure is graphically represented top-down on the page – as two, then three separate bands (as Anya is eventually allowed a voice in Chapter 6) – with His story suggestively placed on top of his and hers. Form supports content, the central notions of hierarchy, power, authority and patriarchy being foregrounded.

The novel thus also advances a covert reading game in its first part: it might be read horizontally, following the three levels separately, or it might be read vertically, descending from the auctorially manipulative political discourse on the state of the world to the confessional writing and the feminine meditations of the personal diaries, in an endless cycle of public manifestations and private incursions.

The other, metafictionally overt, game on offer in 'Strong Opinions' is facilitated by its general frame: J.C., the aging writer working on a contribution to a collective volume on what is wrong with today's world, meets young Anya, whom he asks to work as his secretary and transcribe his dictaphone tapes. Their conversations take place without managing to bridge the status, age or gender gap, but they allow in-depth analyses of the communication between governors and governees, writers and readers, narrators and narratees.

Part Two, 'Second Diary', advertising the autobiographical vein, opens in continuation to Part One's Chapter 31 ('On the afterlife'), which provides it with a symbolical ending, and takes up the representation of death by maintaining the middle band, reserved to the old writer, blank for some time (Chapters 1-4), creating the impression of a continuous line on a life monitoring machine. With Chapter 5, J.C. is revived, and the previous game is taken up once more, with interruptions and reversions in the diegetic levels established previously.

Compared to the strong opinions formulated in Part One – on the origins of the state, the political left and right, anarchism and democracy, terrorism, guidance systems, Al Qaida, Guantanamo Bay, animal welfare, governance in Australia, etc. –, those put forward in Part Two are weaker and address lighter topics like dream, fan mail, mass-emotion, kiss and erotic life, ageing, the classics, Bach, mother tongue, birds, compassion, being photographed, children, etc. Both types are cowardly hidden in diaries, despite the misleading titles. As Paul Patton rightfully notes, "in fact, there is both diary and opinion throughout the novel, if indeed it is a novel. As well as the strong opinions in Part One, Part Two contains what their author refers to as gentler or soft opinions" (2011: 53).

The shift is also obvious in narratorial voice and focalisation, as well as in gender issues, with an obliquely misogynist Part One, where the feminine character is mostly objectified (Nabokov's *Lolita* coming to mind) and presented as unable to grasp the serious topics tackled in the Strong Opinions:

> All he writes about is politics – he, el Senor, not Alan. It's a big disappointment. It makes me yawn. I try to tell him to give it up; people have had it up to here with politics. There is no shortage of other things to write about. He could write about cricket, for example – give his personal perspective on it" (Coetzee 2008: 26).

However, J.C. is unwilling to write about cricket for the time being. It is in Part Two that concessions are made: he ends up writing about the sport in question, just as he finally decides to approach other topics proposed by Anya in her repeated urges to make him give up political talk. In agreement with the German editor for whom he forays in the intricacies of contemporaneity, J.C.'s goal is to 'say his say on any subject he chooses, the more contentious the better', as one of the "six eminent writers [who] pronounce on what is wrong with today's world" (21). Murphet (2011: 64) compares the emerging pronouncements with a "non-fictional *J'accuse* in the venerable tradition of Zola", although, to J.C., the book entitled Strong Opinions, just like the first part of *Diary of a Bad Year*, is just "an

opportunity to grumble in public, an opportunity to take magic revenge on the world for declining to conform to [his] fantasies" (23) – which might be read as a tongue in cheek reference to / criticism of Nabokov's essayistic demarche.

Although having its central character oppose the mainstream in the book inside the book, Coetzee's novel remains inscribed within Western political philosophy, following a line of reasoning which characterises Eurocentrism. J.C. establishes direct and indirect intertextual dialogues with a wide array of artists and philosophers, covering the territories within their brains – a strategy reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's essay on 'Literary Geography' (in Lyon 1979: 186-189) – while subsuming the author's/ narrator's thoughts to a clearly delineated trend in political thinking.

Some of the sources are thus only identifiable on a closer look at the palimpsest of Coetzee's novel, while others are openly acknowledged. Forefront in the latter category – alongside Aristotle, Plato, Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Etienne de la Boétie, Michel de Montaigne, Kierkegaard etc. – one finds Immanuel Kant and Frederic Nietzsche. Kant's 'public performance of reason', "a tradition at least as old as Michel de Montaigne, [which] has since the eighteenth century come to be associated quintessentially with an Enlightenment concept of the public sphere" (Atwell 2010: 214) is recycled in the first part of *Diary of a Bad Year*. From Nietzsche, Coetzee borrows the ideas of resentment, revenge and drive to power. He openly acknowledges his influence in the essay 'On Boredom': "only the higher animals are capable of being bored, said Nietzsche. (…) As a child, I would have seemed to have been an unwitting Nietzschean" (Coetzee 2008: 217).

Also present are Samuel Beckett (partly explainable through Coetzee's doctoral thesis, concerned with the stylistic analysis of Beckett's English works), Kafka and, not surprisingly, Dostoevsky. The author of *The Karamazov Brothers* is, almost unavoidably, compared to yet another great Russian novelist, Tolstoy, in an analysis which seems rooted in Bakhtin's distinction between the latter's monologism and Dostoevsky's polyphony, and which apparently aims at dismantling Barthes's and Foucault's theories on the death of the author and on the function of authorship, respectively. Thus, in J.C.'s words, "no one is better at building up authority than Tolstoy", which is owed to the novelist's status: "during his later years, Tolstoy was treated not only as a great author but as an authority in life, a wise man, a sage" (151). On the other hand, Dostoevsky's genius resides in constructing, through the voice of Ivan from *The Karamazov Brothers*, an impressive anguished rhetoric against forgiveness, despite his strong Christian views (225-6). In Attwell's opinion, the rejection of the Barthesian credo that "the authority of the author has never amounted to anything more than a bagful of rhetorical tricks" (Coetzee 2008: 149) is "an abjuration on Coetzee's part, because he has often implicitly positioned himself in the tradition it represents, the tradition of anti-illusionism which culminates […] in Samuel Beckett" (2010: 220).

This functional monologism has also been acknowledged by Julian Murphet, who remarks that "the strong opinions of J.C. (…) are the closest Coetzee has yet come to the importation of what Bakhtin calls 'direct authorial

discourse', 'single-voiced discourse' of the 'monologic type' into his novels; and (…) are meant to be sensed and recognized as such" (2011: 74). Nevertheless, monologism seems to have been imported in view of deconstruction also, firstly because the triad of discourses in the architecture of *Diary of a Bad Year* offers more than one standpoints and, secondly, because all the names and sources in the novel's cultural intertext, whether overt or covert, reinforce plurality and diversity.

The very strategy of embedding political thought within an experimental metafictional novel supports this notion further. As Jonathan Lear remarks, it is not only a display of literary virtuosity, but "an attempt to defeat the reader's desire to defer to the moral authority, the novelist J. M. Coetzee" (2008: 68). Actually, the strategy is in keeping with the Western philosophical tradition, where many attempts at using literary characters in view of divesting the author of his intrinsic authority have already been identified. Lear, for instance, starts his demonstration from Plato's *Dialogues*, at whose centre is the figure of Socrates, who, with the claim that he only knows that he does not know, "distinguishes himself by eschewing authority when it comes to ethical knowledge" (id. 72). Lear then accounts for Kierkegaard's practice of writing under pseudonyms, explained by the Danish philosopher as an attempt to create pseudonymous authors who then "go and write their own books" (73). In his view, one must learn to "write without authority", or to split authority into multiple entities which escape the gravity of the governing centre. Coetzee however remarks that citing the philosopher readily turns him into this contested authoritarian centre: "by copying Kierkegaard's words here, I make Kierkegaard into an authority. Authority cannot be taught, cannot be learned. The paradox is a true one" (2008: 151).

Much in Kierkegaard's vein, J. M. Coetzee creates a fictional authority… in fiction, the authorial voice being barely disguised in J.C., a South-African aging novelist relocated to Australia who refers to *Waiting for the Barbarians* as "my novel" (Coetzee 2008: 171). This blurs the line between fiction and non-fiction or, better said, between the fictional and the autobiographical, being both a political statement and "an instance of Coetzee pushing at the limits of the novel in a way that makes the authorial persona a central focus" (Head 2009: 94). And at the centre it has always been. As Bill Ashcroft notes in a short excursion through the entire Coetzeean catalogue:

> There is no writer I know who is harder on his characters, particularly those characters whom we might associate with the author — Jacobus Coetzee in *Dusklands*, David Lurie in *Disgrace*, the central characters of *Boyhood*, *Youth* and *Summertime*, the testy narrator in *Diary of a Bad Year*, or even *Elizabeth Costello*, both tired and tiresome in those moments when she is most clearly ventriloquizing Coetzee's beliefs" (2011: 145).

In sum, the common denominator of all Coetzee's narrative practices and techniques is politics which, as asserted in *Diary of a Bad Year*, quoting Aristotle, is

"built into human nature, that is, is part of our fate, as monarchy is the fate of bees" (Coetzee 2008: 9). Admitting this, the novel under focus introduces itself as automatically political, reminding of George Orwell's 'Why I Write' and the famous statement: "[…] no book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude." (1981: 310) If everything is political, then striving for systematisation is futile. Faithful to this principle, in his *Diary of a Bad Year*, J. M. Coetzee does not aim at an archival systematisation of contemporary politics as we know it. Neither does he attempt to write political literature – a pleonastic phrase. Instead, he reasserts the notion that politics is a contaminant structurally impossible to remove from either life or art, while strategically turning politics into literature. In so doing, under the cover of fictionality, he reconstructs truths about political truth construction.

References

Attwell, D. (2010) 'Mastering Authority: J. M. Coetzee's 'Diary of a Bad Year'. *Social Dynamics. A Journal of African Studies* 36 (1)/ 2010. 214-221

Coetzee, J. M. (2008) *Diary of a Bad Year*. London: Vintage.

Head, D. (2008) *The Cambridge Companion to J. M. Coetzee*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Kossew, S. (1996) *Pen and Power: A Post-Colonial Reading of J. M. Coetzee and André Brink*, Cross/Cultures 27. Amsterdam: Rodopi

Lear, J. (2008) 'The Ethical Thought of J. M. Coetzee'. *Raritan*, 28 (1)/ Summer 2008, ProQuest Central, 68-97

Murphet, J. (2011) 'Diary of a Bad Year: Parrhesia, Opinion and Novelistic Form'. In C. Danta, S. Kossew and J. Murphet (2011) *Strong Opinions: J.M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*. London: Continuum, 63-80

Nabokov, V. (1990) *Strong Opinions*, New York: Vintage Books

Orwell, G. (1946) 'Why I Write'. In Orwell, G. (1981) *A Collection of Essays*. London: HBJ Publishers, 309-312

Patton, P. (2011) 'Coetzee's Opinions'. In C. Danta, S. Kossew and J. Murphet (2011) *Strong Opinions: J. M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*. London: Continuum, 53-62

Woolf, V. (1905) 'Literary geography'. In Lyon, M. (ed.) (1979) *Virginia Woolf. Books and Portraits*. St. Albans: Triad Panther, 186-189

Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* as an Act of Literary Resistance

Markéta GREGOROVÁ[*]

Abstract

This paper examines the sheer variety of creative roles that the contemporary Scottish iconoclastic writer Alasdair Gray assumes in his works of fiction, discussing the external manifestations of his multifaceted talents in action as well as considering the conveyed effect. Widely regarded as the leading figure of the 1980s Scottish literary renaissance and the founding father of Scottish postmodern fiction, Gray emerged as a major creative artist with the publication of his influential novel Lanark: A Life in Four Books *(1981), which epitomises his experimental approach to literary production and consumption.*

Gray figures in Lanark *not only as the author of the text and the creator of the accompanying original illustrations, he also makes a cameo appearance as the morose and mean writer of the work-in-progress, who engages in an intellectual discussion with his protagonist concerning the plot of the very novel. Under the alias of Sidney Workman, Gray also fulfils the task of the literary critic in annotating the metafictional chapter of Lanark with discursive footnotes and embedding in it an index of earlier authors and texts that have been supposedly plagiarised in the novel under scrutiny.*

Gray succeeds in utilising the characteristically protean quality of the postmodern age for aesthetic purposes of his own making, challenging by the means of the mutually reinforcing form and content of his work our assumptions about the world as we know it.

Keywords: Scottish literature; metafiction; postmodernism

Even though Alasdair Gray expressed his discomfort about being reduced to limiting labels, it has become a critical commonplace to introduce him as a pioneering Scottish postmodern writer. His novelistic masterpiece, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981), significantly contributed to galvanising the 1980s Scottish literary renaissance, from which there emerged a host of innovative authors soon to achieve international reputation. Alasdair Gray qualifies as a true polymath: he has tried his hand at a range of literary genres and forms, furnished all his books with his own unmistakably original design and decorations and also painted vast murals commissioned for several public sites in his native Glasgow. Ever since his outstanding literary debut with *Lanark*, Gray has been confirming his position as an incorrigible iconoclast keen on startling his readers and critics out of their asinine complacency. Gray likes to take control over all aspects of the book production process, including tasks that writers do not often deem necessarily integral to their work and leave to other professionals in the trade, such as illustrations, front and back matter and typesetting of the book. This comprehensive approach based on Gray's versatility enables him to appeal to the

[*] Mgr., Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic
marketagreg@gmail.com

audience on multiple mutually reinforcing levels and to convey a message of extraordinary coherence and strength.

Gray's groundbreaking *Lanark* is a flamboyant exercise in the postmodern literary technique and at the same time a sympathetic exploration of flawed humanity. This voluminous novel of epic resonance comprises four books arranged out of their chronological sequence because, as the author suggests, he wanted the entire book "to be read in one order but eventually thought of in another" (Gray 2007: 483). Two main story lines are being developed, on the first impression seemingly unrelated, yet on closer observation ingeniously interlocked. One story involves a deeply troubled teenager, Duncan Thaw, obsessively pursuing a fulfilment of his artistic vision in a realistic setting of post-World War II Glasgow. Frustrated in his efforts, Thaw takes his own life only to be reincarnated as Lanark, the protagonist of the other story, which is set in the dystopian city of Unthank and follows Lanark's symbolically endowed search for sunlight. The plot does not evolve in a linear fashion and is further complicated by additional framing devices, stories within stories and metafictional digressions. Beat Witschi (1991: 85) points out that in contriving such a multi-layered narrative, "Gray raises questions about the hierarchy and mode of existence of his various worlds. . . Thus it is virtually impossible for the reader . . . to decide who speaks about whom?, and when?, in which world?, and with what authority?" Undermining the notions of hierarchy and authority on the level of form emphasises the implications of the book on the level of content, which is where a strong distrust of official discourse and externally imposed authority are conveyed.

Gray's work, however, neither champions individualism, nor does it celebrate anarchy, quite the contrary, it embraces humanistic ideals and envisions a cooperative society that would balance the demands of the community and the desires of the individual. Gray speaks about "a sense of justice", which he believes is impeded by "institutional dogma and criteria". Institutions "have been made by people for the good of people," Gray contends, "but when we see them working to increase dirt, poverty, pain, and death, then they have obviously gone wrong" (Axelrod 1995: 108). Alasdair Gray does not presume to offer practical solutions for rectifying social wrongs, yet his art wholeheartedly supports what David Couzens Hoy (2005: 2) terms "critical resistance" and specifies "as the emancipatory resistance to domination". Hoy (2005: 6–8) discusses three forms of resistance—political, social and ethical—while maintaining that resistance does not necessarily imply clear goals and ideological programmes and that any active acknowledgement of one's unfreedom ultimately qualifies as an act of resistance. Considering Alasdair Gray's critical attitude to institutional hegemony manifested in his work, another form of active criticism could be added to Hoy's taxonomy: literary resistance. Literary resistance in a broad sense seems to be the default mode of Gray's writing and shows on the interwoven levels of form and subject matter as well as in small details, such as Gray's assuming the roles of the illustrator and typesetter besides that of the author of his work.

A sense of literary self-consciousness pervades much of *Lanark* but becomes particularly relevant in the epilogue, which, contrary to conventional expectations, happens to be inserted about three quarters throughout the book rather than at its end. Here the protagonist confronts his author in an uneasy conversation revolving around the protagonist's preference as to the ending of his story, which proves to be irreconcilable with his author's aesthetic intentions. The "conjuror", as the author figure calls himself, flatly announces that he "plans to kill everyone" and proceeds to elaborate on his perceptions, "display erudition" and "utter some fine sentiments" (Gray 2007: 483–496). The conjuror as presented in the epilogue parodies the traditional concept of an omnipotent author who speaks through an omniscient narrator, a technique which has now been rendered obsolete. *Lanark*'s author admits that he no longer puts himself on par with God with respect to the power that he can exercise over his characters and shows genuine surprise at certain details in his character's life of which he claims no knowledge. A paradoxical situation ensues when the conjuror interrogates his protagonist to learn about the portions of *Lanark*'s story which he has not yet written, for he is working on the epilogue as he speaks with Lanark, and the manuscript of the novel is still incomplete.

The epilogue of *Lanark* brilliantly exemplifies the major points of Roland Barthes's (1977: 148) influential essay "The Death of the Author", which turns on the proposition that the power and privilege formerly enjoyed by the author ought to be ceded to the reader in the interest of literature. Barthes (1977: 145) denies to the contemporary author any existence beyond the text: "the modern scriptor," he suggests, "is born simultaneously with the text . . . and every text is eternally written *here and now*". Hence, the knowledge and perspective of *Lanark*'s creator is as limited as that of Lanark himself, and by implication, *Lanark*'s author comes to be stripped of any pretensions on creating the traditional grand narrative, for he has no complete vision, no coherent worldview to pass on to posterity. Accordingly, Barthes (1977: 146) asserts that "a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author–God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and crash". He further elaborates:

> Literature (it would be better from now on to say *writing*) by refusing to assign a "secret", an ultimate meaning, to the text (and to the world as text), liberates what may be called an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases — reason, science, law (Barthes 1977: 147).

In the absence of the grand narrative and a single authoritative voice, a significant share of responsibility in the process of making the novel shifts to the reader, who is encouraged to critical thinking rather than merely following and enacting the wor(l)d of the Author–God.

Besides writing himself into the epilogue in the persona of the conjuror, Gray incorporates in *Lanark* a substantial and elaborate body of seemingly serious

scholarly criticism of the novel in progress. It consists of a battery of discursive footnotes and extended marginalia in the form of an "Index of Plagiarisms", where three distinct types of supposed "literary theft" occurring in the novel are defined and the original authors are alphabetically listed (Gray 2007: 485). On closer examination, the device turns out at least in part tongue-in-cheek. Among plausible pieces of critique, there appears for instance the note: "This remark is too ludicrous to require comment here"; and in the plagiarism index there is the entry: "EMERSON, RALPH WALDO. Ralph Waldo Emerson has not been plagiarised" (Gray 2007: 488–492). The epilogue ends anticlimactically with one last footnote containing Gray's (2007: 499) acknowledgements of those who assisted in various ways with the production of the book, including the typesetters at Kingsport Press of Kingsport, Tennessee. Given the notorious unreliability of Gray's narrators, it does not surprise that *Lanark* does not conclude in universal carnage, as the conjurer conceived it would, but on a more hopeful note. Lanark does learn that he will die the next day, yet he forgets about it immediately and concludes the book in peaceful tranquillity, simply "glad to see the light in the sky" (Gray 2007: 560).

In the epilogue and elsewhere, Gray's idiosyncratic style involves occasional comic relief, with the author using anarchic humour as yet another form of literary resistance against the dominant discourse, while his characters engage in what Hoy categorises as political, social and ethical modes of resistance. Lanark's major act of political resistance consists in his effort to thwart fictional world powers from closing a destructive pact, and although he fails to do this, by attempting it at least he accomplishes an action of outstanding human value. Lanark does not view himself as a heroic figure, and neither does the narrator, who bluntly describes him as "a slightly worried, ordinary old man", but it is precisely this lack of heroic mood that renders Lanark's achievement significant (Gray 2007: 560). Hoy (2005: 7) delineates one particular form of social resistance as "opposition to the ways that institutions shape individuals", which covers a substantial part of the story of Lanark's alter ego, Duncan Thaw. Thaw struggles with the institutional restraints of the art college that he attends on a bursary and that he despises for wasting his admitted talent on unambitious examination tasks focused on commercial design. After being dismissed from the college without degree, Thaw comes into conflict with institutionalised religion, whose representatives do not welcome Thaw's boldly original interpretation of the Creation painted by him in a church mural. "The paradigm for ethical resistance is such that ethical resistance will inevitably fail," Hoy (2005: 8) echoes Derrida and adds, "the ultimate resistance is in the face of death". Ethical resistance applies to both Lanark and Thaw but is best illustrated in Lanark's response to the news of his impending demise in the conclusion of the novel: he ignores the message, thus asserting his ethical superiority over death.

More than three decades after it was first published, *Lanark* does not cease to delight, challenge and critically resist, in the sense that Hoy ascribes to the phrase:

> Resistance is both an activity and an attitude. It is the activity of refusal. It is also an attitude that refuses to give in to resignation. . . . Unlike resignation, resistance can lead to hope—that is, to an openness to the indefinite possibility that things could be different, even if one does not know exactly how (Hoy 2005: 9–10).

Lanark concludes in a characteristically postmodern open-endedness but on a hopeful note, which is, in the last analysis, enabled exactly by the novel's lack of binding ending. Alasdair Gray utilises the uncertainties characteristic of the postmodern era and encourages a re-thinking and re-evaluation of seemingly stable concepts such as truth, reality and authority. Admittedly, none of the experimental techniques that he employs in his writing constitute innovations in themselves. Gray's creative uniqueness lies rather in an eclectic synthesis of pre-existing elements and their clever appropriation to purposes and ends solely of his own making. The landscape of his fiction is marked by metafictional diversions, multiple narrative layers and typographical eccentricities, but permanently underlying there is humour, compassion and a deep commitment to humanity. Ultimately, his writing enacts his often-repeated maxim promoting ethical resistance and fostering hope, which has been engraved among other notable quotations in the new building of the Scottish Parliament opened in 2004: "Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation."

References

Axelrod, M. (1995) "An Epistolary Interview, Mostly with Alasdair Gray". *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15 (2), 1995, 106–115

Barthes, R. (1977) "The Death of the Author". in Heath, S. (ed.) *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana Press, 142–148

Gray, A. (2007) *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*. Edinburgh: Canongate

Hoy, D. C. (2005) *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-critique*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Witschi, B. (1991) *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism: A Study of Alasdair Gray's Fiction*. Frankfurt: Lang

Building on the Woolfian Text:
Intertextuality, Instrument or Philosophy?

Mihaela-Alina IFRIM[*]

Abstract

For a quite extended period of time now, the theoretical pool targeting literature and the forces involved in the emergence of texts have been characterized by an excessive and obsessive use of theories revolving mainly around notions which inevitably bring under the scope issues of postmodernism and intertextuality. This phenomenon represents a natural response in the globalized and technologized world of the present day, where the socio-political discourses are articulated in a constant process of cultural recycling. Therefore, most studies operate under the assertion that postmodernism, understood as being governed by a philosophy of repetition, symbolizes a context in which intertextuality, the instrument, is at work; however, the very metaphysics of repetition enables, within theoretical frames, a certain synonymy between the two notions. Reflecting on these ideas, when meaningful texts (illustrated in this particular case by the Woolfian text) enter the process of repetition, the question pops: is intertextuality an instrument, or a philosophy, or both? Consequently, the present paper is oriented towards providing possible answers for the question formulated.

Keywords: *postmodernism, intertextuality, Woolfian text*

Theorizing intertextuality

Despite its extensive use for the indication of various types of contamination of texts/ discourses, intertextuality is, in reality, the outcome or, better yet, the inevitable product of the metaphysics of repetition operating at the very core of postmodernism. Drawing its force from the modernist phase strongly influenced by the Nietzschean theory of irrationality and chaos, which mostly proclaimed the death of God, and by extension, of authority of any kind, postmodernism is characterized by a massive and chaotic production of discourses. Therefore, being perceived as a continuation of the modernist practices and, in its turn, being nourished by and relying on powerful philosophies emitted by acknowledged thinkers such as Nietzsche, Kant, Hegel and Heidegger, postmodernism operates under the assumption that abstract notions such as truth, God, nature and future do not provide a clear cut objective or neutral vision of what constitutes the unicity of the world. The two notions added into the equation by postmodernism are nature and future. Nature is here seen more as 'human nature', which is productive of culture and of history, an assertion supported by the words of Linda Hutcheon, who states that:

---

[*] PhD student, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi, Romania
mihaela.ifrim@ugal.ro

> […] the postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact 'cultural'; made by us, not given to us. Even nature, postmodernism might point out, doesn't grow on trees (2001: 2).

Being preceded by the notion of nature, which implies culture and history, future is the next logical choice to complete the list of the abstract concepts upon which the postmodern discourse is constructed since, paradoxically, it is subjected to historical repetition. In other words, postmodernists are convinced that the life of a micro-system, represented by an individual, or of a macro-system, represented by a state and, by extension, by a culture, depend on the way they are able to attain and repeat experiences, i.e. to repeat that which is 'new' in all ages. As a result, the future can be read as a constant demand for repetition. Therefore, in this context, history is accessed and revived/ revised based on the idea that it is mainly represented by discourse, that it exists only as text or that the postmodern text rewrites the textual past.

To put it differently, within postmodern frames, history as literature or literature as history and, in the end, discourses of any kind, fall under the incidence of repetition with the intention of entering the chain of perpetual production of meanings. As a result, "the past arrives in the form of texts and textualized remainders" (Dominick LaCapra, quoted in Hutcheon 2004: 129) and this entire phenomenon may be read as the justification of the existence of (inter)texts charged with meaning and value within systems of culture. Through this type of accumulation:

> […] one shows how different texts with which one is dealing refer to one another, organize themselves into a single figure, converge with institutions and practices, and carry meanings that may be common to a whole period. Each element considered is taken as the expression of the totality to which it belongs and whose limits it exceeds. And in this way one substitutes for the diversity of things said a sort of great, uniform text, which has never before been articulated and which reveals for the first time what men 'really meant' not only in their words and texts, their discourses and their writings, but also in the institutions, practices, techniques, and objects that they produced (Foucault 2004: 133).

Therefore, the meaning thus absorbed and transformed is under the incidence of the plurality of meanings (a characteristic of language and, by extension, of discourse) further highlighted by the constant process of reflections and repetitions triggered by the value of statements. To sum up would be to say that postmodernism is, or was, set in motion by the metaphysics of repetition which triggers the very process of re-writing and it is precisely the highlighting of this philosophical background which enables the partial synonymy between postmodernism and intertextuality.

The identification of intertextuality as instrument employed in the production of new texts/ discourses is the result of the structuralist and poststructuralist eruption of theories following a shift in the mentalities of humankind best reflected by the events registered in France in May 1968. The rebellious attitude of the 60s had visible effects on the theoretical space being encapsulated by the *Tel Quel* moment also known as 'the time of theory' (see Ffrench 1996). Being in fact a school, *Tel Quel* advances the opinions of some great names associated with the group (Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Phillippe Sollers, Michel Foucault etc.) whose work embodies the endeavour to elaborate new concepts, to produce plural theories with reference to various types of writing and the specific time and space they pertain to and to create a 'politics' resulting from an abstract view and understanding of writing (see Moi 1986).

In this fashion, Julia Kristeva proposes the concept of intertextuality as a result of an effort mainly based on the work of the Russian formalists and on Mikhail Bakhtin's workings of dialogism, heteroglossia and carnivalesque. As a result, in the investigation of the status of the word (extrapolated to text/ discourse) she identifies three coordinates of dialogue, as follows: writing subject, addressee and exterior texts as well as horizontal (subject-addressee) and vertical (text-context) definitions/ axes of it. The intersection of the two axes is explained as: "each word (text) is an intersection of word (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (Kristeva in Moi 1986: 37). Through the clear delineation of the two axes she manages to demonstrate Bakhtin's insightful view on texts as mosaic of quotations caught in a process of absorption and transformation and to advance the notion of intertextuality. Kristeva explains, noting on the political context within which his theories were formulated, that Bakhtin was preoccupied with social problems which determined him to see dialogue "as *writing* where one reads the *other*"; as a result, "Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication, or better, as intertextuality" (39).

Further developing on the concept of intertextuality, Roland Barthes, influenced by Kristeva's work on Bakhtin and operating under the assumption that every structure has a centre, proclaims the death of the author and sees the text as a tissue of quotations. Despite Barthes's view of the text as the product of déjà written/ read texts, the identification of the intertexts of a text does not guarantee their view as signified of the text's signifiers.

From this perspective, the Derridean philosophy fighting the theory of the stable meaning proves to be a sensible one. Stable meaning/ stable signification is associated with the main way in which ideology maintains its power. The structuralist and poststructuralist approaches to literature attempt to dissolute the idea of stable meaning which translates into Derrida's theory of the transcendental signifier, which in reality does not exist, as a result, "[t]he absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" (quoted in Allen 2004: 70). Therefore, in terms of the search for meaning, Derrida's view on the non-existence of the transcendental signifier is once again sustained since intertextuality presupposes a continuum of other

utterances which are in their turn intertextual constructs unable to provide signifiers (see Allen 2000: 73-74).

Bearing in mind Foucault's view that only the statements with value are preserved and reiterated in a perpetual production of meaning, Barthes's view of myth as a peculiar system can be applied to the intertext since "it is constructed from a semiological chain which existed before it: it is a *second-order semiological system*. That which is a sign (namely the associative total of a concept and an image) in the first system, becomes a mere signifier in the second" (1991: 113) – emphasis contained by the excerpt. In other words, myth is a metalanguage which possesses its own value in reference to a certain history and knowledge.

Building on the Woolfian text: Susan Sellers's *Vanessa & Virginia*

Vanessa & Virginia is a novel that reveals the world of the two famous sisters, Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf, as a multitude of first hand experiences lived by Vanessa which ultimately function as raw material for her more famous sister's writing. Susan Sellers, a highly regarded academic, often referred to as a "Virginia Woolf expert"[1] due to the research she conducted in this direction, chose to begin her career as writer of fiction with this fictional biography of the renowned rivalry but also of the close relation shared by the two sisters. Susan Sellers's novel *Vanessa & Virginia* has been selected here as sample analysis in the investigation of which the theory of myth is used as main formula. Therefore, the intertext following the characteristics of myth must contain its tripartite structure: the form (signifier) – which refers to the distancing from the meaning in which, nevertheless, it must be able to be rooted in a persistent mode; the concept (the signified) – which absorbs the history which "drains out of the form", i.e., it accesses a series of "causes and effects, motives and intentions" (Barthes 1991: 117); and, signification (the sign) – which represents the association of form and concept which is designated to distort the meaning.

Consequently, being considered a metalanguage or a second-order system of the intertexts it refers to, namely the Woolfian text gathered as diaries, letters and novels [2], the novel alters and manipulates meaning in order to provide an alternative universe where Virginia is presented in a stable environment. This is a quite different version of Virginia Woolf, which is considerably distanced from the collective, perpetuated for too many years now, image of the writer as a mad person unable to be in control of her mind. Therefore, the stable environment in which Sellers portrays Virginia Woolf is constructed in such a manner as to reinforce the 'fresh' image of the writer as a person able to invest her energy into writing by employing and recycling all of her and her sister's personal experiences into fictional worlds. By contrast, Sellers chooses to portray Vanessa as a person struggling to maintain control and to produce self-satisfactory art but whose, at times, chaotic life seems to be a continuous spring of inspiration for her sister's creative acts. Therefore, an intriguing stance engaged in the construction of the fictional lives of the two sisters is the subtle indication of Vanessa, the older sister,

always functioning as the role-model which in the end is responsible for influencing her younger sister both in a positive and in a negative manner.

As a result, the novel displays some scenarios intended to lead the reader to understand the powerful influence the sisters exerted on each other, especially the great influence Vanessa had on her sister. Such an example is obvious in one of the dialogues imagined between the Bell spouses, which provides the reader with the knowledge that the name of one of Virginia Woolf's most famous characters, Clarissa Dalloway was inspired by a personal event in the life of her sister, Vanessa: ""Did I tell you she was certain Quentin would be a girl? I said I'd call her Clarissa if she were. She seemed to like that." […] To my surprise, Clive grins. "She showed me a story she had written a few weeks ago that had a woman called Clarissa in it."" (Sellers 2009: 80). On the same note, the inception of *The Waves* is also seen as being triggered by an event experienced during a family reunion which made Virginia contemplate on life and death. Once again, the fictional environment advances the hypothesis that Vanessa was the muse for the story of "the life of a woman against the background of flying moths" (Lee 1977: 158):

> "No, Ness. You hold the light. Then there are lonely moths like me circling the lamp, searching for a way in. […]
> "So what about all the other people sitting at the table tonight? How do they feature in your sketch?"
> "They personify the different voices – emblematized by the moth."
> "Sounds like the start for one of your novels." (Sellers 2009: 166).

Besides the positive, i.e. creative outcomes already noted, the novel attempts to formulate the idea that the very same close relationship shared by the two sisters, and the constant positioning of Vanessa as role-model due to her being the eldest, are also responsible for a major destructive effect. Thus, one of the most spectacular and unexpected stances of the novel is the account of an attempt of suicide Vanessa has as a result of being driven mad by Duncan's rejection. She tries to take her life by choosing to enter the icy cold water of a river:

> I cannot stop the pictures from forming in my mind. I push my stick into the river and watch the water eddy round it in fast-moving circles. […] I step into the water and feel the icy cold seep into my shoes. The river is shallow near bank and brown with mud. I walk forward, noting the rise in the level of water. […] I feel calmer now that I am in the water, as if the cold is slowly numbing my pain. This is what I desire. Not to feel anymore. Not to long for what I cannot have (171).

Vanessa abandons her plans of suicide thinking of her children, but she returns, hurt and soaking wet, to her sister's house. The scene of the two sisters evokes a sincere love and a very protective spirit coming from Virginia. She undresses and wraps her sister into a warm blanket, she stokes up a fire and takes care of her sister's wounds, understanding the real reason of her sister's state, in a sombre irony forces Vanessa to make a promise: ""I want you to swear that no matter

what happens – no matter how terrible life is – you will never try anything like this again." I nod. There is nothing in your tone to signal the import of the pact we are making" (173).

Although *Vanessa & Virginia* is a novel constructed from references to an impressive amount of works, the presence and the impact of *To the Lighthouse* is felt like a guiding thread throughout the novel. This is, perhaps, owed to the fact that Woolf's novel tells the story of a family which was to a great extent hers. Virginia is depicted as borrowing from the personality of her father when, through the words of the character Vanessa, Sellers calls for the remembrance of *To the Lighthouse*; thus, in the sequence quoted below from *Vanessa & Virginia* the intention is for the two sisters to be outlined as opposites so as to mirror the dichotomy between Mr and Mrs Ramsay in the corresponding Woolfian novel:

That year, we went to Cornwall on our own. The weather was glorious, I remember, and Thoby, Adrian and I roamed the coastal paths for miles. You refused to come walking with us. […] We returned from our walk to find you cloistered in the sitting room, poring over one of Father's books. You had pulled the curtains half-shut. Thoby and Adrian fell silent as we entered the gloomy interior. "What's that you're reading, Ginny?" You lift the book high enough for me to see that it is Hardy's elegies. "The waves were heavenly. You should have come with us." It is Thoby now who takes up the fray. He settles himself on the sofa, his skin radiant from the sun. "Yes, we thought we might get a boat and go to the Godrevy lighthouse tomorrow." […] I linger for a moment, consumed with guilt. It is only when I get to the door that I hear your voice. "There'll be no going to the lighthouse tomorrow. It's forecast rain." (Sellers 2009: 45).

'Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow, 'said Mrs Ramsay. 'But you'll have to be up with the lark,' she added. […] 'But,' said his father, stopping in front of the drawing-room window, 'it won't be fine.' Had there been an axe handy, a poker, or any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgement. What he said was true. It was always true (Woolf 2007: 259).

The image of the two sisters assuming the dichotomy defining *To the Lighthouse* is present right from the beginning in Sellers's novel and very suggestive in this direction is the episode from their childhood where Virginia asks Vanessa who she likes best when it comes to their parents; the answers are predictable, Virginia identifies herself with their father while Vanessa identifies herself with their mother:

> ""Who do you like best, Mother or Father?" Your question comes like a bolt out of the blue. […] I am dazzled by the audacity of your question. […]
> "Mother." I lean back into the warmth. […]
> "I prefer Father."
> "Father?" I sit up quickly. "How can you possibly like Father best? He's always so difficult to please."
> "At least he's not vague." You spin round and look at me directly. I sense that you are enjoying this discussion.
> "But Mother is …" I search for my word.
> "Is what?" Your eyes are daring me now.
> "Beautiful." I say the word quietly.
> "What does that count for?" You do nothing to hide your contempt. "Mother doesn't know as much as Father, she doesn't read as much. At least when Father settles on something you know he isn't going to be called away." (2009: 5).

The division present in the fragment alludes also to Virginia Woolf's interests towards her inheritance. In the third chapter of the first part of her biography of Virginia Woolf, Hermione Lee best explains this stance in the life of the writer, indicating some of her works as being symptomatic of this aspect. Thus, she nominates: *Night and Day* as the fictional space where Katharine Hilbery displays a strong attachment to her famous grandfather, at times identifying herself with him; *Orlando*'s story as the outcome of a merger between the exceptional individual and the historical inheritance; and *To the Lighthouse* as bringing to the fore the conflict of the modern, post-war artist in search of a way to come to terms with her Victorian inheritance (see 1997: 50). Although the fragment is indicative of Virginia's association with her paternal inheritance in terms of knowledge and education, it is also indicative of an early rebellious nature against the constantly "called away" by the household chores maternal figure. In Sellers's novel Virginia openly exposes an emancipated way of thinking about her mother teaching them history:

> "Please, I have a question." […] "Is it true Elizabeth the First was the greatest queen England has ever known? Was she truly – a superlative monarch?" […] "Do you suppose it was because she was a woman that she achieved so much? I mean, it's true, isn't it, that she never married? I suppose there wasn't a king who was good enough for her. If she had married she would have been busy having children and so wouldn't have had time for her affairs of the state. The people called her 'Gloriana' and she had her own motto." (Sellers 2009: 7).

Even if the question is entirely addressed to her mother, it is again the father who intervenes as the best person to guide such an inquisitive mind and, being extremely delighted by his daughter's "performance", he takes Virginia to his library to find supplementary reading for her. The episode is followed by the image of Vanessa and her mother trying to resume their history lesson with an effort on the part of Vanessa not to hear her mother's sigh.   The fragment

reinforces once more the idea of Virginia's paternal inheritance and of Vanessa, much like Lily Briscoe, living with the memory of her mother and with an unconscious fear and denial of her father (see Praisler, 2000: 163).

On the same note, that of following *To the Lighthouse* functioning as a guiding thread throughout Sellers's novel, chapter three in *Vanessa & Virginia* opens with the expression of some violent feelings Vanessa has towards their father, in the same fashion the Woolfian work expresses the intense feelings Mr Ramsay determines his son James to have: "[s]ometimes I stab father, sometimes I smother him with his pillow, sometimes it is the lethal mix of medicines I pour from the vials on his bedside table that kills him. Though there are variations in my method, the dream always takes the same form. […] I kill him quickly, effortlessly" (43). From the stances indicated so far it may be concluded that Sellers's version of Vanessa and her feelings towards her parents combine the attitudes of both Lily Briscoe and James. Therefore, Sellers constructs her character either by constantly remembering and evoking the image of the mother or by expressing feelings of anger and violence towards the father and, at times, towards her sister - evoked as assuming part of their father's authority. Last but not least, *Vanessa & Virginia* reminds of the creative act in *To the Lighthouse*:

I paint on a wooden panel […]. I stand back and look at what I have done. The area above the figure is still too empty. I look at my colors. I decide to ignore verisimilitude altogether. My brush itches for red. I squeeze crimson onto my palette and blend it with my knife. This time, I paint spheres. I turn the arcs into poppies, vast wide-open blooms. Their black stamens are fresh rings against the red. There is still something missing. I have black left on my brush from the stamens and I draw a line between the poppies, lacing them together. I stand back and observe. Yes, the thread ties the whole. My picture is complete (Sellers, 2009: 54-5).

Quickly, as if she were recalled by something over there, she turned to her canvas. There it was – her picture. Yes, with all its greens and blues, its lines running up and across, its attempt at something. It would be hung in the attics, she thought; it would be destroyed. But what did that matter? she asked herself, taking up her brush again. She looked at the steps: they were empty; she looked at her canvas: it was blurred. With a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second, she drew a line there, in the centre. It was done; it was finished. Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision (Woolf, 2007: 390-1).

That single black line is seen as the acme of creation, that single piece which holds the entire work together. If used or not as inspiration by her sister Virginia, one thing is certain: Susan Sellers manages to identify and to masterfully describe the hypothesised process of making one of Vanessa Bell's paintings, the one entitled *Nude with Poppies* (1916), which contains a similar centre line.

Final remarks

From a strictly theoretical point of view, intertextuality is both an instrument and a philosophy. Therefore, as a phenomenon, it is triggered by a context governed

by a philosophy of repetition where, almost aggressively, everything is reiterated, recycled and, last but not least, repeated in an attempt to borrow from the value of the meanings selected. This may be translated into the statement that the intertext cannot be completely separated from the intentionality of the author. Thus, the death of the author, as Barthes announced it, does not necessarily mean the complete removal of the author from the equation. It does also refer to the death of the reader as perceived within structuralist frames, that is, a reader "operating at an objective and exhaustive level" endowed with the scientific basis of language and by extension of literary texts (Allen 2004: 84). In what regards the sample text selected for analysis, the intentionality of its author is quite transparent as Susan Sellers explained that, in order to avoid producing a "poor pastiche", she decided to narrate the events from the perspective of Vanessa Bell. However, the text abounds in references to Virginia Woolf's works and to events from her life, the most daring attempt on Sellers's part being the effort to change through her writing the gloomy mythical and deeply rooted perception of the writer.

Notes

[1] See *Interview with novelist and Virginia Woolf expert, Susan Sellers* available at https://vulpeslibris.wordpress.com/2009/02/17/interview-with-novelist-and-virginia-woolf-expert-susan-sellers-giveaway/

[2] Since the focus of the paper is restricted to the Woolfian text functioning as intertext, references are strictly made in this direction; however it must be mentioned that Sellers's text relies heavily on other intertexts such as letters and paintings signed by Vanessa Bell, as well as thoroughly documented biographies of her life.

[3] An image of the painting is available at

http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/nude-with-poppies-64519.

References:

Allen, G. (2000) *Intertextuality*, London: Routledge

Allen, G. (2004) *Roland Barthes*, London & New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group e-Library

Barthes, R. (1991) *Mythologies*, New York: The Noonday Press

Ffrench, P. (1996) *The Time of Theory: A History of Tel Quel (1960-1983)*, Oxford: Clarendon Press

Foucault, M. (2004) *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge

Hutcheon, L. (2001) *The Politics of Postmodernism – (New Accents)*, London and New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group

Lee, H. (1977) *The Novels of Virginia Woolf*, London: Methuen and Co Ltd

Lee, H. (1997) *Virginia Woolf*, London: Vintage Books

Moi, T. (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*, New York: Columbia University Press

Praisler, M. (2000) *For a Psychoanalytical Approach to Literature. Reality and Fiction with Virginia Woolf and Ernest Hemingway*, Galati: Porto-Franco

Sellers, S. (2009) *Vanessa & Virginia*, Boston – New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Woolf, V. (2007) *The Selected Works of Virginia Woolf*, London: Wordsworth Library Collection published by Wordsworth Editions Limited

An Imagological Reading of Kazuo Ishiguro's
When We Were Orphans

Andreea IONESCU[∗]

Abstract
This paper focuses on the analysis of Kazuo Ishiguro's When We Were Orphans *from an imagological point of view. The storyline follows the life of a prominent British detective in his endeavour to solve the mystery of his parents' disappearances from their family home in Hong Kong. The images projected by the narrative reflect the centre of the empire in transition, with an accent on the reversal of the classical standpoints of characters, and a colony struggling to cope with the horrors of war as well as a change in vassality.*

Keywords: imagology, identity, otherness, national character

The much acclaimed British author of Japanese descent Kazuo Ishiguro needs little introduction, his books being praised by critics and avid readers alike. His writing is often chameleonic. His first novels take after one of the most celebrated Japanese styles of writing, the *nikki*, a first-person narrative which can be associated with the diary style in Western countries. *Never Let Me Go* approaches the science fiction genre in an Orwellian presentation of a dystopic future, while his latest release, *The Buried Giant*, has caused an uproar because it deals with the British folklore surrounding mythical creatures such as pixies, dragons, and the knights of Arthur, and was, thus, classified as a fantasy novel, a genre considered as lesser by literary criticism.

1. *When We Were Orphans* – An Overview
The focus of this paper falls on Ishiguro's fifth novel, *When We Were Orphans*, a first-person narrative which can easily be labelled as a detective novel, although it still carries the imprint of the Japanese *nikki*, each chapter being marked by date. It follows the life of Christopher Banks, a young and prominent detective on the London scene between the two World Wars, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the overexploited Sherlock Holmes.

The anachrony-filled narrative first details Christopher's hard work to rise to social fame through his impressive detective skills, then takes the reader on a journey to his childhood in the International Settlement of Shanghai where, first

∗ PhD student, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania,
andreea.ionescu@ugal.ro

his father, and then his mother, were abducted only a few weeks apart. During his time in Shanghai, the focus of the narration falls on the boy's friendship with the son of a Japanese diplomat who lived in the house next to their own, while also giving details about the Chinese staff both houses used, or Mrs. Banks's social activities. By the end of the 1930s, his status already established, Christopher decides to revisit Shanghai in an attempt to find his parents, feeling that it was both the goal of his life, but also an expectation of the society, somehow imposed on him more or less overtly. As his investigation progresses, the line between what is real and what is imaginary becomes blurred for the detective, while he realises that his memory is not to be fully trusted either, in a typically Ishigurian manner. He manages to find out where his parents were kept just after their abduction, and he convinces himself that, somehow, after thirty years, they would still be there. Unfortunately, the house in question is in the Japanese-occupied part of Shanghai, where he arrives with great difficulty, encountering on his way a wounded Japanese soldier whom he believes to be Akira, his childhood companion, despite all evidence pointing to the contrary. After escaping unharmed from this borderline psychotic episode, he eventually finds out that his father had not been, in fact, abducted, but that he had eloped with his mistress and had died after a short while stricken by typhoid. His mother, though, had been kidnapped by a Chinese warlord whom she had met during her campaign against the opium-importing companies, on which occasion she had also stricken and insulted him, triggering his retribution. The detective story ends on a lighter note for the protagonist, as he can, finally, enjoy the company of the family he so craved for, his conscience at peace for having at long last rescued his mother and obtained her pardon.

Focusing on Christopher's quest for maturity, social and professional recognition, and forming a family, the text foregrounds the shaping of his identity and the problems he encounters. Being raised in two completely different cultures, the narrator becomes a hybrid of both and is often presented struggling to gain acceptance within at least one of the societies he frequently comes in contact with.

2. On Imagological Grids

Such issues as national identity and stereotyping are central to imagological studies. Considering what coping with people of a different nationality traditionally implies, Joep Leerssen remarks that: "The default value of humans' contacts with different cultures seems to have been ethnocentric, in that anything that deviated from accustomed domestic patterns is 'Othered' as an oddity, an anomaly, a singularity" (2007: 17). Such contacts find their reflection in a wide range of texts where they generate images of the Other and, implicitly, of the self, which imagology explores using tools from various fields such as comparative literature, cultural studies and/or anthropology.

According to Daniel-Henry Pageaux, any image stems from the identification of an *I* opposed to an *other,* a *here* opposed to a *there*, the image being the expression of a difference between two cultural realities, or spaces; it is the representation of a cultural reality through which the individual, or the group, who conceived it translates the social, cultural, and imaginary space where they intend to situate themselves (Pageaux 2000: 82-84)[1].

The literary image, as it is represented in a text, becomes an ensemble of ideas regarding *l'étranger* obtained through a process of literalisation and socialisation. At the same time, an image may lead to problematic intersections, proving to be an important factor in the functioning of a society within its own ideology. The image of the *other* or of the observed culture, is complementary to that of the observing culture, the *self* being dependent on the denial of the *Other* in order to exist. Pageaux, then, points out that imagotypical texts can only be decoded by readers who recognise the image.

According to Pageaux, there can be three types of relations between the *Self* and the *Other*, dubbed as fundamental attitudes towards the *Other*: *mania* – in which case the culture observed is perceived as superior to the observing one by the *self*; *phobia* – when the *other* is viewed as inferior to the *self*; and *philia* – when the observed culture is experienced as positive and complementing the culture of the *self*. The fourth attitude he advances describes a situation in which the exchanges between the *self* and the *other* are indicative of a tendency of overcoming national boundaries (Pageaux 2000: 96-98).

To sum up, in Joep Leerssen's terms, the theories proposed by D. H. Pageaux define an "*imagologie*, much indebted to a Lévi-Straussian anthropology, as an *imaginaire* of perceived characterological (and national-characterological) diversity" (2007: 23).

One of the most acclaimed imagology scholars is Joep Leerssen. According to him, an image is "the mental or discursive representation or reputation of a person, group, ethnicity or nation" (Leerssen 2007: 342) while national characterisations should be regarded as tropes which obtain familiarity by repetition – whenever an individual encounter appears, the primary reference would be to a related textual instance, not to the empirical reality. He claims that these representations signal the existence of two types of images: auto-images and hetero-images. While the former deal with the characterisation of the *self*, the latter provide a depiction of the *other*. In addition, he also suggests national images collect into *imagemes*, which are "characterized by (…) inherent ambivalent polarity" (Leerssen 2000: 276).

An image may also be subject to changes; not because of transformations in the national character of a country, but because the attitude towards that particular nation changes, as was the case of the Germans before and after the two World Wars. Despite their tendency to change, though, all images of a given nation can be regarded as opposite sides of a complex human character, one

complementing the other. Along these lines, in Leerssen's view, auto-images and hetero-images are to be taken equally into account for both the spected, i.e., the observed culture, and the spectant, i.e., the observing one. When an image remains constant in time, however, it becomes a cultural stereotype.

Finally, it is asserted that "our way of thinking in terms of 'national characters' boils down to an ethnic-political distribution of role patterns in an imagined anthropological landscape" (Leerssen 2007: 29). This claim is, however, partially contradicted by the Dutch social psychologist and anthropologist, Geert Hofstede, who claims that the roles that imagologists like Leerssen identify as part of an imagined discourse actually have real-life consequences which he thoroughly details in his *Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind* alongside G. J. Hofstede and M. Minkov (2010).

Geert Hofstede asserts that any culture is made up of four kinds of variables: symbols – words, phrases with particular meaning; heroes – influential figures in society; rituals – gestures, habits, ceremonies; and values – the deepest manifestation of culture, which can be reformed with great difficulty and which represents the core of one's culture. Furthermore, finding individuals who share one's values enables them to create a moral circle, otherwise known as an in-group; these can vary highly, from social class level, to gender, generation, ethnic or national level.

National identity is not a fundamental part of national values, as it is rooted in practices – shared symbols, heroes, rituals. Thus, identities can shift, as in the case of successfully assimilated migrants. However, second generation migrants are a mixture, having a tendency to identify with the original country in the adoptive one, and with the adoptive one when they travel back to their parents' homelands.

Identity and culture should be differentiated, although they are often confused. People with different identities may share basic cultural values (e.g. Irish Catholics and Protestants), while people with different cultural backgrounds may be part of a single group with a single identity (e.g. academia). In order to fully grasp the extent to which cultures vary, Hofstede has pinpointed four dimensions of culture stemming from the basic problems encountered in societies, common to traditional and modern ones alike. A fifth one and a sixth one have also been identified and added to the revised version of his study on *Cultures and Organisations*.

The first dimension, power distance, measures the degree of inequality in society, the acceptance and expectations that people in less powerful positions have in relation to the more powerful ones. In countries with a large power-distance relation, people believe in a well-defined social order which cannot be easily altered; anyone who is labelled as superior – a manager, an elder, a teacher – must be treated with respect and their authority should not be challenged. On the other hand, in countries with low power distance, people try to balance the

distribution of power and challenge those who hold authority positions whom they do not consider above themselves (Hofstede et al. 2010: 53-88).

Individualism-collectivism, the second dimension, relates to "the role of the individual versus the role of the group" (Hofstede et al. 2010: 90). In an individualist society, each person will only take care of himself/herself and his/her immediate family, and will treasure leisure over pay. Interestingly, it was discovered that countries which belong in this category are usually wealthier. By contrast, the collectivist society is driven by the individual's self-image as part of a group defined as "we"; in such a society, it is expected that one person financially support a large number of people belonging to their extended family in exchange for their unconditioned loyalty (Hofstede et al. 2010: 89-134).

The third dimension described is masculinity-femininity. While masculine societies can be characterised by striving for achievement, heroism, assertiveness and material rewards for their accomplishments in an environment driven by competitiveness, a feminine society will value cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak and the quality of life, targeting harmony above all else (Hofstede et al. 2010: 135-186).

The dimension called uncertainty avoidance refers to the attitudes that members of the society will adopt regarding situations which involve uncertainty and ambiguity. It is relevant here to take into consideration the viewpoint such a society has in relation to the fact that the future cannot be controlled or predicted. In countries where uncertainty is strong, people are more anxious, exhibiting a strict moral code whence deviant behaviour and ideas are punished. In countries where uncertainty is weak, people are more relaxed and more open to innovation (Hofstede et al. 2010: 187-234).

Long-term orientation - short-term normative orientation deals with the relation a society has with its own past, present and future. A low level shows an inclination to avoiding change in society norms and maintaining longstanding traditions, while a high level expresses an encouragement for efforts in the present for a better future (Hofstede et al. 2010: 235-276).

The last dimension, indulgence - restraint, basically measures the amount of happiness present in societies. More indulging ones easily allow the fulfilment of the basic human drives related to enjoying life and having fun, while societies with high restraint suppress the gratification of needs and stipulate strict social norms to control them (Hofstede et al. 2010: 277-298).

The research undertaken by Hofstede et al. was based on surveys carried out in the field offices of different subsidiaries of the IBM Corporation and has practical functions. However, it can also be used as theoretical frame for imagotypically-significant texts along with the concepts put forth by J. Leerssen and D. H. Pageaux, which were presented above.

3. Centre-Margin/ Superior-Inferior/ Backward Periphery-Modern Centre

Taking into consideration the theories advanced by Daniel-Henry Pageaux, Joep Leerssen and Geert Hofstede, as detailed above, and the steps they proposed for an imagological study (also synthetised in one analytical grid by Ioana Mohor-Ivan and Michaela Praisler in "Some Theoretical Considerations on Imagology"), the present paper attempts to study the images constructed in the text of Ishiguro's novel *When We Were Orphans*. The focus of the analysis will first fall on the identification of the hetero-images and the assessment of the terms in which *otherness* is articulated. Another important step will be to identify the dichotomic coordinates which underlie the representation of the *other*, in order to finally corroborate the investigation of the form and function of images within the text (Mohor-Ivan and Praisler 2007).

Probably the clearest image a reader might capture from the text refers to the opposition between centre and margin, which is here reinforced by the one between what is perceived as superior and inferior, respectively. During the protagonist's stay in Shanghai as a child, the Settlement, a place especially built for the foreigners residing in the city, is described as an area that is clean, neat, even classy, but, above all, safe for children to move around unhampered. However, their parents banned their entry into the Chinese part of the city – a clear proof of what the representatives of the centre actually thought of their marginal adoptive country:

> It is slightly surprising to me, looking back today, to think how as young boys we were allowed to come and go unsupervised to the extent that we were. But this was, of course, all within the relative safety of the International Settlement. I for one was absolutely forbidden to enter the Chinese areas of the city, and as far as I know, Akira's parents were no less strict on the matter. (Ishiguro 2009: 33)

In complete opposition to the modern, superior settlement of the migrants, the centre-proper of the city is described as chaotic, with crowds flooding the dirty streets, with cars and rickshaws engaged in an unruly traffic, and danger lurking at every corner. All this amounts to a horrifying experience for the two young boys who sometimes spend their time fantasising about an imaginary, exotic world, the boundaries of which lay merely a few streets away from them. This imagined world of horror deepens the already substantial difference between what is considered modern and civilised and that which is rural, barbaric in the eyes of a child:

> Out there, we were told, lay all manner of ghastly diseases, filth and evil men. […] There were no proper buildings, just shack upon shack built in great proximity to one another. […] There were, moreover, dead bodies piled up everywhere, flies buzzing all over them, and no one there thought anything of it. (Ishiguro 2009: 33)

The reader, thus, perceives the International Settlement as the civilised, superior centre as opposed to the rest of Shanghai, which is perceived as the inferior,

backward margin. This, of course, adds to the general description of the Western British world civilising the barbarian Chinese.

Moreover, the Chinese that are described in the text further this opposition. There are two stereotypes of Eastern men described in the text – the other-worldly and the savage. The former are portrayed as spiritual, simplistic creatures surrounded by an aura of mysticism in comparison with the pragmatic, fact-driven, British businessmen or diplomats. In the neighbours' house, Christopher discovers a very old Chinese male servant whom his friend Akira is terrified of. The latter is described as being the only Chinaman who does not smile back at children, always keeping to himself, facts which the two friends find to be a giveaway of his true nature – a murderous sorcerer who cuts people's hands off to transform them into spiders. Aside from the intervention of the two children's imagination, which creates fantastical features for the old servant, a stereotype of the Chinese may easily be identified: all Chinese people are familiar with the occult.

The second type of Chinaman presented in the text is the ruthless, barbaric warlord who cannot be controlled by anyone. A proleptic section in the text provides the perfect description of such a man who, as the reader later understands, was going to abduct the protagonist's mother:

> [Akira] had seen a man – some powerful warlord, he supposed – being transported on a sedan chair, accompanied by a giant carrying a sword. The warlord was pointing to whomever he pleased and the giant would then proceed to lop his or her head off. Naturally, people were trying to hide themselves the best they could. (Ishiguro 2009: 33)

Nevertheless, the East is represented by China only; the Japanese, encountered both times Christopher is in Shanghai, are not seen as inferior to the British and equal to the Chinese, but rather like the British, which may be translated with the view that both nations conquered and colonised Chinese territories in mind, or perhaps as a continuation of the historic relationship Great Britain and Japan had at that time – with Japan often being called the England of Asia, and seen as a sort of protégé of its European 'big sister'. The historical context of Shanghai's occupation by Japanese troops is not, however, very much detailed upon in the text, and the Japanese remain there with an emphasis on the personal relationship of the narrator to his childhood friend of this ethnicity.

4. Femininity vs. Masculinity
Apart from the opposition between East and West, here is yet another one which is generally taken into account with regard to this dichotomy: the feminine East is faced with the masculinity of the West. The Orient is generally viewed through western eyes as feminine, elusive, sensual, and idle in contrast with the masculinity, assertiveness, vigour of the Occident. In Ishiguro's text, though, the

two roles are disturbed as the East assumes the masculine part and the West the feminine one.

Returning to the characteristics attributed to masculine and feminine societies by Hofstede's research, it is easy to identify the switch in the traditional roles between men and women/ male and female characters. To begin with, the mother and father figures seen in Christopher's parents during their time in the Settlement appear to have switched their traditional gender roles. The father is seen as a weak man, always struggling to keep up with his wife's ambitions, complaining that he cannot do a various array of things, lacking in authority and assertiveness. Christopher finds out about his father's struggles during his investigation in Shanghai: "It was difficult for him. He always loved your mother, loved her intensely. [...] And it was just too much for him, trying to come up to what he saw as her mark. He tried. Oh yes, he tried, and it nearly broke him." (Ishiguro 2009: 177)

His wife, on the other hand, is seen as a strong, outspoken, confident active person, involved in many projects, with no deficiency in firmness or influence. Probably the best way to illustrate her personality is to refer to her struggle to ban the opium trade in China. Seeing how negatively it affected the native population, she starts a movement against the British companies who imported the substance, despite the fact that her husband was working for one of them. She held gatherings at the family residence trying to bring awareness to other people and wrote letters to the companies in the attempt to explain what impact their actions had.

This misbalance proves fatal for the family and, after the parents' separation, the fate of those who did not abide by their classic roles takes a tragic turn. While the father is punished for not assuming a patriarchal position with the capital penalty, the mother is taught obedience by her abductor who makes her his concubine and treats her as a slave.

> [...] when I saw her that time, she seemed well enough. But while I was there, I asked others in the household, people who would know. It wasn't just... just a matter of surrendering to him in bed. He regularly whipped her in front of his dinner guests. Taming the white woman, he called it. (Ishiguro 2009: 181)

Upon her kidnapping, for fear she might decide to take her own life rather than become his concubine, the warlord strikes a deal: in exchange for a comfortable life provided for her son, she was to show complete obedience. The image of Christopher's mother being dominated by the Eastern man completes the alteration discussed above of the West losing its masculinity in favour of the East.

5. Self vs. Other
Looking beyond the borders of China and comparing the English people living in the Settlement to the ones the reader discovers in London, a significant difference is revealed. The characters in the novel prove to have a context/ setting dependent

behavioural pattern. The variation becomes clear once Christopher travels back to China in an attempt at solving the enigma of his parents' disappearances, because some of the English gentlemen and ladies the reader becomes acquainted with in England travel to Shanghai as well. While in their homeland, all of them behave in a mannerly style, their description never drawing the attention of the reader in any extraordinary way.

When met again abroad, a shift occurs and the reader suddenly experiences their presence in a quite different manner; both men and women become embodiments of cultural stereotypes of Englishness, being labelled by foreigners as drunkards, as void of emotion, pompous, overly-eager to keep up appearances. This transformation is seen in all British people that the reader has the chance to encounter in both locations, the narrative offering its audience the experience of facing Englishness as an auto-image and as a hetero-image. This corresponds to Pageaux's understanding of the concept of image, which draws its substance from the differences between two places, or two intervals of time. However, while the text depicts vividly the discrepancy between a *here*, in this case London, and a *there* – Shanghai – during Christopher's adult life, at the time of the protagonist's childhood there is no *here* opposes to a *there*, leaving readers with a missing piece of the puzzle, guiding them into drawing the only possible conclusion: that Shanghai represented the place the protagonist identifies himself with as a child.

In fact, the narrator is the only person who suffers no alterations in character, and this is only due to the fact that, having been raised both in China and Britain, he became a hybrid fitting everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Despite identifying with the English, he is often othered by the rest of his colleagues and friends, many times being called strange to his face to his utter surprise and protest. This is a beautiful illustration of Hofstede's supposition that:

> A common experience for second-generation immigrants is to identify with their country of origin while they live in the adoptive country of their parents but, in contrast, to feel that they belong to their new country when they visit their parents' country of origin. This is because they are likely to live by a mix of cultural (hidden) rules from both societies […]. (2010: 22-23)

His attitude does not seem to change, precisely because he is a blend of the two cultures and because his mental programming had taken place in China. For this purpose he can be considered a cosmopolitan individual, truly ahead of the times described in the text. His life choices take him away from what might be considered a common family in the 1930s and make him a single parent, father to a refugee he adopts and raises as his own. He is labelled as bizarre by Englishmen and Chinamen alike, and spends his entire adult life chasing an imaginary reality of his parents' family-life.

6. Final remarks

The novel in focus uses cultural stereotypes and images that, following the theoretical principles put forth by Leerssen, Pageaux and Hofstede, may be perceived as dichotomic. From what was shown above, *When We Were Orphans* is yet another instance where Ishiguro makes use of the poetics of national identity from subtle references to his Japanese descent, to more clear stereotypes of his adoptive culture, or even gender-related images distinguishable regardless of nationality.

Notes
[1] The present paper uses the Romanian edition of Pageaux's book, published by Polirom in the translation of Lidia Bodea.

References
Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J., and Minkov, M. (2010) *Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind* (third edition). New York: MacGraw Hill
Ishiguro, K. (2009) *When We Were Orphans*. New York: Vintage International
Leerssen, J. (2007) "Imagology: History and Method". In Beller, M. and Leerssen, J. (eds.), *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 17-32
Leerssen, J. (2007) "Image". In Beller, M. and Leerssen, J. (eds.), *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters. A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 342-344
Leerssen, J. (2000) "The Rhetoric of National Character: A Programmatic Survey". *Poetics Today*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 267-292
Pageaux, D. H. (2000) *Literatură generală şi comparată*. Transl. by L. Bodea. Iaşi: Polirom
Mohor-Ivan, I, Praisler, M. (2007) "Some Theoretical Considerations on Imagology". in F. Popescu (ed.) *Annals of "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania, Fascicle XIII*, Year 19, Issue 18. Galați: Galați University Press. 47-52

J. R. R. Tolkien – A Literary Philosopher

Maria Filomena LOURO
Tânia AZEVEDO[∗]

Abstract

In several of his writings, J. R. R. Tolkien has openly talked about the sorrow he felt due to the fact that his homeland had no mythology of its own. Through his Middle-Earth imagery, he was able to create a cosmogony and dwell on the eternal fight between Good and Evil. However, it's not in the mainstream texts on Middle-Earth that this intersection between literature and Philosophy is extensively explored. A definite answer will be found concerning the author's main queries on how the land can be healed through the reader's encounter with an elf and a human philosopher and consequent engagement in their debate: Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth (The Dialogue Between Finrod and Andreth). *Through their ideas, fears, doubts and queries, we will understand that the healing of the marred earth has to come from within.*

Keywords: myth, literature, philosophy, Middle-Earth

Introduction

Our present time has witnessed the decline of some myths, the debunking of others. Still a few new ones were created, responding to the urge of societies to structure their experience in "clusters of knowledge", which provide often comforting, readymade solutions or explanations.

A century ago, J. R. R. Tolkien lived in a world that was going to shatter some of its most strongly held beliefs as well. But the eminent scholar chose to muse on the fact that the country he so cherished as motherland could not provide a complete, structured mythology that could compare to others he studied devotedly such as the Norse and oriental ones.

A great part of his creative efforts were for a long time seen as random creations of great magnitude. The editorial effort of the last decades has allowed us to understand his great ambition of creating not only fantastic poetical fiction, but that this should enable the creation of a mythology for England.

In his effort to produce a unified mythopoeia, Tolkien used as conceptual tools a great array of Nature cults and old religions which he structured within the frame of his Christian belief in the existence of one Creator that comes to live

---

[∗] Associate Professor, CEHUM – Portugal – mflouro@ilch.uminho.pt
PhD Student, CEHUM – Portugal – his.tani@gmail.com

among men. The text that we propose, *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth,* explores the points where a convergence of Christian belief or mythology can be found in the work of Tolkien.

     One of the recurrent thoughts in Tolkien's writings and, in our view, one of the main driving forces for his works is the sorrow he felt due to the fact that his homeland had not crafted a mythology of its own. For Tolkien, writing is a mission, a gift that was given to men as 'Sub-creators', as he stated in the main theoretical text he wrote on fantasy: *On Faery-Stories* and also in his long poem about Sub-creation: *Mythopoeia*:

> The heart of man is not compound of lies,
> but draws some wisdom from the only Wise,
> and still recalls him. Though now long estranged,
> man is not wholly lost nor wholly changed.
> Dis-graced he may be, yet is not dethroned,
> and keeps the rags of lordship once he owned,
> his world-dominion by creative act:
> not his to worship the great Artefact,
> man, sub-creator, the refracted light
> through whom is splintered from a single White
> to many hues, and endlessly combined
> in living shapes that move from mind to mind (Tolkien 1988: 98).

This feeling that something was missing in England is one of the main reasons we have received Middle-earth as readers, as we can see in a letter dated 1951, which Tolkien wrote to Milton Waldman, and is quoted by Cristina Scull and Wayne Hammond:

> … one of the reasons he wrote The Silmarillion was that he "was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian and Finnish (which greatly affected me); but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff. Of course there was, and is, all the Arthurian world, but powerful as it is, it is imperfectly naturalized, associated with the soil of Britain but not English; and it does not replace what I felt to be missing. For one thing its 'faerie' is too lavish, and fantastical, incoherent and repetitive. For another and more important thing: it is involved in, and explicitly contains Christian religion (Scull & Hammond, 2006: 56).

Another important idea in this letter is the fact that Tolkien was seeking a mythology for England that could not be directly linked to Christianity or any other religion.

In our opinion, Tolkien sought to show deep values that belong to Christianity (we cannot forget he was a Roman Catholic) and not any external signs that could point to this or to any other religion.

This is what happens in *The Silmarillion*, where we witness the Creation through music and beauty and the subsequent Fall of Men and Arda (the world) because of the enemy's (Melkor) envy; In *The Hobbit*, we are introduced to the concept of fellowship that abolishes differences and binds diverse peoples into the same goal; and in *The Lord of the Rings*, this concept is taken further, mixed with self-sacrifice, friendship, inter-racial love and, above all, the urgent need to end all evil for good.

However, when *The Lord of the Rings* ends, the reader is left with the feeling that something is incomplete, imperfect. Frodo finishes his mission but cannot remain in the Shire; he is too wounded for that: "I am wounded,' (…) 'wounded; it will never really heal'" (Tolkien 2001: 1002) and " '…I have been too deeply hurt, Sam…'." (Tolkien 2001: 1006).

As Frodo, the land - Middle-earth, Arda - has been left wounded and a definitive solution is still needed.

Our aim will be to show that Tolkien wrote a text in which he explores how the wounds of the land can be healed from within. It is a dialogue called *Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth,* which takes place between an Elf - Finrod - and a wise woman – Andreth.

The text is dated 1959 but was only published in 1993, in the 10th volume of *The History of Middle-earth - Morgoth's Ring*. Tolkien's wish was to add this text as an appendix to *The Silmarillion*, as it completes and ends the cycle of the History of Middle-earth in a prophetic way, but this never came to be.

In this dialogue, Tolkien united his fantasy work of Middle-earth to Christianity. However, we do not get this information from the author himself, in some form of theory or lecture. It will be via the queries of these two characters, expressed in their philosophical debate.

Tolkien himself described what happens in the dialogue in one of the many notes that accompany the text:

> The *Athrabeth* is a conversation, in which many assumptions and steps of thought have to be supplied by the reader. Actually, though it deals with such things as death and the relations of Elves and Men to Time and Arda, and to one another, its real purpose is dramatic: to exhibit the generosity of Finrod's mind, his love and pity for Andreth, and the tragic situations that must arise in the meeting of Elves and Men (in the ages of the youth of the Elves). For as eventually becomes plain,

> Andreth had in youth fallen in love with Aegnor, Finrod's brother; and though she knew that he returned her love (or could have done so if he had deigned to), he had not declared it, but had left her – and she believed that she was rejected as too lowly for an Elf (Tolkien 1993: 335).

Besides the love theme that permeates the text, its main theme is, undoubtedly, death, human mortality and the reason men are mortal and elves are not. This generates some form of tension between the two characters, as it becomes evident throughout the points of their arguments.

Starting a Debate

The introduction to the dialogue places the reader in a very specific time in the History of Middle-earth: we are in the First Age, in The Long Peace, in spring, when both Finrod and Andreth are mourning her grandfather, Boron. Finrod starts the conversation on the main theme of the text - human mortality: " 'Sad to me, Andreth,' he said, 'is the swift passing of your people. For now Boron your father's father is gone; and though he was old, you say, as age goes among Men, yet I had known him too briefly'." (Tolkien 1993: 307).

In Arda, Elves are immortal (in the sense that they will not die a natural death, they can only cease to exist by means of violence or grief) and Humans are not. Elves are linked to the existence of Arda so, as long as it exists, so do the Elves. Humans are destined to die and we will understand the reason for this throughout this dialogue.

In the time when the dialogue takes place, Humans and Elves had only met a century ago, so they are still not very familiarised with each other. This is why Andreth's reply becomes a mystery to Finrod: "Our passing was swifter before we found this land." (307)

So it seems mankind had a previous state, before they came to Beleriand. It seems they were deceived by the Enemy and have lost that state. This sends the reader to another text, that Tolkien added to this dialogue as an appendix, called *The Tale of Adanel*, which explains how Melkor deceived mankind into serving him, forgetting the Creator's voice. The punishment was hard: mortality and the everlasting presence and dread of the Enemy. But in this same text redemption is promised. We hear the voice speaking one last time:

> The first Voice we never heard again, save once. In the stillness of the night It spoke saying: 'Ye have abjured Me, but ye remain Mine. I gave you life. Now it shall be shortened, and each of you in a little while shall come to Me, to learn who is your Lord: the one ye worship, or I who made him (347).

A discussion follows about the nature of death - is it good or evil? Finrod believes it is linked to human nature and Andreth explains it has come as a punishment, although she cannot explain very well. She only knows they were not mortal at the beginning:

> 'We may have been mortal when first we met the Elves far away, or maybe we were not: our lore does not say, or at least none that I have learned. But already we had our lore, and needed none from the Elves: we knew that in our beginning we had been born never to die. And by that, my lord, we meant: born to life everlasting, without any shadow of any end.' (314).

A new topic is brought into the dialogue as Finrod queries the nature of Men's souls. He knows the souls of the Elves are linked to Arda as they were created to perfect it. However, if mankind's soul (*fëa*) and body (*hröa*) can be separated, then perhaps the human soul is not connected to the world and has a fate that surpasses it. Maybe this is why Humans are called "Children of Eru". He also mentions that, when Arda is healed, maybe the bodies and the souls might be reunited again and rejoice forever.

And this introduces the next theme which is the possibility of healing the earth.

Healed

Finrod guesses, from Andreth's explanation about the first state of humanity, that perhaps their part in the healing of the wounds that the Enemy left on earth is great. This is why Melkor had to wound mankind in its nature, filling it with fear and dread of death so that they step away from the voice of Eru, the Creator.

> 'Therefore I say that if this can be believed, then mighty indeed under Eru were Men made in their beginning; and dreadful beyond all other calamities was the change in their state.' (318).

The healing will be the climax of the Creator's work of art:

> 'As may a master in the telling of tales keep hidden the greatest moment until it comes in due course. It may be guessed at indeed, in some measure, by those of us who have listened with full heart and mind; but so the teller would wish. In no wise is the surprise and wonder of his art thus diminished, for thus we share, as it were, in his authorship. But not so, if all were told us in a preface before we entered in!' (319).

This thought takes Andreth away from her sadness and she even asks Finrod when these events will take place. He does not know but he seems to be sure Men will have an important role in those events to come:

> 'And then suddenly I beheld as a vision Arda Remade; and there the Eldar completed but not ended could abide in the present forever, and there walk, maybe, with the Children of Men, their deliverers, and sing to them such song as, even in the Bliss beyond bliss, should make the green valleys ring and the everlasting mountain-tops to throb like harps.' (Ibid.).

Healing the Sorrow from within

Next, Andreth sadly reminds Finrod that Men cannot see anything beyond the shadow. Finrod asks her if she has no hope and explains what he means by this:

> 'Have ye then no hope?' said Finrod.
> 'What is hope?' she said. 'An expectation of good, which though uncertain has some foundation in what is known? Then we have none.'
> 'That is one thing that Men call "hope",' said Finrod. '*Amdir* we call it, "looking up". But there is another which is founded deeper. *Estel* we call it, that is "trust'". It is not defeated by the ways of the world, for it does not come from experience, but from our nature and first being. If we are indeed the *Eruhin*, the Children of the One, then He will not suffer Himself to be deprived of His own, not by any Enemy, not even by ourselves. This is the last foundation of *Estel*, which we keep even when we contemplate the End: of all His designs the issue must be for His Children's joy. *Amdir* you have not, you say. Does no *Estel* at all abide?' (320)

At this stage both characters agree. They now understand the worst scourge the Enemy brought to mankind and Arda was a wound in *Estel*, in Trust. And, for this, there is only one solution: the healing must come from within. Andreth speaks of an old prophecy, spoken of by "those of the «Old Hope» ":

> 'They say,' answered Andreth: 'they say that the One will himself enter into Arda, and heal Men and all the Marring from the beginning to the end. This they say also, or they feign, is a rumour that has come down through years uncounted, even from the days of our undoing.' (321).

But this raises the question of how can Eru can enter Arda:

> 'How could Eru enter into the thing that He has made, and that which He is beyond measure greater? Can the singer enter into his tale or the designer into his picture?'
> 'He is already in it, as well as outside,' said Finrod. 'But indeed the "in-dwelling" and the "out-living" are not in the same mode.'

'Truly,' said Andreth. 'So may Eru in that mode be present in Eä that proceeded from Him. But they speak of Eru Himself *entering into Arda*, and that is a thing wholly different. How could He the greater do this? Would it not shatter Arda, or indeed all Eä [the planet]?' (322)

Finrod has an answer for this question:

'Ask me not,' said Finrod. 'These things are beyond the compass of the wisdom of the Eldar, or of the Valar maybe. But I doubt that our words may mislead us, and that when you say "greater" you think of the dimensions of Arda, in which the greater vessel may not be contained in the less.
'But such words may not be used of the Measureless. If Eru wished to do this, I do not doubt that He would find a way, though I cannot foresee it. For, as it seems to me, even if He in Himself were to enter in, He must still remain also as He is: the Author without. And yet, Andreth, to speak with humility, I cannot conceive how else this healing could be achieved. Since Eru will surely not suffer Melkor to turn the world to his own will and to triumph in the end. Yet there is no power conceivable greater than Melkor save Eru only. Therefore Eru, if He will not relinquish His work to Melkor, who must else proceed to mastery, then Eru must come in to conquer him. (322).

The dialogue continues with a different theme: the possibility of inter-racial love, since Andreth was in love with Finrod's brother, who aptly dies in a battle against the enemy. The matter shall be the subject of a further study.

In this text presented as a prophecy, both Finrod and Andreth announce the coming of Eru himself, the Creator, into the world, to heal the wounds from within, to finish with the Enemy's reign forever.

Tolkien united his fantasy work to what he believed to be the highest peak of mankind's History: the Incarnation. He has bound Middle-earth to his faith, to the coming of Christ, as a hope to heal the world from within.

Ending the Cycle

In Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms, human societies organise themselves using symbolic acts, which help them to make sense of the world. While looking at mythology, it is essential to "…apprehend the subject of the cultural process, the human spirit (…)" (Cassirer, 1955: 13) which is the only one able to devise mythological narratives within a specific culture, space and time. In a way, Tolkien's exercise is a *post hoc* attempt to create such a cluster of knowledge that would provide English society with those «facts of culture» that he finds lacking in the legends and folk tale tradition of Great Britain.

In this dialogue, which in our opinion is fundamental to understand how the cycle of Middle-earth would finish, Tolkien united his fantasy works to the History of the world so that a mythology for England might be created. Like the

medieval chroniclers, bounding his works to Christianity, he has also inscribed them in a larger scale, searching for the validation of a link to the higher myth or cluster of knowledge, that of the manifest living God, consolidating his initial goal of crafting a mythology for England. He has united his desire to create a mythology to what was spiritually more important to him. He devised his writing not only as fictional work but also as a form of mission. He created a mythology for his homeland but not a narrative that would be void of spiritual sense. He has linked it permanently to his beliefs, hence the necessity to unite it to Christianity.

Tolkien (1999: xii) also left it still to be completed and finished by other talented and artistic hands, as he declared: "I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama. Absurd."

References

Cassirer, E. (1955) *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2: Mythical Thought. New Haven: Yale University Press

Scull, C. and W. Hammond. (2006) *The J. R. R. Tolkien Companion and Guide – Reader's Guide*. London: Harper Collins Publishers

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1988) "Mythopoeia". In *Tree and Leaf*. London: Unwin Hyman, 97-101

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1993) "Athrabeth Finrod ah Andreth". In *Morgoth's Ring – The History of Middle-earth*, Vol.10, (ed. by Christopher Tolkien). London: Harper Collins Publishers, 307-345

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1993) "The Tale of Adanel". In *Morgoth's Ring – The History of Middle-earth*, Vol.10, (ed. by Christopher Tolkien). London: Harper Collins Publishers, 345-349

Tolkien, J. R. R. (1999) *The Silmarillion*. Ed. Christopher Tolkien. London: Harper Collins Publishers

Tolkien, J. R. R. (2001) *The Lord of the Rings*. London: Harper Collins Publishers

Tolkien, J. R. R. (2006) *The Hobbit*. London: Harper Collins Publishers

Verene, D. P. (1996) "Cassirer's view of Myth and Symbol". *The Monist*, 50:4:553-564, in http://www.anthonyflood.com/venerecassirersviewmythsymbol.htm [17/10/2014]

The Identity Quest: from the Babel of the Worlds to the Coffers of the Body – Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Tricephalos*

Violeta-Teodora LUNGEANU[∗∗]

Abstract

Due to her academic qualification, Ruxandra Cesereanu prefers a literary discourse which is closely related to text production and reception theory. Whether she writes poetry, short prose, essays, or literary criticism, the author is totally aware of the permanent confrontation between the immanence of the text and the transcendence of the ego. Her second novel, Tricephalos: Cartea licornei. Peripețiile Alisei în Țara NewYorkeză. Cuferele trupului meu *(2002), mixes in the autofictional register two essential themes of her writing: identity and lust. The romanesque pattern is not that of the trash autofiction: at the narrative level the story of visiting the erotic cabarets from Paris or the New York slums which abound in sexuality might be considered the perfect plot for consumerist literature; at the discourse level this plot is subdued by imagism and bookish inroads, by aesthetic and elitist rhetoric. From this point of view, we shall analyse the specificity of writing in relation to the feminine autofiction grid and to the identity of the postmodern subject.*

Keywords: autofiction, body, identity, subject, feminine writing

A poet, a prose writer and an essayist, Ruxandra Cesereanu [1] (b. July 17th, 1963) has her debut in 1981, with poems published by *Tribuna*. In 1985 she is a contributor to the collective volume *Alfa* with the poetry sequence "Amiaza mare" (The Afternoon). She considers herself firstly a poet, then a prose writer or an essayist, and gathers her inspiration from daily tribulations which she enriches with academic touches. However, as she admits, all these areas make up a homogenous space in which the obsessions circulate from literary to theoretical texts without losing their intensity. Following the principle of communicating vessels, the authoress's poetry, prose and research activity communicate, whether reference is made to the Expressionist, Surrealist or Dadaist veins equally displayed by her poetry or prose, or to the violent imagism [2], feminine, aggressive and obsessive, of her poetry inspired from her *Panopticon*.

Her activity carried out at the Centre for Imagination Studies "Phantasma" and her connection with Romanian Oneirism [3] have directed the reception of her works towards a form of literature which builds its meanings in the vault of fiction, where the laws of logic and reason are deformed by the confusing and

---

[∗] PhD student, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, teoiorga83@yahoo.com

meaningless image mosaic. The author, nevertheless, prefers the "delirium" of Oneirism, which she has mastered as a construction technique of poetic imagery while organising it on "phantasm layers". The plethora of reveries and hallucinations and the unbound invasion of phantasmatic material result in an imagistic conglomerate which is, at times, difficult to assimilate.

On a different level, Ruxandra Cesereanu's literature reconstructs, from biographically assumed hypostases, the image of a pluriform femininity in search for identity in the many facets she displays in her works, from the neurotic little girl *"cu coapse paranoice şi sâni de anticar"* [with paranoid thighs and antiquarian breasts] (*Cretina deliciilor/ The Idiot of Feasts*), to *"femeia–scrib"* [the scrivener woman], *"femeia-cruciat"* [the crusader woman], from *"Femeie, tu eşti o febră cu măruntaiele în afară* [Woman, you are a fever with the bowels out] (*Trupul (Iezuita)/ The Body (The Jesuit Woman)* to the courtesans La Malcontenta and La Cesarina from *Veneţia cu vene violete/ Venice with violet veins*. The fascination which springs from such poetry comes especially from discovering the body which the woman has constantly fought.

> *Pe de altă parte, este adevărat că eram fascinată de trup, întrucât mi-era necunoscut, era încifrat atunci pentru mine, l-am descoperit târziu, iar poezia mea îmi este martora pentru aceasta. Până la vârsta mea de acum am fost mai mult obsedată de trup decât de suflet, spirit etc., fiind eu, pare-se, o trupelnică.*
> [On the other hand, it is true that I was fascinated by the body, as it was unknown, cyphered to me at that time, I discovered it quite late, and my poetry avouches for this. Up to my present age, I have been more obsessed with the body than with soul or spirit. Apparently, I had greater interest in the body] (Cârstean, 2002).

Tricephalos in the reception mirrors

Tricephalos is introduced by its authoress as an experimental novel which aims to be a trilogy of the body, with no connection with Cărtărescu's trilogy. It brings together three initiation journeys made by three key-characters: licorna (the she-unicorn), Alisa and the Minotaur. The critics understand it from the same corporeality perspective – for example, C. Rogozanu associates it with the three power lines of Romanian recent literature – Gh. Crăciun's textual corporeality, M. Nedelcu's modular and textual body and M. Cărtărescu's visionary body:

> *La Ruxandra Cesereanu, corporalismul urmează linia cărtăresciană. Poate părea surprinzătoare filiaţia. O apropiere de Simona Popescu ar fi părut mult mai justificată. În fond, găsim cam aceleaşi jocuri lexicale, la un moment dat găsim acelaşi joc cu diferite „euri" biografice. Şi totuşi, lucrurile nu stau aşa. În cele trei mari povestiri cuprinse în această carte, cele trei metamorfoze sunt false schimbări. Sunt, de fapt, aventurile picareşti ale unui uniform personaj-narator.*

[With Ruxandra Cesereanu, corporealism follows Cărtărescu's patterns, although the association may seem surprising. A connection with Simona Popescu would have been more justified. After all, one finds the same lexical games, and, at some point, one even finds the same game with various biographical "selves". And yet things are not quite like this. In the three large stories comprised in this book, the three metamorphoses are fake changes. They are, in fact, the picaresque adventures of a uniform character-narrator] (Rogozanu, 2002).

On a different note, Irina Petraş does not see in this conversion to body materialism a genuine attitude of the authoress but one sprung from her efforts of synchronising with the younger generation:

> *In Tricephalos (2002) autoarea acţionează, cum am spus deja, bulimic – înghite rapid orice şi mult, bibliografie ori proprie imaginaţie, apoi răstoarnă în pagină nedigerat; o curiozitate pentru tot ce are legătură cu trupul, dar o curiozitate artificială, oarecum trucată, care nu-şi lasă răgazul să experimenteze pe cont propriu mai nimic. Atinsă iremediabil de pudori şi inhibiţii ale generaţiei precedente, cu o educaţie «cuminte», Ruxandra Cesereanu **vrea** să fie în pas cu generaţia următoare pe care o asistă şi o sprijină cu program.*
> [In *Tricephalos* (2002) the authoress acts, as stated before, as a bulimic – she swallows fast a lot of anything, bibliography or her own imagination, then she throws it on the page undigested; a curiosity for everything that has to do with the body, an artificial one, somehow faked, which does not allow itself to experiment too much on its own. Irremediably touched by the elder generation's prudishness and inhibitions, "decently" educated, Ruxandra Cesereanu *wants* to keep up with the next generation, which she programmatically assists and supports] (Petraş, 2013: 160).

Another direction in the reception of the novel concerns its mosaic composition determined by a postmodern fragmentation of the discourse. The three distinct parts, "*Cartea licornei*"/ "*The Book of the She-Unicorn*, "*Peripeţiile Alisei în Ţara NewYorkeză*"/ "*Alisa's Adventures in New York Country*" and "*Cuferele trupului meu*/ "*The Coffers of My Body*" conjoin by virtue of a split identity (programmatic in the case of the authoress of *Oceanul Schizoidian*/ *The Schizoid Ocean*), despite the uneven tone, perceived as artificial:

> *Diferenţa de ton, de atitudine, de viziune creează o ruptură clară. Ochiul femeii călătoare din primele două părţi e prea rece, prea stăpânit, puţin naiv, martor curios, nepreocupat de sine şi interesat doar să înregistreze, pe când ochiul celei care pleacă în căutarea minotaurului este scormonitor, pasional, implicat, fragil şi trăind intens fiecare percepţie. Or, nimic nu explică transformarea sau glisajul. Toate semnele conduc către aceeaşi concluzie: textele devenite capitole ale aceleiaşi cărţi sunt, de fapt, bucăţi distincte, scrise din motive diferite, în perioade diferite (jurnal, note memorialistice, excerpte eseistice şi proză). De aceea, mişcările textului sunt rupte şi nu funcţionează ca un întreg, fie el şi fragmentat. Materialul e bun, croiala grăbită. Deşi un proiect ratat, demersul romanesc al Ruxandrei Cesereanu e însă demn de laudă măcar pentru că e îndrăzneţ.*

[The differences in tone, attitude and vision create an obvious break. The eye of the woman traveller of the first two books is too cold, too restrained, a little bit naïve, a curious witness, unconcerned with herself and interested only in recording information, whereas the eye of the woman in search for the Minotaur is scrutinising, passionate, involved, fragile and intensely living all perceptions. Nothing justifies this change or slip. All signs lead to the same conclusion: the texts that became chapters of the same book are, in fact, distinct pieces, written for different reasons at different times (diary, memoir notes, essayistic excerpts and prose). This is the reason why the textual movement is broken and does not function as a whole, be it a fragmented one. The cloth is good but the tailoring is haste. Though a failed project, Ruxandra Cesereanu's novelistic endeavour is worth praising at least because it's daring] (Chivu, 2003).

Simona Popescu's bird's eye view on Cesereanu's textual network reveals an interesting project of the latter, one that may be termed "Ruxandrism", from Ruxandra and the Alexandrism of her prose, a niche of her own. Alongside with the unmistakable stylistic mark, Simona Popescu places the thematic universe of the journeys with far and strange topoi, present both in *Tricephalos* and *Nebulon*. However, she does not construe them as oneiric breakouts, as labelled by Matei Călinescu. Instead, she places them under the sign of stories shaped from real facts, associating Cesereanu's autofiction texts with, as she claims, some by Mircea Horia Simionescu and Mircea Cărtărescu.

A *high* piece of autofiction

Autofiction, a minor genre, marks literature's entrance into the age of show, of the consumerist society which minimizes, on the one hand, the auctorial authority, and maximises, on the other hand, the role of the reader, who must be allured towards the text. It is not too often in literature that writers who "practise writing seriously" (Mircea Chivu includes Cesereanu in this category) adhere to a writing mode that makes a spectacle out of literature. It is, however, certain that major literature sees its territories more and more often invaded by the media show, and autofiction follows the patterns of this new movement. The mirage of autofiction seems to have allured Ruxandra Cesereanu, although the motivation of her choice is not notoriety.

A first aim of this paper is to track some of the signs that lead the reading towards the autofictional grid, whilst also considering the condition of autofiction born from the conjunctions and disjunctions of the fictional with the referential. Due to her many research scholarships abroad and to her many academic projects, Ruxandra Cesereanu is well-travelled. One finds in *Tricephalos* ample fictional displays of her experiences in summer schools or creative camps in Greece, or during her Fulbright scholarship at Columbia University of New York, which she 'directs' in the novel: "*Îmi plăcea să desfășor uriașa hartă a Americii și, punând degetul*

pe câte un orăşel, să-mi închipui, să inventez, să mă joc." [I used to like laying out the huge map of America and randomly put my finger on a small town, to imagine, to invent, to play] (Cesereanu, 2002: 59). There are some *identifiers* [4] (Philippe Gasparini's phrasing) in the novel, which place the text into the referential. Nominal identity is not performed by the instruments existing at the surface level of the text, which is why onomastic identification functions indirectly, in the sense of establishing a series of external homonymies in the relation between author, narrator and character. It is to be sought for in other directions: maybe in the name of "*bărbatul meu, Cobra, pe care am să-l numesc astfel pentru că i se dusese buhul despre cât era de înţelept"* [my man, Cobra, whom I'll call this way because he was famously wise] (Cesereanu, 2002: 6) and who becomes Korin in the third part, or in other categories of operators: the age of 30, symbolic for the discovery of her own femininity, the socio-cultural space of the libraries where the character used to go, etc. In this case, biographical identification is much more effective, setting out a dynamic identity through the representation of the places, times and other particular individual or social signs. Thus, what is left to unveil is the identity of the narrator-character, which, most often than not, reveals a fictional strategy. By refusing to give the hero a name, the author eludes the traditional idea of character, choosing instead the subjectivity of an uncertain, labile voice, on the edge of postmodern dissolution. It is also what Ruxandra Cesereanu does, apparently inviting the readers to recognize themselves in this depersonalised voice of an alienated character which clandestinely migrates to an absurd world.

Familiar with psychoanalysis and fully convinced of the text's ability to excavate the depth of the human being, Ruxandra Cesereanu adheres with *Tricephalos* to an autofiction that matches the model of Doubrovsky. In a second self-critical article on *Fils*, *Autobiographie/ vérité/ psychanalyse*, Doubrovsky emphasises the intimate connection between archetypal representations and the attempts to recover individuality: thus, autofiction becomes a fictional genre which must "give me back to me" (Doubrovsky, 1988: 43), not only through theme but also through textual production. In truth, the most important concern of the authoress is to generate text, as if word order supported the world itself. Aware that the text generates, in turn, other texts, the authoress makes use of the chaining principle:

> *Pe mijlocul străzii treceau viermi şi gângănii uriaşe, puzderie de drăcuşori şi diavoliţe, vrăjitoare şăgalnice, homosexuali cu harnaşament femeiesc, Adam şi Eve, regi, brahmani, gravide cu pântece închipuite, fachiri, obeze, androizi, buni sălbatici cu salbe de gheare, gheişe europene, samurai inautentici, bebeluşi sexagenari, suflători de foc pe picioroange, vampe decrepite, felliniene cu dosuri incredibile a căror cărnărie deregla simţurile, schelete ambulante*

[In the middle of the street there were worms and giant bugs, an army of little devils and she-devils, jesting witches, gays with women's harness, Adam and Eve, kings, Brahmas, pregnant women with fake bellies, fakirs, obese women, androids, good savages with claws-made necklaces, European geishas, inauthentic samurais, sexagenarian toddlers, fire-blowers on stilts, decrepit vamps, Fellinians with incredible behinds whose flesh was upsetting the senses, walking skeletons] (Cesereanu, 2002: 103).

Last but not least, Ruxandra Cesereanu, as other academics practising literature, believes in sentence and style, but not in the rough style. In *Tricephalos*, and also in other writings, she possesses a traditional, elegant, refined rhetoric which turns abstruse at times. From this perspective also, one may note a series of differences which place this novel in another spot than that of the common place of feminine autofiction signed by the young women writers of the 2000s. Even when the image pertains to sick sexuality, the rhetoric outdoes vulgarity, producing genuine linguistic ecstasies. Watching a sex cabaret, for example, becomes an exercise in linguistic virtuosity:

Fiecare era specialistă într-un anumit fruct pe care îl introducea în sex, prin atracție magnetică, și, apoi, îl devora. Am asistat, astfel, la performanțele unor kivieuse, bananeuse – aceasta era loc comun -, kakieuse – kaki fiind un fruct ca o roșie de seră – pecheuse, abricoteuse, pruneuse, framboiseus, fraiseuse și figueuse (în traducțiune valahă ar suna astfel: kiwioasă, bănănoasă, kakioasă, piersicoasă, caisoasă, prunoasă, căpșunoasă, zmeuroasă, smochinoasă)
[Each one of them was an expert in a certain fruit which she introduced in her vagina, by magnetic attraction, and then she devoured it. Thus, I witnessed the performances of some *kivieuse, bananeuse* – this was commonplace – *kakieuse* – kaki is a fruit like a greenhouse tomato - *pruneuse, framboiseus, fraiseuse* and *figueuse* (translated into Wallachian, these would sound like this: *kiwioasă, bănănoasă, kakioasă, piersicoasă, caisoasă, prunoasă, căpșunoasă, zmeuroasă, smochinoasă*)] (33).

As D.C. Mihăilescu rightfully remarks, pan-sexualism is absorbed by the exuberant linguistic and imagistic carnation which is one of Ruxandra Cesereanu's attributes:

Exultând de sincerități și cruzimi egofile, dar și de un ludic pufos, malițios, melancolic și autopersiflant uneori, pansexualismul din Tricephalos nu este niciodată obscen, nici vulgar. Și nici excitant. Este un uriaș exercițiu mintal – prolix, ce-i drept, uneori până la lehamite – un eseu indirect despre subteranele casei cu fantasme care este trupul – creier al fiecăruia.
[Exulting with egophile sincerity and cruelty but also with a fluffy, viperous, melancholic and sometimes self-mocking ludic, the pan-sexualism of *Tricephalos* is never obscene or vulgar. Nor is it arousing. It is a huge mental exercise – wearily

> prolix, to be fair – an indirect essay on the underground of the house of phantasms that is everyone's body and brain] (Mihăilescu, 2006: 330-331)

Aside from confusing history through discourse, the narrative allows for a number of intertextual allusions. For example, there are investments in the mythological cultural imaginary or in major literature, which the reader almost feels compelled to align in an order of symbolic significances. Cultural allusion is present starting with the title, which justifies, on the one hand, the narrative triptych of the novel and, on the other hand, a mise-en-abyme of the identity construction. The elitist title could not have been chosen by a 'trash' author because it might have appeared as lacking authenticity. Nonetheless, it resonates with the literature of an authoress who knows how the textual mechanism works. The bookish prose is constant along the three parts of the autofiction, subsuming episodes with a symbolic potential. Thus, the peregrine couple identifies with Orpheus and Eurydice, with Dante and Beatrice in search of the Grail, guided from behind by the spirits of Allen Ginsberg and Ezra Pound. But perhaps the most significant episode is the intertext with the tapestry *La Dame à la licorne* in Cluny Museum, where the significance of the journey through the Parisian subways is explained with the tools of symbolic images encapsulated in a discourse which abides by mediaeval customs. The search for the friend Zizou (the doppelgänger theme meets here an identity quest) is equivalent with the search for her own sexuality, and the tapestry calls upon the image to mark the battle fought with the five "senses of misfortune":

> *Grădina edenică a rămas aceeaşi, cu fiare trăind laolaltă, fără să se rănească. Mure, mere, alune, portocale. Cine eşti tu? Sunt cea care am renunţat la tot, dar mai ales la mine însămi. S-au dus pasiunile şi văzurile, mirosurile, auzurile, atingerile. Capră corcită c-un cal, cu singurul corn răsucit ca o turlă subţiratică, licorna e ultima ispită şi martorul acesteia. Doamna s-a războit cu simţurile-i. Roşu, verde, auriu, albastru. Văd, aud, ating, miros şi gust.* A mon seul désir je renonce pour toujours. *Cruciada fecioarei sfârşită-i.*
> [The Garden of Eden has remained the same, with the beasts living together without doing harm to each other. Blackberries, apples, peanuts, oranges. Who are you? I'm the one who gave up everything but especially me. Gone are the passions and the sights, the smells, the hearings and the touches. A goat half-bred with a horse, with its only horn twisted like a thin spire, the she-unicorn is the last temptation, and its witness. The lady fought her own senses. Red, green, gold, blue. I see, I hear, I touch, I smell and taste. *A mon seul désir je renonce pour toujours*. Ended is the maiden's crusade] (Cesereanu, 2002: 51).

The reader should not fall in the trap of this intertextual game: the directed narrative in *Tricephalos* is not the novel *Tricephalos* but a staging which, on the one hand, draws attention to literary practice, to literature as opera, and on the other hand, invites questions on the fictional truth.

Identity and the world by steps

Thematically, the narrative triptych is conjoined by two fundamental themes: identity and lust. If lust manages the relation with the body better, identity is the main coordinator of the entire novel. A concept designed around two terms, *idem* and *ipse*, where the former is essentially defined as an identity of the 'same' type (therefore as a form of constancy, of faithfulness to the self), whereas the latter stimulates change and alterity, 'identity' is built in steps, in accordance with new construction of the contemporary subject. The writing thematises the reflected self, the existential drama of the individual who confronts himself/herself with his/her own conscience and with the world. The self in autofiction is necessarily a **subject** who confronts him-/herself and the system. (In comparison with 'individual', the term 'subject' reflects the existential drama of someone placed in relation with a preordained system.) The subject can constantly see him-/herself in the mirror s/he is offered by the exterior world but also in that offered by his/her consciousness – it is, therefore, a double existential drama.

This is also what the voice of *Tricephalos* does: through the glass she carries with her, the learned narrator gives access to a completely sexual world with mythological iridescence on whose surface lies the specular layer in which the narrated I is glimpsed. This is the reason why 'the Wallachian' who feels "*spaime ancestrale de femeie de cavernă*" [a cave woman's ancestral fears] also feels her inequality in relation to the others. The journey to Paris, which gives her the chance to visit the Museum of Sex and the search for the lost friend in the sexual cabarets of the city are not narrative threads but rather pretexts for staging an identity game. Thus, the thorough search through the recesses in Paris becomes a search for the double:

> *Adevărul este, zise Cobra în cele din urmă, că te-ai pornit pe drumul acesta sucit, ca şi cum ai fi pornit, de fapt, în căutarea dublului tău. Ca şi cum aş vrea să mă descotorosesc de mine însămi? Cam aşa ceva. Dar sexualitatea oraşului mă copleşeşte şi mă depăşeşte. Cum aş putea să mă opun, cum aş putea să mă fac că nu pricep aceste semne din care Zizou face parte şi ea? Prea bine, hotărî Cobra, dacă nu poţi fi întoarsă din cale, atunci să pornim în căutarea acestei femei. Mă bucur că îi spui femeie şi nu cocotă, pentru că mă simt mai în apele mele astfel. Eu caut, prin urmare, o femeie pe care am cunoscut-o odinioară şi care mi-a ţinut de cald în nopţile reci ale adolescenţei mele întârziate*
>
> [Truth be told, Cobra eventually said, that you've taken a twisted path as if you started, in fact, searching for your double. As if I wanted to get rid of myself? Something like that. But the sexuality of the city is overwhelming and gets beyond my understanding. How could I fight it, how could feign that I don't understand these signs Zizou is a part of? Very well, Cobra decided, if you can't be turned, then let's start looking for this woman I'm glad that you call her a woman, not a cocotte, I feel more comfortable this way. Therefore, I'm searching for a woman

whom I once met and who warmed me in the cold nights of my late adolescence] (Cesereanu, 2002: 14)

A proof for the fact that the episode is inscribed in the identity quest is the end of this first journey: Zizou is not found (this hypothesis becomes certainty as early as in the middle of the journey), but the meaning of the exploratory journey towards one's own sexuality is underlined:

> *Am răsuflat uşuraţi şi am tăcut, mai apoi, o zi întreagă, întrucât poveştile ne mâncaseră limba. Astfel avea să se încheie, pare-se, călătoria mea pariziană în ţara trupelniciei şi a senzualităţii, fiind eu împăcată că aveam să-i pun la punct. Căci eram frântă de oboseala căutării şi a neaflării a ceea ce căutasem*
> [We breathed freely again and kept silent for a whole day, as the stories had eaten our tongues. This is, apparently, how my Parisian journey in the country of the body and sensuality was to come to an end, and I was content to put an end to it. For I was exhausted with the search and with not finding what I had been searching for] (47).

The relationship of the self with the world in the construction of the identity profile is equally important in the second part of the novel. New York reveals itself as a strange world populated with half-human half-animal beings, hard to understand for the European. The centre has shifted and, with this new reference, the voice also changes, as the relationship involves new parties: from the Wallachian self in relation to the Western European world to the European self in relation to the American world. And the American world opens up for all senses: street shows delight the eye, jazz evenings flatter the ear, the feast in the Indian restaurant arouses the taste buds, and the visit to Sephora floods the nostrils. New York opens up epidermically at first, and then turns more and more spiritual, bookish, as the narrator-protagonist enters the privileged areas of the libraries, and the old body and soul dichotomy reappears:

> *Oricine s-ar putea întreba pe bună dreptate: care eram eu, adevărata? Nocturna în bejenie, sporovăielnica, sau fata studioasă din Templu? Eu zic, însă, că viaţa mea în NYC se aranjase ca două jumătăţi de inimă reîntâlnite: nocturnă eram cu trupul şi toate simţurile lui, diurnă eram cu mintea în bibliotecile Qulumbiei, cu cărţile în spinare.*
> [Everyone is entitled to wonder which one was me, the true one. The nocturnal in exile, the chatty one or the scholarly girl at the Temple? But I'd say that my life in NYC had settled in two reunited halves: I was nocturnal with my body and with all its senses, and I was diurnal with my mind in Columbia's library, with the books on my back] (99).

Just like in Paris, sexuality remains external, unassumed and, perhaps for this reason, perceived as inauthentic: in the Temple library, the narrator reads, under Socrates's eyes, bawdy limericks carved on the reading desks or printed in the

New York newspapers. It is, however, worth mentioning that these encounters of the character's common sense and prudishness with the excrescences of orgiastic New York are rendered in terms such as *"scufundare"* [diving] or *"cufundare"* [indulging].

The third part of the novel, *Cuferele trupului meu/ The coffers of my body*, further subdivided into *Uterus* and *Jurnal cu minotaur/ Diary with the Minotaur*, might represent a distinct novel in itself. After the writing exercise in the first two parts, the voice eventually sounds authentic, rendering a story of the self with a fully assumed feminine identity. However, it is not about femininity in a feminist tune, as the authoress does not agree with feminism at all times:

> *Feminismul decent este o treabă bună şi îl agreez. În ce mă priveşte, însă, questa mea este de altă natură: am voit să-mi găsesc şi să mă întorc la rădăcinile de femeie şi să îmi iau în posesie propria-mi condiţie. Altfel, lumea bărbaţilor mi se pare la fel de captivantă ca şi aceea a femeilor; dar, fiindcă sunt femeie, m-am aplecat asupra a ceea ce mă durea pe mine mai mult. La fel de mult mă interesează, de pildă, relaţia dintre bărbat şi femeie, androginia. […]Un alt sens al posibilului meu feminism este unul la nivel fantasmatic: femeia-cruciat, gonflabila, curtezanele etc. Ce sa fie toate acestea? Fireşte, eu nu sunt nici curtezană în realitate, nici femeia gonflabilă (ipostaza este atât de amuzantă încât deja mustăcesc); poate că sunt o femeie-cruciat, dar doar în sensul căutării credinţei, nu altfel. Fantasmele mele sunt, însă, nişte nivele ale inconştientului pe care doresc sa le iau în posesie. Cred că trebuie curaj pentru aşa ceva.*
>
> [Feminism is good and I care for it. As far as I'm concerned, however, my quest is of a different nature: I wanted to find and to return to my roots as a woman and to possess my own condition. Otherwise, men's world seems to me as captivating as women's world, but since I'm a woman, I chose what had bothered me the most. I'm equally interested in the relationship between man and woman, in androgyny. […] Another sense of my alleged feminism is at the phantasmatic level: the woman-crusader, the inflatable woman, or the courtesans. What are all these? Naturally, I'm neither a courtesan, nor an inflatable doll (this image is that funny that I'm already smiling); perhaps I am a woman-crusader, but only in the sense of faith-searching, and not in any other way. My phantasms are, however, some unconscious levels which I want to possess. I guess it takes courage for this] (in Cârstean, 2002).

Thus, the authoress does not programmatically adhere to the *écriture feminine* pattern but she is relatively close to it through her practice of writing, as her writing is born from that *non-locus* of the dream, as in the case of Hélène Cixous. Placing the feminine condition in relation with the body, subjectivity and language, Hélène Cixous directs the discourse analysis towards the intimate relationship between writing and the biologic. By exploiting all these elements with psychoanalytical tools [5], Cixous demonstrates that bisexuality exists in every being, and, along these coordinates, that women have the exceptional

chance of expressing themselves in writing because they have never repressed this bisexuality, and have accepted the presence of "the other" within their own psychic configuration.

Uterus sets out with a story of the shared origin:

Fiecare bărbat a fost la început femeie. În țara uterului ascuns, am fost cu toții gemeni de un singur fel femeiesc, deși amorfi încă și nedesprinși din tenebre. Apoi, ne-am desfăcut din plăselele trupului pe drumuri diferite. Așa am rămas femei, cele care a fost să rămânem astfel, și așa s-au născut bărbații, cei care și-au uitat începuturile femeiești de odinioară.
[Every man was, at first, a woman. In the country of the hidden uterus, we all were twins of a sole gender, female, though still amorphous and unchained from the dark. Then we unbound ourselves from the body hilt and took different paths. Thus those who had to be women remained women and thus men were born, the ones who forgot their feminine beginnings of old] (Cesereanu, 2002: 173).

What follows is an ample episode of corporeal self-representation which results from the split of the biologic from the social, the cultural and the mythological. All those experiences which hallmark feminine identity are present: the discovery of the feminine sexual signs, menstruation, the impossibility to procreate, childhood, adolescence, the acceptance of the body, etc. The exuvial ego is rippled from everywhere: "*Viața mea era învăluită în foi uriașe de ceapă albă, pe care le desfășam ca niște bandaje de pe trup, dar care îmi erau așternuturi răcoroase pentru reveriile trupești și netrupești la un loc.*" [My life was veiled in huge white onion peels which I was unswathing from my body as if they had been bandages but which used to be my cool bed sheets for both my bodily and non-bodily reveries] (191). The ego obstinately searches for its unitary structure, impossible to attain after trauma: "*Identitatea mi se pulveriza în cioburi, cu o violență imediată, apoi plutea în derivă ca o corabie ciumată. Avusesem parte de două traume, una de a fi pe cale să-l pierd pe Korin și alta de a nu putea avea un fiu cu el, dar ele mă maturizaseră, adâncindu-mă.*" [My identity shattered to pieces with immediate violence, then floated adrift as a ship of plague. I had been through two traumas - almost losing Korin, then not being able to have a son with him, but they had made me grow and had deepened me] (228).

An unusual identity profile results from this quest – *a femininity of the palimpsest body*, one could name it, as "the subterranean and lunar areas" of her body are just replicas of Kora Persephone, Virgin Mary, or the mother. Invisible threads bind women together in a magic way, rewriting the signs of life on their bodies:

Când, mai târziu, trecută de treizeci de ani, am purtat eu însămi fosta rochie de mireasă a mamei, dar ca pe o rochie de vară, am simțit cum în foșnetul acelei rochii se suprapuneau două trupuri: unul feciorelnic, al mamei pure, celălalt al panterei care devenisem acum și care își mișca trupul sălbatic. Alchimia acelei rochii făcea să iasă la iveală un palimpsest de

femeie, o mamă-fiică, unde imaculata era, însă, mama de odinioară. Apoi mai era o altă senzație ciudată: mi se părea, purtând acea rochie de fluture de varză, că o parte din trupul meu este chiar trupul mamei care mi se concentrase în sâni. Brațele, trunchiul, picioarele erau ale mele, dar sânii aceia albi și pufoși erau ai mamei-codane. Îi simțeam cum își ivesc ochii de mură și eram stingherită de bucuria femeiască ce mă răscolea, adică de trufia de a fi femeie.

[When, later, after the age of 30, I dressed myself with my mother's bridal dress, but as if it were a summer dress, I felt two bodies overlapping in the rustle of that dress: a virginal one, of my pure mother, and the other, of the panther that I had become, which was moving its wild body. The alchemy of that dress took out a palimpsest of a woman, a mother-daughter, where the immaculate one was the mother from the old times. Then, another strange sensation: it seemed to me that, wearing that dress of a butterfly, a part of my body was my mother's body, concentrated in my breasts. The arms, the body and the legs were mine, but those white, soft breasts belonged to the girly-mother. I felt their blackberry eyes popping out and I was abashed by the feminine joy which was rummaging through me, by the conceit of being a woman] (210).

As a whole, *Tricephalos* is an eccentric, multi-layered novel, in perfect harmony with the portrait of a polymorphous femininity: the autofictional discourse, with travelogue and intimate diary infusions and with an essayistic core, as well as the diversity of narrative techniques (metanarrative techniques, palinodes, metalepses, etc.), provide the aspect of a postmodern literary experiment. The clearly intentional heterogeneous character of the text is also underlined by the narrative structural mixture, which, at times, seems to turn into journalistic reportage or film script. The idea of eclecticism is also supported both by the fragmentary "archetypal" condition (Braga) of the modern subject, itself subjected to a permanent movement illustrated both by the frequent changes in its relationship to the world (the Parisian world, the New York world) and by the triptych structure of the novel.

Notes
[1] She graduated from the Faculty of Letters of Cluj in 1985, she has been a Philology Doctor since 1997, editor for Steaua journal and professor or comparative literature at the Faculty of Letters, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj.
[2] The poetess motivates the specificity of her writing by underlining the resorts which generate poetry: on the one hand, the energy of living, of the sentiment, and, on the other hand, the strength of the image: "*Poezia mea este agresivă în primul rând asupra mea însămi, iar aceasta este o forma de exorcizare. Și de defulare, desigur.[…] Iată de ce sunt, deci, agresivă ca poetă. Pentru că scriu despre lucruri care mă chinuiesc fie pe mine, fie pe alții și înțeleg să scriu toate acestea într-o formă pe care o consider a fi adecvată, foarte vie adică. Imaginile sunt șocante, fiindcă motorul poemelor mele mizează enorm pe imagine. Tăria simțământului și a imaginii fac poemul, pentru mine. Există apoi un ritm interior, un vuiet al poemului. Și acesta contează mult, îmbinat cu imaginea si forța simțirii.*" [My poetry is aggressive to me, first and foremost, and

this is a form of exorcism. And one of release, of course. […] This is the reason why I'm an aggressive poetess. Because I write about things which torment either me or the others, and I understand to write them in a form that I see adequate and very vivid. The images are shocking because the engine of my poems places its stake on the image. The strength of the sentiment and that of the image are what does the poem for me. Then, there is also a rhythm, a roar of the poem, which also matters a lot, combined with the image and the strength of the sentiment] (Svetlana Cârstean, *'Toate poemele mele sunt nişte bătălii'* [All my poems are battles], interview with Ruxandra Cesereanu in Observator cultural, no 131 August 2002.)

[3] In 2000, Ruxandra Cesereanu is the editor of an anthology of Romanian Oneirism. She signs the preamble and the mini-portraits, and makes up the selection of the texts: *Deliruri şi delire. O antologie a poeziei onirice româneşti* [Deliriums and Deliria. An Anthology of Romanian Oneiric Poetry], Cluj: Paralela 45.

[4] In his ample work *Est-il je? Roman autobiographique et autofiction (*Éditions de Seuil, Paris, 2004), Philippe Gasparini maintains that autofiction is a genre rooted in the autobiographic novel, with which it shares a series of common techniques. In order to determine the constants of the biographic novel and, implicitly, those of autofiction, Gasparini takes into account a number of aspects, which he tackles from various perspectives. Firstly, he accounts for a series of *identifiers*, which he considers when he analyses the relation between the character in the narrative and author.

[5] Cixous considers the psychoanalytical grid as one of the most important in approaching literary texts, as she maintains that any written text involves the subconscious, and that all written texts are actually the products of the subconscious. Jung's theory on *animus-anima* imprints the entire work of the French authoress, as she considers that any human being has this dichotomy within, and that, from this point of view, the feminine style is not conditioned by the male gender (in Conley 1991).

References

Braga, C. (2008) *Psihobiografii [Psychobiographies]*. Iaşi:Polirom

Cesereanu, R. (2002) *Tricephalos. Cartea licornei. Peripeţiile Alisei în Ţara New Yorkeză. Cuferele trupului meu [Tricephalos. The Book of the She-Unicorn. Alisa's Adventures in New York Country. The Coffers of My Body]*. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia

Cârstean, S. (2002) 'Toate poemele mele sunt nişte bătălii' [All my poems are battles], interview with Ruxandra Cesereanu, in *Observator cultural*, nr.131, August, retrieved from http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Toate-poemele-mele-sint-niste-batalii.-Interviu-cu-Ruxandra-CESEREANU*articleID_4586-articles_details.html

Chivu, M. (2003) 'În cheia sexualităţii'[In the tune of sexuality]. In *România literară*, nr. 40, October, retrieved from http://www.romlit.ro/n_cheia_sexualitii

Conley, V. A. (1991) *Hélène Cixous: Writing the feminine*, Expanded Edition, University of Nebraska Press

Doubrovsky, S. (1988) 'Autobiographie/vérité/psychanalyse'. In *Autobiographiques, de Corneille à Sartre,* Paris: PUF

Gasparini, P. (2004) *Est-il je? Roman autobiographique et autofiction*. Paris: Éditions de Seuil

Rogozanu, C. (2002) "Corpul, obsesia continuă" [The Body, The Permanent Obsession]. In *Observator cultural*, no. 165-166, April, retrieved from

http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Corpul-obsesia-continua*articleID_8066-articles_details.html

Petraş, I. (2013) *Oglinda şi drumul. Prozatori contemporani [The Mirror and the Road. Contemporary Prose Writers]*. Bucureşti: Cartea Românească

Mihăilescu, D. C. (2006) *Literatura română în postceauşism, II. Proza. Prezentul ca dezumanizare*. [*Romanian Literature after Ceausescu. II. The Prose. The Present as Dehumanisation*]. Iaşi: Polirom.

Accessing Local Literatures via Public Institutions Websites

Alexandru PRAISLER[∗]

Abstract
Most public institutions create and disseminate pragmatic, community oriented information via their official websites. Some, however, also have pages dedicated to literary text production, distribution and consumption. A case in point is the regional "V. A. Urechia" Public Library, Galati, Romania, with its webpage, available at http://www.bvau.ro/. Its cultural component, Axis Libri, includes links to the homonymous literary salon, cultural magazine, publishing house and book festival – all of which primarily promote Romanian culture, literature and education – but for the larger public access is limited due to the fact that translation into international languages (mostly English and French) is only partly provided, for three of the twenty-four volumes of the Axis Libri cultural magazine. A sample text and its translation into English, 'Fănuş Neagu: Cum am scris Îngerul a strigat' *['Fănuş Neagu: How I Wrote* The Angel Yelled'], *are under scrutiny here, generating considerations regarding local representation and intercultural communication.*

Keywords: culture, literature, translation, representation, website design

1. Introductory lines

Local literatures, produced in minority languages and carrying a relatively unknown cultural component, go global via translation into an international, majority language. In the contemporary new media age, one no longer resorts to translated hard copies of local literary productions only. Translations are now digitised and increasingly made public through the internet. However, one needs to exercise critical judgement in the selection of web resources that disseminate translated texts. Trustworthy, among others, are generally the official ones of public institutions like academies, national literary societies, research/ cultural institutes, colleges and universities, embassies, museums and libraries. Yet the obvious minuses of their electronic marketing strategies, as well as the flaws in the translations uploaded, raise questions with reference to the intercultural mediation they support and invite further investigation efforts. The particular case chosen for illustration is that of the "V. A. Urechia" Galaţi County Public Library and its webpage, available at http://www.bvau.ro/, which advertises Romanian culture, but provides little information to the international public. Under special focus is one of the few cultural translations from Romanian into English to be accessed on the respective site, Fănuş Neagu's 'Cum am scris *Îngerul a strigat*' ['How I Wrote *The Angel Yelled*'].

[∗]Postdoctoral researcher, "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati, Romania, alexandru.praisler@ugal.ro

2. Case study

Named after the renowned Romanian historian, writer and politician, Vasile Alexandrescu Urechia (1834-1901), the Galați County Public Library is more than one hundred years old. A parliament representative for the region at the time, Urechia made a donation of 3,000 volumes to "Vasile Alecsandri" College Galați in October 1889. Two months later, in December 1889, the library's foundation was initiated by the Ministry of Cults and Public Instructions, signed by Theodor Rossetti – prime minister, and approved by King Charles I of Romania (Decree 3382/ 1889). Along the years, the public institution has gained prestige, has attracted numerous readers and collaborators, and has built trust in the information it circulates.

2.1. The website

Today, the public institution is well organised, addresses a large number of customers (common readers, scholars and researchers, etc.), and offers a wide range of services, including loans, access to resources, document supply, study and research, inter-library exchange, specialised assistance, training courses, cultural workshops and seminars, literary readings etc. Most of its informative archives and databases are accessible online, through an interactive website, relatively well managed and designed, structured along the following sections: *Prezentare [Presentation]*, *Axis Libri [Axis Libri]*, *Servicii [Services]*, *Catalog [Catalogue]*, *Profesional [Professional]* and *Contact [Contact]*.

While four of the entries match the expectations of common library users, one does not. *Axis Libri*, the odd one out, is intended for the specialist, including links to *Brand Cultural Gălățean [Galati Cultural Brand]*, *Salon literar [Literary society]*, *Revista culturala [Cultural magazine]*, *Editura [Publishing house]*, *Festival de carte [Book festival]*. It is gratifying at the level of content, but has noticeable problems from the point of view of the language used (see Figure 1 below):

a. There is no consistency in terms of the use of definite articles: *salon [salon]*; *revista [**the** magazine]*; *editura [**the** publishing house]*; *festival [festival]*.
b. Loanwords are employed, even if there are appropriate Romanian equivalents: *brand*, instead of *marcă*.
c. Capital letters are misused: *Brand **C**ultural **G**ălățean [Galati Cultural Brand]*; in Romanian, the correct form is *Brand **c**ultural **g**ălățean*.
d. Diacritical marks are sometimes omitted: *cultural**a*** instead of *cultural**ă***. Not only should graphemes correspond to phonemes in Romanian orthography, but the use of diacritical marks is compulsory in public places, relations and institutions (Law 500/ 2004; Law 183/ 2006).

Figure 1. "V. A. Urechia" Library main page
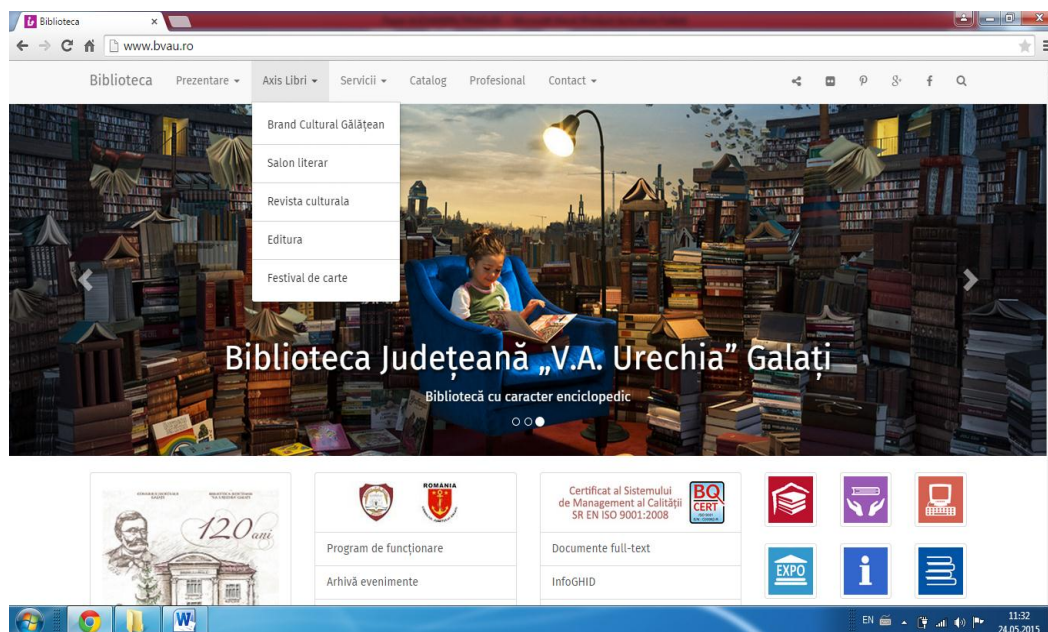
Under *Axis Libri*, the link to *Revista culturala [Cultural magazine]*, which provides the sample text(s) focused upon in what follows, includes a short presentation of the publication, names the editorial team, reiterates the entries already mentioned, advertises the 2015 book festival organised annually by the library, introduces a brief bibliographical note and offers access to the *Axis Libri* archives (see Figure 2 below). The observations to be made about this page might be summed up as:

a. Some diacritical marks are missing: *varietate tematica* instead of *varietate tematică [thematic variety]; buna şi fertilă* instead of *bună şi fertilă [good and fertile]*, *urarea adresata* instead of *urarea adresată [greeting addressed]*, *următoarea echipa* instead of *următoarea echipă [the following team]*.

b. From among the entries on the right hand side, at least one is superfluous. *Revista culturala [Cultural magazine]* takes users to the very same page they have just left.

c. The archive is incomplete (not up to date). The September 2014 issue is the last one uploaded.

d. *Fişă bibliografică [Bibliographical note]* announces that, starting with 2009, the quarterly magazine will also be published in French (first issue: March 2009) and in English (first issue: June 2009). Nonetheless, only three issues in French are accessible here (from March and September 2009, and from March 2010). The English ones are absent altogether. For those interested, the translations of *Axis Libri* into foreign languages are only available in hard copy, on library premises or, partially, through the Scribd digital library, at http://www.scribd.com (information not given on the institution's site).

Figure 2. *Axis Libri* Cultural Magazine page

While the flaws signalled at the level of web design and within the text in Romanian are easily rectifiable, the downside of the policy regarding translation as intercultural mediation –with no professional translators part of the staff (as shown in another study, following a questionnaire-based survey) – leaves deep traces in the long run. Therefore, the threat of denying access to local literary scenes due to the (partial) absence of translated versions of significant writing or due to inappropriately rendering its ideas and cultural content is to be scrutinised and found possible solutions to.

2.2. Text in focus

The sample text chosen is Fănuş Neagu's [1]: 'Cum am scris *Îngerul a strigat*', whose English translation 'How I Wrote *The Angel Yelled*' (*Axis Libri* 2009) demonstrates that translation-supported intercultural mediation is encouraged, but not carried through by the public institution "V. A. Urechia" Library.

As its title suggests, the article presents how the novel *The Angel Yelled* came to be, with emphasis on the context of its inception, not on the technicalities of writing. It is not an arid record of decisions made and steps taken, as much as it is a literary piece in itself. Fănuş Neagu brings to life an extinct universe and recreates the atmosphere of the sixties in Romania by blurring the boundaries between successive layers of representation: the beauty of the south eastern Danube landscape, the parochial savour of his native Braila and environs, the lingering memory of the country's national past and the overall harsh communist situation of the time. Romanianness breathes through the vernacular narrative,

appealing to the local reader, yet remaining difficult to decode by the cultural other (see Table 1).

Table 1. Text in focus. Fănuş Neagu, 'Cum am scris *Îngerul a strigat*' ['How I Wrote *The Angel Yelled*']

Romanian original	English version (Paula Măhălean)
<u>*Brăila* veche şi mai cu seamă legenda ei</u> *suprapopulată de hoţi romantici*, plasată pe orbita Orientului de aventurieri zdrenţăroşi, doldora de vise şi robiţi de *gândul pătrunderii în Eldorado, năucită de* aur vechi, împotmolită în corăbii *suple şi* azvârlită de către <u>*Panait Istrati*</u> pe altarul Mediteranei, unde *Şeherezada* mănâncă struguri, plutea *în ancoră, prea puţin schimbată, la malul cel mai dulce al* <u>*Dunării*</u>, pe care <u>*Ştefan cel Mare* 1-a incendiat</u> de şapte ori. Dacă n-a *izbutit* nici el *să ne risipească*, vă daţi seama că nu vom pieri în veci. <u>*Brăila*</u> va fi mereu în *vâltoarea visului*, nedestrămată şi *numai învăluită* în fumul jertfelor. *Întinde mâna*, zgâlţâie-i somnul şi ascultă-i vorbele. Am mâna zdravănă şi o ureche bună. *Am ascultat*-o şi-*am colindat*-o în ungherele ei bătrâne. Ce oraş nemaipomenit! Suflet împovărat de crime, speranţe, *năluciri*, istorii cu <u>*Chira Chiralina*</u>, lăutari nebuni (de la <u>*Petrea Creţu Şolcanu*</u> la <u>*Gheorghe Afloarei*</u>) şi Dumnezei ai ortodoxismului *de toate nuanţele*, plus felii de umbra lui, cel cu faţa de tătar sau de turc. Zuruiau în amintiri şi-n pereţii caselor venite din alt veac averi fabuloase şi pierdute <u>*pe apa Sâmbetei*</u>. *Mulţi înşelaţi de timp trecut mureau neîmpărtăşiţi*, sub *blestem* şi *nenoroc. Apoi erau, adică umblau vii şi alintate de purpura închipuirilor mele, poveştile despre* <u>*prinţii Şuţu*</u>. (39)	*Old* <u>*Brăila*</u> *and especially its legends, overpopulated with romantic heroes*, placed on the Orient's orbit by ragged adventurers, packed with dreams and enslaved by *the thought of El Dorado, drunk with* old gold, stuck in *supple tall ships* and thrown by <u>*Panait Istrati*</u> on the altar of the Mediterranean sea, where *Sherezade* eats grapes, was floating *tied by the anchor, not much changed, at the bank of the sweet* <u>*Danube*</u>, that <u>*Stephen the Great burnt down*</u> seven times. If he didn't *succed* in *scattering us from here* it means we will never die. <u>*Brăila*</u> will always be *midstream of dreams. Unscattered and just enveloped* in the smoke of sacrifice. *Reach with your hand*, shake her out of her sleep and listen to her words. I have a strong hand and a good ear. I *listened to* her and *visited her in* her old corners. What a great city! Her soul is heavy with crime, hopes, *dreams*, stories of <u>*Kyra Kyralina*</u>, mad fiddlers (from Petrea Creţu Şolcanu to Gheorghe *Aloarei*) and *Gods of orthodoxism of all shades* plus slices of *his shadow*, the one with the face of a Tatar or a Turk. Memories were rattling also in the walls of the houses that came from other centuries, fabulous fortunes lost <u>*in vain*</u>. *Many were cheated by past time were dying* with no last rites, under *the curse* and *the bad luck. Then, there were, that is were walking alive and comforted by the purpura of my imagination, the stories about* <u>*the Şuţu Princes*</u>. (39)
Vedeţi, cartea mea miroase a ţărani, a oameni din mahalale şi *cârciumi* şi deopotrivă a întâmplări regale şi *princiare*. Miroase şi *a* <u>*Dunăre*</u>, şi *a Panait*	You see, my book smells of peasants, people from the slums and *pubs* as well as of royal and *princelike* happenings. It smells *for* the <u>*Danube*</u>, of <u>*Panait Istrati of*</u>

| *Istrati*, şi a câini dezlegaţi din lanţ. (42) | unchained dogs. (42) |

The cultural references in the original (*Brăila*, *Dunării/ Dunăre [(of the) Danube]*, *Panait Istrati*, *Ştefan cel Mare*, *Chira Chiralina*, *pe apa Sâmbetei*, *prinţii Şuţu*) are mostly preserved as such, translated word for word or found English spellings: *Ştefan cel Mare [Stephen the Great]*, *Chira Chiralina [Kyra Kyralina]*, *prinţii Şuţu [the Şuţu Princes]*. The exception is the expression *pe apa Sâmbetei*, which is rendered in English by the equivalent phrase *in vain*. If the exotic proper names of secondary characters (*Petrea Creţu Şolcanu* and *Gheorghe Afloarei*) – inserted for authenticity and local colour – may be overlooked by the translator, for the clarification and disambiguation of the remaining elements of cultural specificity, a set of translator's notes would have been in order:

a. *Brăila* – old town on the Danube, in south-eastern Romania; first attested in the mid fourteenth century; many legends about its romantic aura, its beautiful women, daring heroes and notorious villains still circulate;

b. *Dunăre(a)* – large river which springs from the Black Forest in Germany, crosses several European countries, Romania included, and flows into the Black Sea on Romanian territory;

c. *Panait Istrati* (1884-1935) – famous Romanian writer; born in Brăila, a town which is constantly revisited in his fiction;

d. *Ştefan cel Mare* – voivode of Moldavia, a province of Romania, between 1457 and 1505; famous for his military deeds against the Ottoman Empire and for the monasteries he built (today World Heritage sites); a famous defence strategy of his was to torch the lands about to be invaded;

e. *Chira Chiralina* (1923) – a tragic and romantic short story by Panait Istrati, part of the Adrian Zografi series; portrays a violent, decadent, Dionysian environment where kidnapping and human trafficking reign supreme; covers wide spaces and crosses cultural frontiers, from Eastern Europe to the Levant;

f. *pe apa Sâmbetei* – in Romanian mythology, Sâmbăta (the Saturday) is the river of all rivers, which separates this world from the world beyond, and heaven from hell; the expression *a se duce pe apa Sâmbetei* (literally *to flow down the Saturday*) means *to be/ get lost*, *to go to waste*, *to vanish*, *to disappear*, *to die*, *to be destroyed*.

g. *prinţii Şuţu* – rich aristocratic family who, in the nineteenth century, owned estates and palaces in the Şuţeşti-Grădiştea area of Brăila county; had numerous peasants working their lands and used gypsy slaves for domestic chores and entertainment.

As regards the language of the translation provided, the following aspects deserve special consideration: misspellings/ punctuation mistakes have not been corrected; a few lexical and grammatical errors may be identified; some of the choices made structurally modify the meaning of the original; some others ask for improvement.

a. misspellings:

- *Sherezade* (instead of *Scheherazade*);
- *succed* (instead of *succeed*);
- *Aloarei* (instead of *Afloarei*);
- punctuation mistakes (no comma used): *of Panait Istrati of unchained dogs* (instead of *of Panait Istrati, of unchained dogs*).

b. lexical errors:
- *purpura* (instead of *rosy colour*).

c. grammatical errors:
- double subject – *If he didn't succed in scattering us from here **it** means we will never die.* (instead of *If he didn't succeed in scattering us from here means we will never die.*);
- double direct object, unnecessary preposition – *visited **her in her old corners*** (instead of *visited her old corners*);
- ***his** shadow* (instead of ***her** shadow*);
- passive verb instead of verbal adjective – *Many **were cheated** by past time were dying.* (instead of *Many **cheated** by past time were dying.*);
- unnecessary definite article – ***the** curse… **the** bad luck…* (instead of *curse… bad luck…*);
- wrong preposition – *It smells **for** the Danube* (instead of *It smells **of** the Danube*).

d. choices modifying meaning:
- *heroes* (instead of *thieves*);
- *at the bank of the sweet Danube* (instead of *on the sweetest bank of the Danube*);
- *dreams* (instead of *visions/ apparitions/ illusions*).

e. choices to be improved:
- *Old Brăila and especially its legends, overpopulated with romantic heroes / Old Brăila, legendarily overpopulated with romantic thieves*;
- *the thought of El Dorado/ the thought of finding El Dorado*;
- *drunk with/ dazzled by*;
- *supple tall ships/ slender ships*;
- *tied by the anchor/ at anchor*;
- *not much changed/ almost unchanged*;
- *burnt down/ torched*;
- *scattering us from here/ driving us away*;
- *midstream of dreams/ caught in the vortex of dreams*;
- *Unscattered and just enveloped/ unscattered, only enveloped*;
- *reach with your hand/ reach out*;
- *listened to… visited…/ have listened to… have visited…*;
- *Gods of orthodoxism of all shades/ Orthodox gods of all shades*;
- *past time/ the past*;
- *Then, there were, that is were walking alive and comforted by the purpura of my imagination, the stories about the Şuţu Princes./ Then, there were the stories about the Şuţu Princes, alive and well, still circulating, comforted by the rosy colour of my imagination.*;

-   *pubs/ taverns*;
-   *princelike/ princely*.

The cultural and linguistic issues shown at work in the excerpts above are symptomatic for the whole article and its translation into English. The Romanian substratum slips under the foreign surface layer, and thus the translation misses the point. The language used does not do justice to the beautiful, magical story Fănuş Neagu tells about a novel which encapsulates the spirit of a people and the discourse of a generation.

An upgraded translation of 'Cum am scris *Îngerul a strigat*' ['How I Wrote *The Angel Yelled*'] as part of a revised electronic edition of the issues of *Axis Libri* in English might be the short term solution to the current situation. On the other hand, a long term approach for "V. A. Urechia" Galaţi County Public Library might reside in reformulating both its language and its website design policies.

3. Concluding remarks

What the case study shows is that the representations of symbols, values, rituals and heroes run the risk of going unnoticed or of being misunderstood when no visibility is conferred to the translation as process and product, and when domestication – for the sole benefit of the reader immersed in the target language/dominant culture only – remains the only operating principle. (Venuti 1995, 1998) Stored in the collective unconscious of the inheriting nation and surfacing in its literature more frequently than in any other art form, these cultural fundamentals ask of the literary translator to find the perfect balance between politically determined domestication strategies or stylistically oriented text naturalizing, deforming tendencies (Berman 1985), and excessive foreignizing or minoritizing translation policies which, although cultivating heterogeneous discourses (Venuti 1998), will find few readers interested in interacting with it. As for the language skills required of the literary translator, especially of someone who translates out of their native language, it goes without saying that attaining those demands vocation and sustained professional training. It follows that leaving the act of translation as intercultural mediation to chance is unaffordable with public institutions which attempt to promote local literatures via their official websites.

Notes
[1] Born in Grădiştea, Brăila, Fănuş Neagu (1932-2011) was a Romanian novelist, playwright, memoir and short story writer, representative for the neo-modernism of the sixties. Well known works: *Îngerul a strigat [The Angel Yelled]* (1968), *Frumoşii nebuni ai marilor oraşe [The Beautiful Madmen of Large Cities]* (1976), *Scaunul singurătăţii [The Loneliness Chair]* (1988), *Amantul Marii Doamne Dracula [Great Lady Dracula's Lover]* (2001) – novels; *Ningea în Bărăgan [It was snowing in Baragan]* (1960), *Dincolo de nisipuri [Beyond the sands]* (1962) – short stories; *Cartea cu prieteni [The Book of Friends]* (1979), *Insomnii de mătase [Silk Insomnia]* (1981) – memoirs.

References

Berman, A. (1985) 'Translation and the Trials of the Foreign'. In Venuti, L. (2000) *The Translation Studies Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 284-297

Biblioteca Judeţeană "V. A. Urechia" Galaţi (2015) available from http://www.bvau.ro/[25 May 2015]

Neagu, F. (2009) 'Cum am scris *Îngerul a strigat*' – In M. Băraru (gen. ed) *Axis Libri*, An II, Nr. 3, iunie 2009, Galaţi: Axis Libri, 39-42, available from http://www.bvau.ro/docs/axislibri/AxisLibri3.pdf [25 May 2015]

Neagu, F. (2009) 'How I Wrote *The Angel Yelled*'. In M. Băraru (gen. ed) *Axis Libri*, 3rd Issue, 2nd Year, June 2009, Galaţi: Axis Libri, 39-42, available from http://www.scribd.com/doc/215657208/Axis-Libri-Nr-3-in-limba-englez%C4%83#scribd [25 May 2015]

Parlamentul României (2004) *Legea 500/ 2004 – privind folosirea limbii române în locuri şi relaţii publice* available from http://lege5.ro/en/Gratuit/gu3dsnbt/legea-nr-500-2004-privind-folosirea-limbii-romane-in-locuri-relatii-si-institutii-publice [20 May 2015]

Parlamentul României (2006) *Legea 183/ 2006 – privind utilizarea codificării standardizate a setului de caractere în documentele în formă electronică* available from http://lege5.ro/Gratuit/ha3dgnzq/legea-nr-183-2006-privind-utilizarea-codificarii-standardizate-a-setului-de-caractere-in-documentele-in-forma-electronica [25 May 2015]

Revista culturală "Axis Libri" (2015) available from http://www.bvau.ro/axislibri.php?pagina=revista [25 May 2015]

Venuti, L. (1995) *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*, London: Routledge

Venuti, L. (1998) *The Scandals of Translation*, London: Routledge

The Role of Intertextuality
in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*

Irina RAȚĂ*

Abstract

The American cultural identity and the essence of modern America are concepts difficult to describe and define. Neil Gaiman, a highly acclaimed British writer, tried to capture, in his award-winning novel, American Gods, *the "real" America, and its elusive cultural identity. This article aims to uncover the intertextual references in* American Gods, *since Gaiman's work is renowned for its extensive intertextuality. It also attempts to analyse the role and the importance of references in the creation of the American identity, and its cultural representation in Gaiman's novel, by examining the types, functions, and effects of intertextuality.*

Keywords: intertextuality, transtextuality, American cultural identity, cultural representations of America.

Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2001) is a highly-acclaimed, Hugo and Nebula award winning novel, which tries to represent America, and to capture its identity. *American Gods* is renowned for its rich intertextual references to poetry, prose and popular culture. The novel contains a variety of old myths, tales, stories and legends presented in a new context. It "uses myths to define what makes America" (Rimmels 2001). Considering these, one can claim that Gaiman is an author - *bricoleur* as defined by Lévi-Strauss (1966: 16-33), who creates improvised structures by appropriating pre-existing materials. According to Lévi-Strauss, the author - *bricoleur* works with signs, constructing new arrangements by adopting existing signifieds as signifiers and conveying his message "through the medium of things" – by the choices made from "pre-constrained possibilities". In *American Gods* Gaiman plays with countless references, allusions and quotations from earlier sources to mould new stories and myths, and express his views of America and its identity.

In discussing American cultural identity, one should start by defining the concept of cultural identity, which, according to *Dictionary of Media and Communication* is: "The definition of groups or individuals (by themselves or others) in terms of cultural or subcultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender)" (Chandler, Munday 2011: 84). Thus the concept of cultural identity is closely related to that of national identity. When it comes to national identity, this is determined by a number of shared traits, like: inhabited territory, ethnicity, language, religion, customs and traditions, and

* PhD student, "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați, Romania
irina.rata@ugal.ro

history under the form of a shared memory (Bell 2003), and it is a "collective cultural phenomenon", and a "multidimensional concept" (Smith 1991: vii). In the case of the United States of America, a polyethnic state, characterised by multiculturalism, globalisation, and consumerism, the American cultural identity, becomes a complex concept, a jigsaw puzzle, formed of hundreds of disparate pieces connected together by the same territory and politics. As stated by Lyotard: "traditional notions of national identity and culture are superseded by global forms deriving from transnational corporations in control of the media, of scientific research and other technological and commercial areas of life" (Allen 2000: 183). All these make the task of representing American identity even more daunting and difficult than it may seem at first. Gaiman succeeded in representing the concept by using intertextuality to convey its complexity.

The concept of "intertextuality" was introduced by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960 in discussing Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, and the term first appeared in Kristeva's essay "Word, Dialogue and Novel" in 1966. The concept was further developed by many twentieth century literary theorists, like Barthes, Derrida, Riffaterre, Genette, Culler, and others. Intertextuality is a flexible concept, used by structuralists (Genette, Riffaterre) to locate and fix literary meaning, and by poststructuralists (Barthes, Derrida) to disrupt notions of meaning (Allen 2000:4). According to Kristeva intertextuality is "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1986: 37), and a text is "a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text", in which "several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralise one another" (1980: 36). These texts according to Kristeva are made up of "the cultural (or social) text", which includes "all the different discourses, ways of speaking and saying, institutionally sanctioned structures and systems which make up what we call culture" (Allen 2000: 36). According to this definition the text is a compilation of cultural textuality.

The framing of texts by other texts has implications not only for the *writers* of these texts, but also for their *readers*. In 1968 Barthes formulated "the death of the author" and "the birth of the reader", stating that "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination"(Barthes 1977: 148). Once written the text is detached from its author, its meaning reconstruction depending upon the reader's previous readings, experience, cultural formation that form important intertexts. The meaning thus becoming a dynamic concept, constituted during the reading process, making the authorial intent irrelevant.

Related to the reconstruction of meaning, Kristeva referred to texts in terms of two axes: a *horizontal axis* connecting the author and reader, and a *vertical axis*, connecting the text to other texts (Kristeva 1980: 69). In the horizontal dimension "the word in the text belongs to both writing subject and addressee"; in the vertical dimension "the word in the text is oriented toward an anterior or synchronic literary corpus" (Kristeva 1980: 66). These two axes are united by shared codes: every text and every reading depend on and are mediated by prior codes. Developing this idea Barthes itemised five codes employed to communicate

meaning in literary texts: hermeneutic (narrative turning points), proairetic (basic narrative actions), cultural (prior social knowledge), semic (medium-related codes), and symbolic (themes) (1974: 18-20). The codes, part of such textual systems, are involved in dynamic patterns of dominance between them, which contributes to the generation of meaning. Moreover, they are not always in complete accord with each other; their interaction can reveal incoherence, ambiguities, contradictions and omissions that may offer the scope for deconstructing the text (Chandler 2007: 205). These codes, which frequently appear simultaneously, offer the text a plural quality, making it polyphonic. Furthermore, out of the five codes, "only three establish permutable, reversible connections, outside the constraint of time (the semic, cultural, and symbolic codes); the other two impose their terms according to an irreversible order (the hermeneutic and proairetic codes)" (1974: 30). What Barthes called cultural codes in *S/Z*, is further developed in his collection of essays *Mythologies* in the terms of myth or ideology (Silverman 1984: 41). In *Mythologies* Barthes discusses the orders of signification, and alongside denotation and connotation he introduces the concept of myth (1972: 127-128). Denotation and connotation combine to produce ideology or myth. Myths, according to Barthes, are the dominant ideologies of our time. They express and serve to organise shared ways of conceptualizing something within a culture (Chandler 2007: 144). In the text, myth serves the ideological function of naturalisation (making dominant cultural and historical values, attitudes and beliefs seem entirely "natural", "normal", self-evident, timeless, obvious "common-sense") (Barthes 1977: 127-130). Similarly, myths can be seen as extended metaphors, helping us to make sense of our experiences within a culture (Lakoff, Johnson 1980: 185-186). Subsequently, myth was referred to, as a higher order of signification (Hjelmslev 1961: 125), or as the third order of signification (Fiske, Hartley 1978: 43). In *American Gods*, one can find numerous cultural references belonging to the order of myth or ideology. For instance, in the fragment: "I didn't think there was anywhere in the world that was fifty miles from McDonald's" (Gaiman 2001: 345), McDonald's stands for globalisation or even for the Americanisation (Danesi 2009: 20) of the world.

In analyzing intertextuality one can follow one of the models elaborated by such theorists like Genette (1992, 1997), Fairclough (1999, 2003), Halliday (2002), Widdowson (2004), or Bloor and Bloor (2007). However, for the purpose of this article we will only focus on Genette's concept of transtextuality and its analysis. Genette (1997: 18-19) proposed the term transtextuality, for the concept of intertextuality, as a more inclusive one. He names transtextuality the "*textual transcendence* - namely, everything that brings it into relation (manifest or hidden) with other texts" (Genette 1997: xv). These new texts are "written over" the older ones, inviting a double reading.

His model of transtextuality analysis implies three types and five subtypes of transtextuality. The three types of transtextuality are: explicit and formal transtextuality (quotations), non-explicit hidden transtextuality (plagiarism), implicit transtextuality (hidden elements of other texts, offering clues - references

and allusions). *American Gods* offers both instances of explicit transtextuality, and implicit transtextuality. For example, there are numerous quotations, to illustrate explicit transtextuality, as in: "Call no man happy, till he's dead" - Herodotus, *Histories* (Gaiman 2001:5). There are also numerous allusions, as examples of implicit intertextuality: "Or has Timmy fallen down another well?" (Gaiman 2001: 123), an allusion to the American TV series Lassie; or as in: "Somehow, Toto …I don't believe we're in Kansas anymore" (Gaiman, 2001: 337), an allusion to Dorothy Gale in Wizard of Oz movie. Since, we are dealing with a novel, we have no hidden transtextuality in the text. The five subtypes of transtextuality according to Genette include: intertextuality formed of quotation, plagiarism, and allusions; paratextuality comprising titles, headings, prefaces, epigraphs, dedications, acknowledgements; architextuality, which designates a text as part of a genre or genres; metatextuality composed of explicit or implicit critical commentary of one text on another text; hypertextuality which transforms, modifies, elaborates or extends the previous text (including parody, spoof, sequel, translation) (1997: xviii).

In addressing the subtypes of transtextuality, according to Genette's model, the first subtype is intertextuality. In the text it is illustrated by: onomastic allusions, quotational allusions, literary and cultural allusions. As stated above, Gaiman uses old myths to create new ones. He introduces elements from African, American Indian, Irish, Norse, and Slavic mythologies, as well as, numerous urban myths, phenomena and objects of worship. Among these elements the characters represented by the gods, have suggestive names, as pointers toward their cultural origins, which function as onomastic allusions: *Czernobog, Zorya sisters, Mr. Ibis, Mr. Wednesday, Mad Sweeney, Mama-ji,* etc. As in the example: "*They brought me, and Loki and Thor, Anansi and the Lion-God, Leprechauns and Kobolds and Banshees, Kubera and Frau Holle and Ashtaroth, and they brought you*" (Gaiman 2001: 107). The effect produced by their names is reinforced with cultural stereotypes related to their origin, expressed through clothes, food, traditions, and manners of speaking. The Old gods represent in the novel multiculturalism and pluralism of the United States of America. Modern gods have suggestive names, as well: Media, Mr. World, Mr. Town, or Technical Boy. The new gods represent another level of intertextuality parallel to what the old gods represent. They are modern world myths, representing a dominant ideology. For instance Mr. World stands for globalisation, Mr. Town – for urbanisation, etc. Among quotational allusions we can distinguish marked and unmarked allusions. For instance, we have marked quotational allusions, as: "No man, proclaimed Donne, is an Island" (Gaiman 2001: 252), overt allusion to John Donne. As examples of unmarked quotational allusions: "Say "Nevermore", said Shadow" (Gaiman 2001: 123), an allusion to The Raven by E. A. Poe; "We were discussing the ways to deal with the coming paradigm shift" (Gaiman 2001: 318), allusion to Thomas Kuhn's book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions; "That's all she wrote" (Gaiman 2001: 461), an allusion to an American saying, coming from a country song titled "That's All She Wrote", recorded by Ernest Tubb in 1942. Among the literary allusions, we

encounter: "Friends, Romans, countrymen" (Gaiman 2001: 420), an allusion to Marc Antony's speech from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar; and "Turning and turning in the widening gyre/ The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the center cannot hold…" (Gaiman 2001: 349), quoted from W. B. Yeats' The Second Coming; or: "holding out his gold-filled cap with both hands like Oliver Twist" (Gaiman 2001: 170), allusion to Dickens' Oliver Twist; or as in: ""Mostly folk just take the thrillers and the children's books and the Harlequin romances. Jenny Kerton, Danielle Steel, all that." The man was reading Agatha Christie's The Murder of Roger Ackroyd" (Gaiman 2001: 233).

The category of cultural allusions is represented in the novel by such examples, as: "*This country has been Grand Central for ten thousand years or more*" (Gaiman 2001: 153) and "*Ah, Lady Liberty. Beautiful, is she not*?" (Gaiman 2001: 82), both alluding to the cultural symbols of New York. This is a rather special category of intertextual allusions. In the novel these become signs with real equivalents recognizable worldwide, due to the Americanisation of the world. Some of these signs, however, represent inexistent realities. This concept was introduced by Baudrillard in his essay "Simulacra and Simulation" (1988: 166). According to Baudrillard there are four phases of the image/sign: 1. the sign as a reflection of a basic reality. 2. the sign marks and perverts a basic reality. 3. it masks the *absence* of a basic reality. 4. it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum (Baudrillard 1988: 170). Baudrillard argues that when speech and writing were created, signs were invented to point to material or social reality, but the bond between signifier and signified deteriorated. In time, the sign began to hide "basic reality". The simulacrum "copy" came to replace the "real". In the postmodern age the "reality" is "created" through media: radio, television, newspapers, film, literature, becoming a *hyperreality*. This hyperreality is only an illusion, only seeming very real; signs hiding the absence of reality and pretending to mean something (Baudrillard 1988: 171). In the novel Hollywood or Disneyland stand as signs for United States of America and "American Dream", while being simulacra. Similarly, in the novel we have references to the very concept of simulacra and simulation:

> The important thing to understand about American history … is that it is fictional, a charcoal-sketched simplicity for the children, or the easily bored. For the most part it is uninspected, unimagined, unthought, a representation of the thing, and not the thing itself. It is a fine fiction …that America was founded by pilgrims, seeking the freedom to believe as they wished, that they came to the Americas, spread and bred and filled the empty land (Gaiman 2001: 73).

Or as, in the following example: "the Lookout Mountain he had left was a painting on a backdrop, or a papier-mâché model seen on a TV screen—merely a representation of the thing, not the thing itself" (Gaiman 2001: 418).

These cultural allusions serve to "anchor" the preferred readings of an image. Barthes developed the concept of "anchorage" used "to *fix* the floating chain of signifieds" (1977: 38-41) primarily in relation to advertisements, where

texts and captions were used to anchor the interpretation of meaning, and serve an ideological function. The term is applied in literature, as well, to "anchor" signification by privileging certain terms over others, in order to determine a preferred reading of a text. *American Gods* contains numerous allusions that are used to anchor the meaning in the text. For instance: ""And what are you? A spic? A gypsy?" "Not that I know of, sir. Maybe." "Maybe you got nigger blood in you. You got nigger blood in you, Shadow?""(Gaiman 2001: 10), where terms like *spic, gypsy, nigger* are derogatory and racist. These are allusions to the constant fight against racism, and the history of slavery in America. On the one hand, there are old gods as a representation of multiculturalism and pluralism, and on the other hand, there are these discriminatory terms as allusions to racism, in a binary opposition, representing American identity. The idea is further developed in: "Nobody's American," said Wednesday. "Not originally. That's my point" (Gaiman 2001: 83), alluding to the history of United States, as a land of immigrants.

Other cultural allusions are to famous American landmarks: World's Largest Carousel, statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, House on the Rock, Disneyland, Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, Grand Central Station New York alluding to "American Dream", and "land of unlimited possibilities" myths. Additional cultural allusions are to American brands, like: Burger King, KFC, McDonald's, Wal-Mart, Chrysler, Ford, Chevrolet that became recognisable worldwide due to globalisation and the Americanisation, as well as, to the increasing consumerism. Allusions to American history, like: Fourth of July - Independence Day, Civil War, 1830s Andrew Jackson's Indian Relocation Act, alluding to important landmarks in American history, as steps in the evolution of "world's greatest democracy", part of another myth that characterises modern America. All these recognisable American landmarks, brands, historical events are used to anchor the meaning interpretation to America, considering the fact that all these are recognisable solely due to globalisation, Americanisation and consumerism, thus carrying an identifiable, "natural", "normal", "self-evident" American ideology. The American culture heroes, mentioned in the novel, are allusions to folktale and popular culture, together with allusions to real personalities of American culture and history. American popular culture heroes, like: Whiskey Jack, Johnnie Appleseed aka John Chapman, Paul Bunyan, Canada Bill Jones, and outstanding American personalities, like: Frank Lloyd Wright (renowned architect), Jackson Pollock (influential painter), George Devol (famous inventor), Abraham Lincoln (one of the three greatest U.S. presidents), Gutzon Borglum (famous sculptor, creator of the monumental presidents' heads at Mount Rushmore), that came to be considered culture heroes of sorts, are used to reference the diversity of America. The novel also abounds in American media references, to TV, newspapers, film, music: *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Xena: Warrior Princess, M*A*S*H, Dick Van Dyke Show, Scooby-Doo, Cheers, "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood", Indigo Girls, Jay Leno, The Tonight Show, Carrie, The War of the Worlds, Gravity's Rainbow, Reader's Digest, Newsweek, Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor,*

Judy Garland. These audio-visual references enrich the text, have a cinematic effect, and give the impression of on-going reality or even hyperreality. As stated by Chandler: "Intertextuality blurs the boundaries not only between texts but between texts and the world of lived experience" (2002: 209).

Another type of transtextuality in the novel is paratextuality, represented by title, preface, dedication, acknowledgements, postface, and chapter headings. The title *American Gods* is highly evocative. It is simultaneously ambiguous and open to interpretation. The *gods* in the title can be understood both literally and figuratively. The preface called: "Caveat and Warning for Travelers", offers the readers an advance commentary on the text that they have yet to become familiar with. In it, the reader is warned that: "this is a work of fiction, not a guidebook", in a metafictional technique. "Only the gods are real", arousing reader's interest and pointing how one should read the text. The novel also has a dedication – "For absent friends—Kathy Acker and Roger Zelazny, and all points between", and three pages of acknowledgements, to friends and editors making the appearance of the book possible (Gaiman 2001: 463 – 465). In this subtype one has to include all the chapter headings, as well. Every chapter in American Gods, carries a marked quotation, each "anchoring" the meaning of the following chapter, in Barthes' terms, or pointing toward the meaning interpretation. For instance: "The boundaries of our country, sir? Why sir, on the north we are bounded by the Aurora Borealis, on the east we are bounded by the rising sun, on the south we are bounded by the procession of the Equinoxes, and on the west by the Day of Judgment. —The American Joe Miller's Jest Book" (Gaiman 2001: 3), referencing the "greatness of the United States of America", and the myth of America as "the greatest country in the world". These quotations are as diverse as the rest of the intertextual references in the novel. They come from prose, poetry, popular culture, and each of them mentions its source. The novel contains a postscript, functioning as an epilogue, where the reader gets a glimpse of Shadow's future, several months after the events of the book. It also contains a postface, called: "On the road to American Gods: Selected Passages from Neil Gaiman's Online Journal" (www.americangods. com), as well as, a short author's biography at the end of the book. In the entries the author addresses the reader directly, as he does in the preface, thus "breaking the fourth wall".

The architextuality in the novel is represented by the subtitle: "*A novel*". The assignment of a text to a genre provides the interpreter of the text with a key intertextual framework. However, *American Gods*, as a postmodernist novel, disrupts the genre boundaries in a melting pot of genres. At first glance it is a road trip novel, or an Americana (a novel about America), a fantasy novel, while simultaneously pertaining to speculative fiction, with elements of detective fiction, gothic fiction, science fiction, and horror. Usually, architextuality offers the reader clues and conventions of the genre, as pointers towards interpretation. While, *American Gods* contains clues and conventions of multiple genres, it follows them through the novel. For instance, during Shadow's stay in Lakeside, a child disappears. Shadow finds out that it usually happens in the winter. Throughout

the novel he gets clues, as to maintain the reader interested in unravelling the mystery. The Shadow's journey gets to a close, and the reader almost forgets about the mystery; however the culprit is uncovered in the last chapter, before the postscript, thus the reader's expectation are fulfilled and genre tropes are followed up.

Metatextuality presents the dialogic relation between the allusions and the novel, in such examples, as: "the father of lies" (Gaiman 2001: 132), talking about Herodotus, and then rectifying it was the Devil, thus allowing the dialogue between Histories and the Bible. "The sacrifice of a son" (Gaiman 2001: 414) is another Bible reference, alluding to Jesus, and permitting the comparison of Shadow's journey to that of Jesus. This comparison and contrast between Shadow and Jesus is reinforced, by constant references to Jesus, throughout the novel, like in: "I don't want to seem like I'm—Jesus, look …" (Gaiman 2001: 123), "A man in a suit explained that these were the end times and that Jesus…" (Gaiman 2001: 135), "That boy was one lucky son of a virgin.""Jesus?"" (Gaiman 2001: 161), "So, yeah, Jesus does pretty good over here" (Gaiman 2001: 162). The dialogue between the two gets even more interesting, when Shadow discovers that he was sacrificed by his father in an egoistic attempt to kill everyone for his own benefit.

Another example of metatextuality in the novel is represented by the modern goddess Media, who describes herself as: "I'm the idiot box. I'm the TV. I'm the all-seeing eye and the world of the cathode ray. I'm the boob tube. I'm the little shrine the family gathers to adore."… "The TV's the altar. I'm what people are sacrificing to."…"Their time, mostly," … "Sometimes each other" (Gaiman 2001: 136), followed by the next commentary in a dialogue between Czernobog and Mr. Nancy: "Media. I think I have heard of her. Isn't she the one who killed her children?" "Different woman," said Mr. Nancy. "Same deal" (Gaiman 2001: 338), making an allusion to Euripides' Medea, subsequently allowing comparison and contrast between the two characters.

Hypertextuality in *American Gods* is represented by parody. The Old World mythology, with its corresponding values, is parodied, by ironic inversion, through the American versions of the (altered) Old World gods and traditions. For instance, all American versions of gods are old, working odd jobs: Odin (Mr. Wednesday) is a grifter, Queen of Sheba is a prostitute in Las Vegas, Loki Liesmith is in jail, Czernobog is a former knocker (he used to kill cows with a sledgehammer in a slaughterhouse), Mr. Ibis and Mr. Jacquel are morticians. They live in peculiar places, Odin in motels, Czernobog in an apartment smelling like overboiled cabbage, Mr. Ibis and Mr. Jacquel in a mortuary house, etc. All of them are American versions of themselves, that do not feel like entirely belonging in America, and which cannot return to their homelands. Therefore they become caricatures of their old selves, coming together in a pastiche of discordant characters. Other instances of hypertextuality in the novel are: "You are an immaterial girl living in a material world" (Gaiman 2001: 293), "You are an analog girl, living in a digital world" (Gaiman 2001: 293), Technical Boy parodying Madonna's Material Girl.

Each of the above presented types and subtypes of intertextuality serve certain functions in the text and affect its interpretation. The general functions of intertextuality in a text, derived from previously examined theory, are: to give to the audience the interpretative codes for understanding the message; to "naturalise" the perceived ideology; to anchor the meaning for its interpretation; to compare and contrast different texts; to allow the dialogue between texts, engaging in a debate about what is important or dominant (Bakhtin 1981); to destabilise - disrupt the meaning, by adding another level of understanding to the text; to provide the reader with the reminder that he/she is a part of mediated reality.

Some defining features of intertextuality according to Chandler might include the following (2007:207): *reflexivity* (self-consciousness of the text); *alteration* (of sources); *explicitness* (recognition of sources); *criticality to comprehension* (importance of reader's recognition of sources in text interpretation); *scale of adoption*; and *structural unboundedness* (text as part of a larger structure). The effects of intertextuality in *American Gods*, derived from these functions and features, as they are presented above, are: persuading the audience to believe in the on-going reality of the narrative; offering an extra-dimension to the novel; offering the readers the pleasure of recognition of sources, and new layers of interpretation, as well; providing alternative points of view on the "reality" of the everyday life, allusions to the mediated reality/hyperreality. The novel is also characterised by self-reflexivity and explicitness in its intertextual references, as an acknowledgement of the preceding literary tradition. Meanwhile, the implicit intertextuality is not essential for reader's comprehension, thus leaving the seasoned reader enjoy the allusions, at the same time not affecting the understanding of meaning by an occasional reader.

Taking into consideration that the novel contains far more intertextual references than might be included in a short article, and that the text's meaning is constructed during the reading process, one can fully agree with Foucault stating that:

> The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network … The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands … Its unity is variable and relative (1974: 23 cited in Chandler 2007: 201).

In *American Gods* Gaiman created a rich intertextual web of references, which creates a complex image of America and its identity. Gaiman's America is a pastiche of discordant individual voices representing different cultures, values and nationalities, and their corresponding idiosyncrasies, combined into a representation of modern America, as a multicultural, polyethnic country, marked by its own strengths and weaknesses; yet, incredibly complex and rich in its diversity.

References

Allen, G. (2000) *Intertextuality.* London and New York: Routledge

Bakhtin, M. (1986) *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays.* Austin: University of Texas Press

Barthes, R. (1972) *Mythologies.* New York: Hill and Wang

Barthes, R. (1977) *Image – Music – Text.* London: Fontana

Barthes, R. (1974) *S/Z,* New York: Hill and Wang

Baudrillard, J., Poster, M. (ed.) (1988) *Selected Writings.* Cambridge: Polity Press

Bell, D. S. A. (2003) "Mythscapes: Memory, Mythology, and National Identity." *The British Journal of Sociology* 54.1. 63-81

Bloor M., Bloor, T. (2007) *The Practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction.* London: Holdder Arnold Education

Calabrese, A., Burke, B. R. (1992) "American Identities: Nationalism, the Media, and the Public Sphere". *Journal of Communication Inquiry 16.* 52

Chandler, D. 2nd ed. (2007) *Semiotics. The Basics.* London and New York: Routledge

Chandler, D., Munday, R. (2011) *A Dictionary of Media and Communication.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Danesi, M. (2009) *Dictionary of Media and Communications.* New York, London: M. E. Sharpe

Fairclough, N. (1999) "Linguistic and intertextual analysis within discourse analysis". In Jaworski, N., Coupland, N. (eds.) *The Discourse Reader.* London and New York: Routledge

Fairclough, N. (2003) *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research.* London and New York: Routledge

Fiske, J., Hartley, J. (1978) *Reading Television.* London: Methuen

Gaiman, N. (2001) *American Gods.* New York: William Morrow

Genette, G. (1992) *The Architect: An Introduction.* Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Genette, G. (1997) *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation.* Lincoln NE and London University: University of Nebraska Press

Halliday, M. A. K.., Webster, J. (ed.) (2002). *On Texts and Discourse.* vol.2. London and New York: Continuum

Hjelmslev, L. (1961) *Prolegomena to a Theory of Language.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press

Kristeva, J. (1980) *Desire in Language: a semiotic approach to literature and art.* New York: Columbia University Press

Kristeva, J. (1986) *The Kristeva Reader*, New York: Columbia University Press

Lakoff, G., Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors We Live By.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Lyotard, J. F. (1986) *The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge.* Manchester: Manchester University Press

Silverman, K. (1983) *The Subject of Semiotics.* New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Smith, A. D. (1991) *National Identity.* London: Penguin Books

Widdowson, H. G. (2004) *Text, Context, Pretext: Critical Issues in Discourse Analysis.* Blackwell Publishing

The Two Gentlemen of Verona in *Shakespeare in Love*: Intertextual Relations and their Role in Meaning-Making

Ilaria RIZZATO*

Abstract
This paper seeks to explore the relationship between Shakespeare's early comedy The Two Gentlemen of Verona *and John Madden's film* Shakespeare in Love. *To this end, first of all, it will examine the role played by direct quotations of text from* The Two Gentlemen *and the significance of the fictional staging of the comedy in the film. Moreover, it will identify themes, imagery and elements of characterisation from* The Two Gentlemen *exploited by the film and explain how they contribute to the latter's dramatic development. Further, it will highlight situational parallelism between play and film and attempt an explanation of its functions. Finally, it will seek to integrate the above-mentioned aspects with a view to illustrating the picture of* The Two Gentlemen *as emerging from* Shakespeare in Love: *a highly mediated picture, where romantic love and comical excess are foregrounded at the expense of other equally important features of the play, such as risqué eroticism and highly refined wordplay.*

Keywords: Shakespearean comedy, film, intertextuality, signification, multimodality

This paper looks at the role played by *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* [1] in *Shakespeare in Love*, the 1998 film directed by John Madden and based on the screenplay by Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard [2]. Such a role is constructed at many levels, the most obvious of which is that of direct quotation of text from the comedy, which will be analysed as the first and most basic way of establishing an intertextual relationship between the two works. The second level of analysis will focus on themes, imagery and characterisation in the film which appear to have *The Two Gentlemen* as a source, so as to emphasise the further contribution of the play to the motion picture. Thirdly, scenes or situations from the comedy that are recognisably paralleled by the film will be commented on so as to identify their function in the film.

All direct quotations from *The Two Gentlemen*'s text appear at an early stage in the film. The first mention of the full title occurs in the scene hosting the first dialogue between the character of William Shakespeare, referred to as Will in the film (and henceforward in this paper), and the theatre manager Henslowe. While Henslowe is trying to convince Will to complete the comedy he has promised to him, Will replies he is still awaiting payment for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Thus, the audience is informed that this play has already been completed, which presents it as a background element to the current development of filmic action.

---

* Lecturer in English Language and Translation. University of Genoa, Italy.
ilaria.rizzato@unige.it

The text is referred to again when Will comes to Whitehall Palace and, in what appears to be a backstage area, he meets the actor William Kempe [3], dressed and made up as a clown, with a dog. Will addresses the dog as Crab, which is the same name Lance's dog has in *The Two Gentlemen*. This could suggest that Will is using the animal's 'stage name' either because he is not familiar with his real name or because the dog is about to go on stage to perform and should, therefore, be called by the name of his character. This, however, could also suggest that the dog in the play has been named after, and presumably inspired by, a real one, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, Kempe states that "Crab is nervous. He's never played the palace" (Norman and Stoppard 1998: 13), which refers to the 'real' dog rather than the character. Secondly, and most important, there are other scenes in the film which appear to explain the origin of Shakespearean characters' names on the basis of Will's 'real-life' situations, for example when Marlowe proposes the name Mercutio for a character in Will's next play (as well as a significant part of the plot of *Romeo and Juliet*), or at the end of the film, when Will names the heroine of the comedy he is about to write, *Twelfth Night*, after the love of his life, Viola. These similarities seem to support the idea that the film represents the dog's name in the comedy as inspired by the 'real' dog's name, which seems to be very unrealistic, as the name Crab for the dog in the play seems to have been chosen because it means "sour," and therefore because it expresses the unfriendly temper and unfeeling attitude the animal is supposed to have in the play [4]. This mention of Crab, however, also announces that *The Two Gentlemen* is about to be staged [5].

The sequence devoted to the show begins with the arrival of the Queen and alternates shots of the actors on stage with takes of the audience and of other characters in the backstage area. Text quoted from *The Two Gentlemen* is to be heard during such takes, more distinctly in the former case, less so in the latter.

The first quotation is Valentine's incipit, "Cease to persuade, my loving Proteus" (I.1.1), which is pronounced by the character to the right in the frame, as seen from the back of the stage, as if to introduce this place as a source of point of view. Immediately after this first, distinctly audible line, in fact, the camera moves backstage where Will is. Text from the play can still be perceived as background noise:

> VALENTINE
> Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits.
> Were't not affection chains thy tender days
> To the sweet glances of thy honoured love,
> I rather would entreat thy company
> To see the wonders of the world abroad
> Than, living dully sluggardized at home,
> Wear out thy youth with shapeless idleness.
> But since thou lov'st, love still, and thrive therein-
> Even as I would, when I to love begin.
> PROTEUS

> Wilt thou be gone? Sweet Valentine, adieu.
> Think on thy Proteus when thou haply seest
> Some rare noteworthy object in thy travel.
> Wish me partaker in thy happiness
> When thou dost meet good hap; and in thy danger—
> If ever danger do environ thee
> Commend thy grievance to my holy prayers;
> For I will be thy beadsman, Valentine (I.1.2-18).

This long quotation, however, is barely audible, and just provides a background to the conversation between Will and his lover Rosaline in which he asks her to become his muse. In this sequence, then, the exchange between lovers is foregrounded, whereas quoted text does not seem to attract much attention. Will's remark on the audience plotting against him because they cough during his play seems to diminish both the seriousness of the bond between Rosaline and him and the status of the comedy to the eyes of at least one of its spectators [6].

Coughing provides an auditory as well as a visual link to the next set up, showing the Queen coughing and having some food, her eyes first averted from stage, and then looking at it again. The next frame shows Kempe onstage as Lance, speaking these lines from the famous parting scene:

> My mother weeping, my father wailing, […] our maid howling, our cat wringing her hands […] yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear (II.3.6-9).

When the words "our cat wringing her hands" are uttered, the camera take leaves Lance to move to Crab barking, and then to the Queen again, who is now laughing out loud. These parallel visual inputs of the Queen, separated only by Lance's and Crab's close-ups, emphasise what is different in each of them: the Queen's mood, changing from being absent-minded to being amused. In other words, a cause and effect relationship between Lance and Crab's acting and the Queen's loud laughter is established. Then Lance is shown fumbling with the dog lead and stumbling as Crab pulls at it, which makes the audience roar with laughter, along with the Queen. This view of the audience also provides a chance to display a close-up of the protagonist Viola, sincerely amused, and of Lord Wessex, who remains dark and silent.

Then Lance and Crab becoming more and more tangled up in the dog lead are in focus again, and the Queen is shown laughing even louder, her laughter rising above everybody else's in the room. The implicature this sequence creates is that the more clownish the performance, the more intense the Queen's – and the public's in general - pleasure. The same conclusion is reached by Henslowe, who says to Will Shakespeare, sitting in the back of the room with him: "You see? Comedy. Love and a bit with a dog, that's what they want" [7]. But Will's face expression suggests that his opinion is different.

As Lance recites the following lines from the same scene

He is a stone, a very pebble-stone, and has no more pity in him than a dog. A Jew would have wept to have seen our parting. […] Now the dog all this while sheds not a tear nor speaks a word (II.3.9-12),

the camera closes up on Wessex, who looks at Viola, and then on Viola herself. At first she is laughing, but as she turns to the back of the room and catches a glimpse of Will Shakespeare, grave and unsmiling, her face also saddens. Here the contrast between the audience's mirth and the comic scene, on the one hand, and Will's seriousness, on the other, is meaningful: it presumably conveys that Will is not at ease with this type of comicality. Then the Queen's praise goes to Crab, to whom she throws a sweetmeat, under the astonished eyes of Lance/Kempe.

The quotation closing the scene on the staging of *The Two Gentlemen* is from Act III, scene 1. The Duke has just banished Valentine from Milan, and the latter, remaining alone on stage, laments that life makes no sense to him without Silvia:

What light is light, if Silvia be not seen?
What joy is joy, if Silvia be not by —
Unless it be to think that she is by,
And feed upon the shadow of perfection.
Except I be by Silvia in the night
There is no music in the nightingale (III.1.174-179).

As the actor playing Valentine delivers line 174, he is in close-up, his posture and diction seemingly contrived. As he moves on to lines 175-176, the Queen is again in view, as seen from the by now familiar angle, but this time she closes her eyes and starts napping. As Valentine reaches lines 177-179, however, a high-angle close-up of Viola's face is shown: she is mouthing Valentine's words, with a participating, moved expression.

To explain how the above-mentioned text quotations contribute to the construction of meaning in the film, it may be useful to look at the selection of passages operated. Selection, in fact, implies both compression of a more extended text and more focus on the parts selected as opposed to those left out. And focus means importance: the selected parts must be important building blocks of meaning to the text in which they appear – that is, *Shakespeare in Love*. Moreover, selection implies motivation: understanding why a scene has been chosen out of all others and which aspects of it have been foregrounded may tell us much about the ideas the film wishes to convey.

To sum up, the quotations appearing in the scene of the staging of the play are:
-    the opening dialogue between Valentine and Proteus;
-    the famous parting scene with Lance and the dog Crab;
-    Valentine's love monologue.

Not all three quotations gain the same prominence to the viewer. The opening dialogue, for example, is mostly not audible, except for the very first line,

which is also the only one pronounced with the actors being visible onstage. The rest of the passage is just background noise to the love dialogue between Will and Rosaline. Therefore, the themes introduced by the first scene of *The Two Gentlemen* (friendship, travelling as a form of education, as opposed to love as a form of imprisonment) are not made accessible to the film viewer, unless s/he already knows the play in detail, which is very unlikely, both because the comedy is one of Shakespeare's less renowned works, and because the film addresses the widest audience possible, rather than one of academics or connoisseurs of Renaissance literature. Thus, the function of this quotation seems to be simply that of announcing the beginning of the play.

Lance's parting scene, on the other hand, appears to be much more prominent, indeed the most prominent of the three staged scenes. It is one of the most famous passages in *The Two Gentlemen*, considered one of the best pieces of comic prose in the canon (Farnham 1971, Weimann 1989). What is foregrounded in the film, however, is not the textual element, but its extreme buffoonish quality, represented through Kempe's exaggerated playing, his clown's dress and make up, and the grotesque presence of the dog, not to mention the enthusiastic reaction of the audience, and particularly of the Queen, at their performance. The comment uttered by Henslowe during this scene, "Comedy. Love and a bit with a dog, that's what they want" puts into words what the picture is expressing visually − with the exception of "love," for which we will have to wait until the next quotation. Will's unconvinced face and pondering attitude, however, suggests that he does not agree with Henslowe. His attitude, in contrast with the comic moment in the play and with the audience's wild laughter and clear satisfaction, seems to imply that this piece, and particularly this kind of comedy, is not a source of satisfaction for him as it is for his public, and that he aspires to higher, more inspired achievements in writing.

A similarly reductive image of the *Two Gentlemen* as a comedy is also obtained through what is left out of the quotations. The portion of text between "shed one tear" and "He is a stone," which has been skipped in the film, is probably the main reason why this monologue is so famous. It includes, in fact, the passage where Lance uses his shoes, a stick and the dog to impersonate the members of his family and himself in the account of his parting from them. This passage in the comedy relies on gesture, true, to use the comical potential of props to their full – part of a popular tradition, dating back to the Middle Ages (Weimann 1989) – but also on witty wordplay, as is the case with Lance's description of his mother:

> No, no, this left shoe is my mother. Nay, that cannot be so, neither. Yes, it is so, it is so, it hath the worser sole (II.3.15-17).

"Worser sole" can be read in at least three ways: literally, as the more worn-out lower part of the shoe; with a pun only on "sole" and its perfect homophone "soul," referring to the ancient belief that women were endowed with lesser

spiritual gifts than men; finally, with a pun on both words, sounding very close to "whore's hole," an extremely obscene image, especially if referred to one's mother. However gross the image evoked, this pun is an instance of very skilful writing and of refined wordplay, associated with the most appreciated verse by Shakespeare rather than with a popular tradition based on cheaply bought laughter. Leaving this out of the filmed stage makes it much easier to represent this passage as somewhat poor.

What is left out of the film obviously extends to the many other comic scenes in the play which have not been selected for quotation. *The Two Gentlemen*, in fact, presents a very rich comic apparatus, featuring not only the sole example of animal character in the canon, but also two clowns rather than the usual one: Speed, Valentine's servant, as well as Lance (Brooks 1963). Moreover, comic effects are often achieved even by characters who are not clowns. In most cases, a rich, highly skilful use of wordplay is responsible for comicality in a way that is not inferior to that of the major comedies by the Bard.

For these reasons, *Shakespeare in Love* appears unfair to *The Two Gentlemen*'s comic vigour, a choice which seems to be prompted by the need to justify Will's new interest in tragedies, as his next, much celebrated work will be *Romeo and Juliet*, around which this film revolves.

As for Valentine's monologue, it finally introduces the important element of love on stage. It represents a very lyrical moment in the play, using the conventions of courtly love poetry to picture an idealised love feeling. The static posture of the actor and the fact that the Queen has fallen asleep during this passage seem to suggest it may not be too appealing. But the close-up on Viola knowing every word of it subverts this view: cold acting and the Queen's preference for comic pieces appear to be part of the problem, whereas Valentine's lines, which have conquered the girl's heart, seem to express love poetry convincingly. On the whole, a positive image of the amorous element in *The Two Gentlemen* seems to emerge, although it is again quite a reductive one. In the comedy, love is multifaceted, as the character of Proteus, named after the priapic Greek god, testifies (Coronato 2005, Scuderi 2012, 2013): ideal, poetic feelings live together with erotic impulse, obscene suggestions and rape instincts.

This positive but limited picture of love in *The Two Gentlemen* features again in the audition scene, where Viola, as Thomas Kent, proposes as an audition piece the same passage from Valentine's monologue, extended by the following lines:

> Except I be by Silvia in the night
> There is no music in the nightingale.
> Unless I look on Silvia in the day
> There is no day for me to look upon.
> She is my essence, and I leave to be
> If I be not […] (III.1.178-183).

As she rehearses these lines, the camera closes more and more on her, and her words and face expression become more and more passionate. Quotation of the same text makes it compulsory to draw a comparison between its two performances. Thomas's/Viola's is much more convincing, which reinforces the positive idea of love verse in *The Two Gentlemen*, and the suggestion that Will's writing has already expressed love effectively, but has not found the right interpreter, audience and play that can make it thrive. As the film displays the making of *Romeo and Juliet*, this may also suggest that the play is good inasmuch as it anticipates the more famous tragedy. Such a perspective, however, seems to obscure some of the successful aspects of the play celebrated even by those who have expressed reservations on it. Some critics, for example, lamented the play's problems in structure and characterisation (Wilson 1969), especially in the final act (Small 1933), but amply recognised not only the intensity of its lyrical excerpts, but also the quality of its comic force (Wells 1963, Wilson 1969). The film, however, does not refer to structure and characterisation at all, and uses the other two prominent features (love lyrics and comicality) in a simplified manner, serving the needs of the film plot, which aims at a final, triumphant staging of *Romeo and Juliet* seen as the quintessence of love on stage – which is obviously somewhat reductive of the tragedy as well. In other words, the selection of quotes made and the way they appear to be treated in the film foreground romantic love in *The Two Gentlemen* as an anticipation of Will and Viola's passionate affair, materialised on stage as that of Romeo and Juliet, and present a limited view of its comical effects as they are not to be further developed in the tragedy.

Shakespeare in Love, however, owes more to *The Two Gentlemen* than it states through quotations from it. A number of themes and elements of imagery and characterisation are drawn from the comedy. First of all, Viola cross-dressing makes clear intertextual reference to a character in *The Two Gentlemen* who does not appear on stage in the performance, nor is explicitly mentioned at any point in the film: Julia. Julia is the most fascinating female character in the play; dressed as a page, she embarks on an adventure a woman of the time could never have experienced. She travels to Milan to follow the man who has promised eternal love to her, Proteus, and there witnesses his betrayal and meets her rival, Silvia. Her disguise places her in a vantage point from which she can get to know the other characters' feelings and intentions to a very high degree. Also Viola's cross-dressing allows her to follow her lover and experience adventures forbidden to women – joining a company of actors – but the psychological depth and complexity reached by Julia's part is never evoked in *Shakespeare in Love*.

The name Viola for the film protagonist clearly points to the *Twelfth Night*'s heroine introduced in the film ending; then, the latter comedy could be the sole source of Viola's camouflage. There are elements in the film, however, supporting the hypothesis that Julia also had an influence on the film female protagonist. The scene in which the nurse asks Viola whether she liked Proteus or Valentine best, informs her that Wessex was looking at her during the show, and talks about love with her, clearly parallels the scene in which Lucetta, Julia's waiting woman, gives

advice to Julia on which of her admirers she should bestow her love on (I.2.1-32). In the next film scene in which Viola is alone with the nurse, she tells her: "As you love me and as I love you, you will bind my breast and buy me a boy's wig!" (Norman and Stoppard 1998: 41); thus, she echoes Julia's pledge: "Gentle Lucetta, fit me with such weeds/As may beseem some well-reputed page" (II.6.42-43).

If the device of cross-dressing originates from Julia, Viola also borrows from Silvia, as she is promised by her family to a gentleman she despises, Lord Wessex, for reasons of interest, but loves another man. In *The Two Gentlemen*, however, the villain her father wants to marry Silvia to is Thurio, a man of fortune, whereas in the film Viola has the money and her family covets Lord Wessex's title. The man Silvia loves is obviously Valentine, who, differently from Will Shakespeare, comes from a good family and, even when banished and deprived of his status, gets a chance to prove his worth and courage to Silvia's father (V.4). Will, on the other hand, is never given that chance in the film: his social status prevents him from being a possible suitor for Viola, without any right of appeal.

Some situations in the play are also paralleled by the film more loosely. The similarity of the exchanges between Julia and Lucetta and Viola and her nurse has been mentioned above. Then there is the unveiling of Thomas Kent's identity through Tilney, Master of the Revels, which is remindful of the Duke's unmasking of Valentine and of his plans to take Silvia away from Milan and marry her against his father's will (III.1.58-138). The two scenes seem to be related because both involve disguise. Valentine is in fact hiding a rope under his cloak, with which he intends to climb the tower where Silvia is to set her free. The notion of 'disguise,' however, is very different in the two works. In *The Two Gentlemen*, Valentine's disguise does not imply a radical change of physical appearance to conceal his identity, since it is just meant to conceal his intention of using a rope ladder to reach Silvia's room in the tower. In *Shakespeare in Love*, on the other hand, Viola uses indeed all the means possible – a wig, a false moustache, male clothes – to conceal her identity and to pass for an actor in Will's show.

In addition, it may be worth pointing out that in both *The Two Gentlemen* and *Shakespeare in Love* betrayal plays an important part in exposing what is hidden behind the 'mask': in Shakespeare's comedy, Valentine's intentions are revealed by his treacherous friend Proteus, who informs the Duke of Valentine's plans, whereas in the film, the young John Webster, driven by the desire to take revenge on Will Shakespeare, reveals Thomas Kent's true identity to Mr. Tilney.

A further element of similarity is that, in both works, the unmasking causes the two lovers to stay apart, until they are unexpectedly reunited towards the end of the play.

In *Shakespeare in Love*, this particular episode is echoed again after the representation of *Romeo and Juliet*, when Tilney recognises Viola as Juliet and accuses her of being a woman before the whole audience. This time, though, the Queen gives the lie to him, and saves Viola from punishment and the theatre from closing by declaring that the player is actually a man, in spite of his remarkable

resemblance to a woman. In this situation, Viola, a woman dressed as a woman and playing the part of a woman, is said by the Queen to be a man very convincingly disguised as a woman. The complexity of the situation is reminiscent of Julia's dialogue with Silvia (V.2.155-169), in which the former, playing the part of a page, tells the latter that "he" once played a woman's part, Ariadne's, wearing Julia's clothes, and moved Julia to tears with "his" most intense impersonation of a woman abandoned by her man (as Julia is by Proteus). This is one of the most intriguing passages featuring Julia, and one of the most successful in *The Two Gentlemen*, its force relying on the synergy between the dramatic situation in which Julia is and the power of the intertextual reference: the myth of Ariadne and Theseus, foregrounding Julia's pain and sense of abandonment. *Shakespeare in Love* does not seem to strike such a high chord, also because the mixture of gender identities is merely part of a narrative device aimed at re-establishing the balance reached by dramatic action: Viola will not incur punishment, but leave for America with her husband Wessex as planned, and Will Shakespeare will not see his theatre closed, but enjoy the success just gained with *Romeo and Juliet*, the play that has shown, in the Queen's words, "the very truth and nature of love" (Norman and Stoppard 1998: 148).

Thus, representing *Romeo and Juliet* as the first and best representation of love by Shakespeare may be considered among the main objectives of the film, if not the main one. In the light of this objective, it may be easier to explain why the picture of *The Two Gentlemen* provided by the film appears to be rather diminutive: partially 'downplaying' the latter may effectively serve the purpose of celebrating the former. Foregrounding mainly folk or grotesque aspects of comedy may further the noble elegance of tragedy. Moreover, representing love verse ambiguously may well suggest it contains the roots of the splendour to come, but in an underdeveloped form. In this sense, *The Two Gentlemen* appears as a juvenile, unsatisfactory attempt at writing something as great and immortal as *Romeo and Juliet*. Similarly, the love scene with Will and Rosaline during the staging of the first scene of *The Two Gentlemen*, appears as a juvenile, failed attempt at finding true love, the love that Will Shakespeare will find in Viola/Juliet.

This reductive picture seems to emerge when *The Two Gentlemen* is quoted explicitly. But when the film uses it as a source for one of its major aspects, Viola's cross-dressing, responsible for a large part of its dramatic development, the debt to *The Two Gentlemen* is by no means recognised. It is very unlikely for the viewer, then, to figure out that the film owes, at least in part, this exquisite trait to the comedy, unless s/he already knows it. And as cross-dressing is a feature of more famous plays by Shakespeare, such as *Twelfth Night*, of which there is explicit mention in the play, viewers are likely to see the source for this elsewhere, although intertextuality, as stated above, seems to support the interpretation of Julia as a model for the film character of Viola.

Thus, the tribute *Shakespeare in Love* pays to *The Two Gentlemen* appears to be somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, it draws abundantly from it, but, on the other, it presents as imperfect aspects of the play that are widely recognised as

brilliant (lyricism, comic prose), totally erases some of its major strengths (linguistic achievement, especially in wordplay) and fails to pay its dues to it for one of its most important ideas (Julia's dressing as a page). In a word, the image of *The Two Gentlemen* is highly manipulated to serve the main purpose of the film, and only that: extolling the virtues of *Romeo and Juliet* as the quintessential representation of true love.

Notes

[1] Henceforward abbreviated as *The Two Gentlemen*. The exact date when the play was written is unknown, but it is usually located between 1590 and 1594.

[2] This analysis focuses on the film as an audiovisual product rather than on the screenplay.

[3] William Kempe was one of the most beloved clowns of the age and featured in a number of later plays by the Bard.

[4] The origin not only of names, but also of a variety of textual elements is explained in the film through very unrealistic episodes in Shakespeare's life, a strategy which is presumably meant to produce irony.

[5] Crab is the only dog in the canon (Wells 2005: 1).

[6] This is another example of filmic irony resulting from episodes invented by the scriptwriters, as Will angrily comments on the performance being disturbed by spectators coughing, without knowing that the 'culprit' is actually the Queen herself.

[7] Here the film significantly diverges from the script, the corresponding line reading: "Love and a bit with a dog, that's what they like" (Norman and Stoppard 1998: 18).

References

Brooks, H.F. (1963) "Two Clowns in a Comedy (to Say Nothing of the Dog): Speed, Launce (and Crab) in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*". *Essays and Studies*, 16, 1963, 91-100

Coronato, R. (2005) "The Emergence of Priapism in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*". In Dente, C., Ferzoco, G., Gill M. and Spunta, M. (eds.) *Proteus. The Language of Metamorphosis*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 93-101

Farnham, W. (1971) "Falstaff and the Codes of High Endeavour". In *The Shakespearean Grotesque*. London: Oxford University Press

Madden, J. (1998) *Shakespeare in Love*. [DVD] United States of America: Universal Pictures and Miramax

Norman, M. and Stoppard T. (1998) *Shakespeare in Love. A Screenplay*. New York: Hyperion

Shakespeare, W. (2005) *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, with an introduction by S. Wells, in Wells, S. and Taylor, G. (eds.) *William Shakespeare. The Complete Works*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1-24

Scuderi, A. (2012) *Il paradosso di Proteo*. Roma: Carocci

Scuderi, A. (2013) "Desiderio, seduzione, violenza: wrestling with Proteus". *Between*, 3: 5, 2013, 1-13

Small, S.A. (1933) "The Ending of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*". *PMLA*, 48, 1933, 767-776

Weimann, R. (1987) *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press

Wells, S. (1963) "The Failure of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*". *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, 99, 1963, 161-173

Wilson, F.P. (1969) "Shakespeare's Comedies". In Gardner, H. (ed.) *Shakespearian and Other Studies*. London: Oxford University Press

Revisiting *The Mahabharata*:
Draupadi's voice in Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*

Smriti SINGH[∗]

Abstract

This paper attempts to read Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's novel The Palace of Illusions *as a feminist interpretation of the Indian epic* The Mahabharata. *In the Indian scenario, women have been encouraged to follow the ideal women of the past: Sita, Savitri, Draupadi but their stories are given to us by the male writers from a male perspective. One wonders what these women would have had to say about their lives and here comes into focus Divakaruni's novel. The paper seeks to look at the delineation of the character of Draupadi and the textual strategies used to give prominence to the voice and thoughts of one of the central figures of this great epic. The paper seeks to answer whether* The Palace of Illusions *is a resistant text or a revisionist one, and how far it includes women in storytelling which hitherto has been male-centred. The paper uses the method of discourse and context analysis to arrive to the conclusion that Divakaruni has ably articulated the thoughts and voice of Draupadi and has successfully brought the story to the audience from a female's point of view.*

Keywords: revisionism, postmodernism, resistant text, historiographic metafiction, feminist perspective

A sub-genre of postmodernist literature is the revisionist narrative in which established narratives are re-written from a perspective for which they did not account. This term goes beyond "historiographic metafiction" to include fictional narratives, because both historical and fictional narratives can illustrate many possible representations for the event in question. Historiographic metafiction represents not just a world of fiction, however self-consciously presented as a constructed one, but also a world of public experience. The difference between this and the realist logic of reference is that here that public world is rendered specifically as discourse. How do we know the past today? Through its discourses, through its texts… On one level, then, postmodern fiction merely makes overt the processes of narrative representation - of the real or the fictive and of their interrelations. (Hutcheon 1988: 33-34) The treatment of space and place are central points at which revisionist narratives expose dominant power systems during the author's own era and offer new possibilities of reality to the readers.

Revisionism in literary studies has been utilized mainly in order to oppose traditional cultural views and give voice to marginalized groups, dealing

---

[∗] Assistant Professor, PhD. School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Patna, India. smritichotu@gmail.com

with concepts such as race, class and gender, specifically within feminist literature (Mileur, 1985: 5; Mudge, 1986: 245; Shawcross, 1991: 18). An important aspect of revisionist narratives such as these works is that they expose other views that do not fit into the dominant structure. Additionally, by exposing the underlying power structures inherent in traditional representations of events, revisionist narratives then open up to the reader or audience member a myriad of possible representations and perspectives through which to view the social conventions in their culture.

Revisionism is closely connected to Hutcheon's term "historiographic metafiction", but this paper looks at revisionism as a term that allows for a broader scope of what is culturally considered historical to include other narratives that are caught between the categories of history and fiction, such as traditional legends and epics, because these too have become cemented in culture as a sort of "cultural truth." And this is the point where Chitra Bannerji Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* comes in the frame of reference. This text is a retelling of the Indian epic *The Mahabharata*. Riding on the wave of the deconstruction of one of India's oldest mythological tales and epics is *The Palace of Illusions*, the story of Mahabharata as told by Draupadi- the Queen of Queens, the woman married five times over to the five sons of Kunti, the Pandavas. *The Mahabharata* has been handed down to us through generations and brought to us in popular culture from an essentially male perspective, where women were either shown as characters to be avenged, sympathized with or gambled in a game of dice. Written from a feminist point of view, Divakaruni explains in her author's note her motivations for the book. Hearing the tales *of the Mahabharata* in her youth, she felt that the female characters were underplayed, underused, and underdeveloped. This formed the inspiration to not only retell an epic for a new audience, but to explore it from a woman's point of view, choosing the proud queen Panchaali (or Draupadi) to illustrate the frustrations, passions, and experiences of a woman in a man's world. It traces her life from her unusual 'birth' right through to her equally unusual death and adds another dimension to a piece of literature with worldwide importance.

Divakaruni gives voice to the woman who had a crucial role to play in shaping the course of the greatest tale of our continent but not before carrying us through her journey from an ordinary woman of desires harboring a secret and possibly only true love for an unsung hero she could have never had. What is most fascinating is the author's touching upon the life of a princess with the concerns of run-of-the-mill marital life-power struggles with her mother-in-law, craving love of the only husband who had rightfully won her, but never truly loved her or jealousy over her husbands' taking other wives. The book delves into the loneliness of the woman with five husbands who were only truly married to a life of duty, leaving her no real companion but her place in history.

The novel not only invites criticism for the ambitious attempt this poses on a formal and structural level, but allows insight into the interaction of gender and identity, particularly into the complex construction of femininity already inherent in the original text, while also challenging it from a contemporary perspective. Divakaruni retells the epic from the point of view of one of its heroines, Draupadi, thus reclaiming female agency in the famous tale of war between two families, hyper-masculine heroes and their devoted wives. The text highlights a crucial relation established between womanhood and vengeance. Moreover, it displays the struggle for identity in a mythological context, which is distinctly Indian, yet transcends cultural borders, all the while showing the illusionary nature of borders imposed by history and gender.

The "*Mahabharata* is one of the defining cultural narratives in the construction of masculine and feminine gender roles in ancient India, and its numerous tellings and retellings have helped shape Indian gender and social norms ever since" (Brodbeck/Black 2007: 11). The desire for revenge is a central trait linking the sexes who are otherwise assigned clear differences in appearance, behaviour, as well as character. Fighting being one of the main gender-distinguishing activities, the masculine ideal is commonly represented by the virile husband and fearless warrior. This is complemented by the portrayal of the epic's principal model of femininity, the ideal of the loyal, devoted wife (cf. Brodbeck/Black 2007: 16-17). A striking example for this is Gandhari, who decides to follow her husband, king Dhritarashtra, into blindness and sacrifices her sight by wearing a silk scarf over her eyes till her death. But the story is not just a binary one of a silent, following female and an active, battling male. Draupadi and her mother-in-law Kunti play dual roles with its inherent tensions. And so while Draupadi is a chaste, demure, devoted wife on one hand, on the other she is shown "to be intellectual, assertive, and sometimes downright dangerous" (Divakaruni 2008: 213).

With regard to female education and knowledge, a significant ambiguity can be found in the epic. As Brian Black points out, the women undergo a second-hand instruction as they are usually a constant presence in all scenes, watching when men receive important teachings and hearing their stories, yet this eavesdropping "is far from passive" (Black, 2007:53). Therefore, Black argues, the central female characters, though mostly confined to the background, emerge to shape the story in significant ways and the stance taken towards their agency appears thoroughly ambivalent, as:

> for both Gandhari and Draupadi there is more to being a listener than merely their symbolic presence. The way in which both of them are constituted as subjects shows that they are not merely defined and portrayed in relation to male characters, that what they hear and say is linked up with their specific duties and circumstances as queens: […] Draupadi's role as listener […] educates her for her role as *dharma* queen (Black 2007: 73).

Divakaruni's novel portrays the education of Draupadi and her transformation from ambitious princess to revenge-seeking queen in subjective detail. Following first her brother's and then her husbands' lessons, she also receives many instructions on her own (e.g. by a sorceress, a sage, and Krishna, the incarnation of Lord Vishnu). Regarding the multi-dimensional presentation of femininity, Divakaruni's narrative appears in many ways merely faithfully modelled on the original, but reverses the perspective by granting the reader an insight into the mind of the listening Draupadi.

The opening chapters present Draupadi's obsession with her origins. They introduce her rebellious character as well as her struggle for a self-constructed feminine. Indeed, listening to the story of her birth and her prophecies about her destiny seem to signify as "the only meaningful activity for her" (Nair 2011: 151). She dreams of leaving her father's palace, a suffocating place for her, which "seemed to tighten its grip around me until I couldn't breathe" (Divakaruni 2008: 1). Her nurse calls her teasingly "the Girl Who Wasn't Invited" (1), as she was born as daughter to one of the richest kings in India, yet — in best mythological fashion — emerged from the fire unexpectedly, clinging onto her twin-brother, the long awaited heir. While her brother is named "Dhristadyumna, Destroyer of Enemies", she is called "Draupadi, Daughter of Drupad" (5), a name she considers to affirm patriarchal dependency and to be unsuitably at odds with the divine prophecy made at her birth: "she will change the course of history" (5).

From the beginning the narrative highlights an important relation between names, gender, and identity. Draupadi envies in particular the power and agency inherent in her brother's name, the implied mission of his life to kill the archenemy Drona, while hers merely symbolizes patriarchy. Full of self-doubts about her outward appearance, which deviates radically from the ideal of the 'fair' woman, she asks Krishna "if he thought that a princess afflicted with a skin so dark that people termed it blue was capable of changing history" (8). This question testifies to an awareness of a double marginality, a felt inequality of the heroine in both ethnicity and gender (if not, obviously, in terms of class/caste). From the start she fights "to position herself as a subject who desires and not as an object of desire" (Nair 2011: 152). But the results of her refusal to be a victim of circumstances and her aspiration of attaining "a more heroic name" (Divakaruni 2008: 5) are shown to be deeply ambiguous as the story unfolds, fusing justified claims of equality and liberation with guilt, vanity and cruelty. Finally, it will prove almost "ironic that a name that she fancied for herself, 'Off-spring of Vengeance', turns out to be true" (Nair 2011: 152). She consults a sage about her destiny and learns that: she will marry the five greatest heroes of her time, be envied like a goddess, become mistress of the most magical palace, then lose it, start the greatest war, bring about the deaths of millions, be loved, yet die alone (Divakaruni 2008: 39). Moreover, in her lifetime she will encounter three moments that can potentially mitigate the catastrophe to come; significantly the sage's advice is related to not speaking and controlling her emotions in those

moments ("hold back your question", "hold back your laughter", "hold back your curse"). The name given to her by the sage, "Panchaali, spirit of this land" (41), excites her due to its power, it is "a name that knew how to endure" (42).

Draupadi, also known as Panchaali starts to narrate her life story and dreams of possessing her own palace one day. Thus she claims both a place for herself and narrative agency, seeking to establish her identity by rootedness in a location and control over her life and its presentation to others. Tellingly, she imagines her future palace full of "colour and sound", mirroring her "deepest being" (7), a statement which hints at the desire for dramatic significance and "brilliant theatricality of her life" (Nair 2011: 153).

Panchaali rebels against an education of typically female skills (painting, sewing, poetry), which she perceives as useless in comparison to the knowledge taught to her brother (lessons about royal rule, justice, power). Again she uses a metaphor of suffocation to describe the life awaiting her: "With each lesson I felt the world of women tightening its noose around me" (Divakaruni 2008: 29). Yet after her father reluctantly agrees to let her partake in Dhri's classes, she starts to notice how these transform her further and deepen the difference to what she has been trained to perceive as feminine. She observes how it was "making me too hard-headed and argumentative, too manlike in my speech" (23), and finds it increasingly harder to resign herself to the restrictions of royal womanhood. In response to the tutor's idea that "a woman's highest purpose in life is to support the warriors in her life" (26), Panchaali realizes that her ambitions makes her an outsider of her own sex: "Each day I thought less and less like the women around me" (26). Repeatedly, the narrative refers to her perception of differences and the awareness that: "For better or worse, I was a woman" (139). As she learns to employ her femininity strategically, e.g. to dazzle and manipulate through her looks, she forces acceptance on both men and women around her: "I who had been shunned for my strangeness became a celebrated beauty!" (10). Soon afterwards, a sorceress makes Panchaali recognize her central flaw, her vanity, and the power of women, as despite all their dependency on men, "you're wrong in thinking of woman as an innocent species" (66). But the main lesson she tries to teach Panchaali is the control of her passion and her own destructive power, reminding her that she does not "have the luxury of behaving like an ordinary star struck girl. The consequences of your action may destroy us all" (88).

Throughout the narrative Divakaruni has her heroine ponder on the inevitability of fate, the discrepancy between the perception of others and her self-image. The central tension exists between her desire for independence and the attempts to please and conform, which is increased by recurring confrontations with gender differences. Watching her husbands for the first time after her marriage, she observes: "I was a woman. I had to use my power differently" (99). This is followed by recognition of her inequality with regard to freedom, as well as reputation. Despite being granted independence from her father and the status as queen, her unconventional polyandrous marriage bears the risk of being seen as an insatiable whore (118). Moreover, according to the

special marital arrangements, Panchaali is split between her husbands, spending a year with each, her virginity restored each time when entering a new husband's bed. She becomes aware that in contrast to her husbands, she "had no choice as to whom I slept with, and when" (120).

Narration is another area of focus. Generally the story is narrated in the first person through Draupadi. But there are times in the text when Vyas appears to remind the readers as well as the narrator of the fixed outcome of the text. Changes in perspective highlight the importance and the illusionary nature of perception and narrative transmission. There is always the possibility of deception, just as there is always another angle to the story. The novel opens with three narrators (Panchaali, her brother, and her nurse), presenting different versions of the tale of Panchaali's birth and destiny. While trying to gain power over the narration, Panchaali's reflections, her dialogic engagement with her implied listeners, also include meta-narrative comments on the nature of truth and narration: "At the best of times, a story is a slippery thing" (Divakaruni 2008: 15). Throughout the narrative one finds a dual view on stories as powerful and "true", as well as subjective and refusing to be fixed in time or space, likely to change with each telling. Creating a parallel between storytelling and identity, the narrative situation reflects on the process on an inter- and metatextual level. Furthermore, regarding the prominence given to dialogic negotiation, it is noteworthy that Divakaruni captures this element of the original epic in her first-person narration. Analysing the inherently dialogic structure of the *Mahabharata* Laurel Patton argues for a correlation between the multiple perspectives and an emphasis on a plurality of identity. Basing the argument on gender theory, she refers to "the dialogical, gendered self" as "a multiple self, with a variety of momentary roles to choose from" (Patton 2007: 198). Such a discursive, performative notion of gender, which might appear as a theoretical given nowadays, and which lies at the heart of Divakaruni's novel, can be seen to operate already in the ancient epic through its construction of characters and narrative structure.

The scene in the court where Draupadi is shamed presents a clear assertion of female strength and agency. The silence of her men makes her recognize the limits of their feelings for her. "There were other things they loved more. Their notions of honour, of loyalty toward each other, of reputation were more important to them than my suffering" (Divakaruni, 2008: 195). She also notices how she had been consumed by passionate anger, in contrast to her husbands who stoically suffered the humiliation and controlled their desires for revenge by submitting to the expected protocol, patiently waiting for the circumstances to turn in their favour. The situation triggers a painful act of emancipation for Panchaali who is forced to protect herself as men fail her, while also learning how "emotions are always intertwined with power and pride" (195). Furthermore, the fact that Duryodhan takes over her beloved palace increases her hatred and unhappiness to such an extent that she describes her emotional state thus:

> "She's dead. Half of her died the day when everyone she had loved and counted on to save her sat without protest and watched her being shamed. The other half perished with her beloved home. But never fear" (206).

It is significant that for the first time she describes herself as seen from the outside. The quote underlines the importance of the experience of shame and loss of her palace, which had formed such an integral part of herself, as catalysts for the tragedies to come. Although the focus on compensation and revenge henceforth give her a clear sense of purpose, she is still missing a feeling of stable selfhood:

> it seemed that everything I'd lived until now had been a role. The princess who longed for acceptance, the guilty girl whose heart wouldn't listen, the wife who balanced her fivefold role precariously, the rebellious daughter-in-law, the queen who ruled the most magical of palaces, the distracted mother, the beloved companion of Krishna, who refused to learn the lessons he offered, the woman obsessed with vengeance – none of them were the true Panchaali (229).

Throughout the narrative, the desire for and the execution of vengeance is presented as the central trait transcending the boundaries of gender, yet affirming them at the same time. While Panchaali spends her life struggling to control her passionate temper and her thirst for revenge culminates in causing the killing of thousands, her husbands are constructed as her counter images in terms of patience and stoic obedience of rule and custom, all the while, of course, enjoying the freedom of action attached to their status as men. Although Panchaali's desire and speech trigger the war, she does not actively fight in it but remains confined to a position of eyewitness. At various points in the story it is implied that a woman's body is incapable of fulfilling a mission of revenge. One night during battle, Panchaali dreams of killing her brother who is disguised as a Kaurava prince. The dream expresses her feeling of despair from watching everybody close to her die, from facing her own impotence and guilt. Transformed into a man in the dream, she experiences a feeling of sameness, a kind of gender-empathy, because she feels the familiar hatred and desire for revenge, yet now she is actively able to kill. In contrast to this brief imaginary switching of gender, Panchaali's half-sister, Sikhandi, undergoes a permanent change, being transformed into a "great and dangerous warrior" (44) in order to partake in the battle. Although her appearance and behaviour are markedly different, she describes her new identity thus: "When I awoke, I was a man. And yet not completely so, for though my form was changed, inside me I remembered how women thought and what they longed for" (46). She retains this ambiguity about her gender. Watching her in battle, Panchaali notices how she still looks "male from a certain angle, female from another" (256). Like Panchaali, Sikhandi is driven by vengeance and rebellion against men's greater freedom of action. Early in the narrative she describes an insight in the inevitability of emancipation, similar to the one Panchaali has during her shameful disrobing in court. She argues that women need to fight for themselves to restore their dignity because, "wait for a man to avenge your honour, and you'll wait

forever" (49). Inspired by Sikandhi's sex change as the ultimate liberation from the restrictions of womanhood, Panchaali is aware from the start that: "I, too, would cross the bounds of what was allowed to women" (51). As shown above, her behaviour frequently transgresses the boundaries of traditional femininity, e.g. her outspokenness, her education and her polyandrous marriage. Furthermore, she fails to display a strong attachment to her children, valuing her independence higher than motherhood. To be at the side of her husbands, she leaves her sons behind, barely recognizing them years later.

Draupadi challenges the traditional formulations of what a woman and wife should be. Though she doesn't switch genders like Shikhandi, she has definitely moved away from traditional femininity towards vengeance which is one of the important strands in reading this epic through feminist lenses.

The last part of the narrative adds another dimension. During the battle Panchaali is most shocked to find that her self-perception (as the brave woman wronged, admired for enduring hardships) is completely at odds with the opinion of the women around her, who, consumed by their own suffering gaze only in fear at "the witch who might, with a wave of her hand, transform them into widows" (258).

The portrayal of the battle of Kurukshetra and its aftermath present perhaps Divakaruni's most radical modification of the plot of the original epic. Draupadi is given special powers to witness the great battle. This again brings her to the centre of the action rather than making her a passive listener to daily events. The focus on the subjective female consciousness is here broadened to draw attention to what is omitted in the older text: "But here's something Vyasa didn't put down in his Mahabharata: Leaving the field, the glow travelled to a nearby hill, where it paused for a moment over a weeping woman" (298). Highlighting the grief of the women, the narrative presents a different angle of the morale of the battle between families and thoroughly blurs the distinction between kin and enemies, between winners and losers. After the battle, the grieving widows try to jump onto the funeral pyres. Faced with a mass sati, which would add unimaginably to the tragedy of the war, king Yudhisthir is rendered helpless: "If it had been a battle, he would have known what kind of command to give his men. But here he was at a loss, paralyzed by guilt and compassion and the ancient and terrible tradition the women had invoked" (312). This crisis forces Panchaali to finally prioritize sisterhood over her own interests and emotions. She steps forward to address the crowd, speaking as a woman and mother sharing their grief and manages to avert more deaths (314). The devastation of the war, which had made Hastinapur "largely a city of women" (322), triggers a further change of Panchaali. She takes action, but this appears now to be driven less by personal than political interest and feelings of community: "It was time I shook off my self-pity and did something. I resolved to form a separate court, a place where women could speak their sorrows to other women" (323).

Divakaruni's feminist agenda underlines this almost utopian vision of a new city rising from the ruins, now a haven of safety and respect, a place of

equality for women: "And even in the later years […], Hastinapur remained one of the few cities where women could go about their daily lives without harassment" (325). This is sustained through another plot change. Whereas in the original the only remaining heir to continue the Pandava line, is a son, Divakaruni turns Parikhshit into a daughter, who takes on Panchaali's legacy and realizes a peaceful female supremacy.

The analysis has shown that Draupadi is far from a univocal representation of the ideal Indian female, always torn between devoted wife and independent, outspokenly critical woman. Nancy Falk writes: "She is a throwback; her stories come from a time when women were more highly respected than in the days of the meek and submissive wifely models" (cited in Brodbeck/Black 2007: 16). Divakaruni's narrative can be seen to highlight this perception of femininity. Moreover, the plurality of roles (wife, mother, queen etc.) within the story can itself explain the shifts and inconsistencies in Draupadi's character. Divakaruni makes this tension one of her focus points and presents Panchaali's distress and suffering caused by the fragmentation of her different selves. This is illustrated once more by Panchaali's decision to follow her husbands on their final journey. Again she is both loyal wife and rebellious woman, as no other before her had ever attempted to climb the Himalayan Mountains. When her strength starts to desert her, she reflects:

> "Perhaps that has always been my problem, to rebel against the boundaries society has prescribed for women. But what was the alternative? To sit among bent grandmothers, gossiping and complaining, chewing on mashed betel leaves with toothless gums as I waited for death? Intolerable! I would rather perish on the mountain. […], my last victory over the other wives […]. How could I resist it? (Divakaruni 2008: 343-44)

The quote shows the complex mix of emotions and demonstrates the ambiguous, finely tuned assessment of Panchaali's character in the novel. It portrays her as a model of female empowerment and courage but casts a clear critical-humorous glance on her vanity and desire for admiration. Even her death is staged ambivalently in this regard. When she jumps from the pathway it appears to signify a brave acknowledgment of having reached the end of her powers and as a final cry for attention because her last tormenting thoughts are about which men in her life would have turned around to come to her rescue. But the arrival in heaven brings a surprising relief for Panchaali, who notes: "The air is full of men – but not men exactly, nor women, for their bodies are sleek and sexless and glowing. Their faces are unlined and calm, devoid of the various passions that distinguished them in life" (358). The gods are presented as people without a sex, beyond passions, and thus in a state of androgynous, peaceful balance. Finally, emotions are singled out as the element marking character and gender differences, beyond all other deceptive guises. Panchaali's death appears as liberation and resolve of the contradictions of her identity: "I am beyond name and gender and the imprisoning patterns of ego. And yet, for the first time, I'm truly Panchaali" (360). It remains for

the reader to decide whether this ending appears spiritually consoling or pessimistic, as the reconciliation of her troubled female identity and recognition of her 'self' is denied to her on earth. Divakaruni's novel manages to convey the "great psychological depth" (Dasa 2009) of the *Mahabharata* and reflects on the various illusions the characters have about themselves, about romantic love, about heroism, war, and vengeance. If "in most constructions of Draupadi, in both literary and non-literary texts, she is seen as a victim of patriarchy" (Nair 2011: 153), Divakaruni modifies this view and makes the question of female agency a more complex one.

References

Black, B. (2007) "Eavesdropping on the Epic: Female Listeners in *The Mahabharata*." *Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata*. Eds. S. Brodbeck and B. Black. London: Routledge, 53-78

Brodbeck, S. and B. Brian, eds. (2007) "Introduction." *Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata*. London and New York: Routledge, 1-34

Dasa, B. (2009) "Review of The Palace of Illusions." *Harmonist.us* 15 May 2009.http://harmonist.us/2009/05/palace-of-illusions-the-feminist-mahabharata/[23 March 2012]

Divakaruni, C. B. (2008) *The Palace of Illusions.* London: Picador

Hutcheon, L. (1988) *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction.* New York: Routledge

Mileur, J.-P. (1985) *Literary Revisionism and the Burden of Modernity.* Berkeley: U California Press

Mudge, B. K. (1986) "Burning Down the House: Sara Coleridge, Virginia Woolf, and the Politics of Literary Revision". *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5.2, 220 - 250

Nair, K. (2011) "Agency, Narrativity, Gender in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions*." *Language in India* 11 (6 June 2011).

Patton, L. P. (2007) "How Do You Conduct Yourself? Gender and the Construction of a Dialogical Self in the Mahabharata" *Gender and Narrative in the Mahabharata*. Eds. S. Brodbeck and B. Black. London: Routledge. 97-109

Shawcross, J. (1991). *lntentionality and the New Traditionalism: Some Liminal Means to Literary Revisionism.* University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP

Parisian Space and Memory in Patrick Modiano's Fiction

Elena-Brândușa STEICIUC[∗]

Abstract

Patrick Modiano, the recent Nobel winner, depicts in his writings - more than any other French contemporary novelist – the space of France seen as a "terre d'accueil" for many persons, especially Jews who had to leave their homelands during the Second World War. The very heart of France, Paris is not only the "ville-lumière" much praised by artists of all times and cultures, but also a space where memory is present at any street corner, especially the sad and painful remembrance of anti-Semitism.

     *This is why our paper will deal with some of the most outstanding aspects concerning France during the 20th century, which are related in Modiano's writings (*Ronde de nuit, Livret de famille, Une jeunesse*) with memory, especially the Holocaust and the Vichy collaboration experience.*

Keywords: Patrick Modiano, French culture, Paris, memory, Holocaust

In the autumn of 2014, French literature was in the spotlight when the Nobel Prize was awarded to Patrick Modiano, an outstanding name in the French and Francophone novel of the last decades. He is an author who has built his work with a jeweler's passion for over four decades, bringing forth the subtle game of memory, closely linked to issues such as identity, origins, roots; in his fiction, Paris holds an important place, connected with an identity quest which is specific to Modiano's style.

Modiano – landmarks in his life and bibliography

Since his debut in 1968, with *Place de l'Étoile*, Modiano has been considered a representative of the "nouvelle fable" in the French literature of those years, strongly marked by the experiment called "Le Nouveau Roman". The young author made a triumphal entry into the literary world, constantly receiving various European awards: Roger Nimier Award (1968); Grand Prize for the novel by the French Academy (1972); Booksellers Award (1976) ; Goncourt Prize (1978); Prize Prince- Pierre -de- Monaco (1984); Grand Prize for Literature Paul-Morand (2000); Jean-Monnet Prize for European Literature awarded by the Charente Department (2002); Cino del Duca Award (2010); Austrian State Prize for the whole work (2012).

[∗] Professor PhD, "Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Romania
selenabrandusa@yahoo.com

What novelty has this shy young author of the late sixties brought to the field of French literature? As mentioned, his literary debut took place in a period of intense controversy of the socio-political structures of France, when the young generation of May '68 "were thoroughly fed up". In keeping with the spirit of those years, the first Modianian novels - *Place de l'Étoile, Ronde de nuit, Boulevards de ceinture*, the so-called "trilogy of the Occupation" - break a thinking pattern and enter by force into what was called the "Resistance myth". They highlight the painful and complex issue of French collaboration during the Nazi occupation, Jewish identity and anti-Semitism in the Vichy regime. Moreover, the author is obsessed with this period in the history of France at the end of which little Patrick was born, son of a Flemish mother, Luisa Colpeyn, and of a Sephardic Jew father, Albert Modiano.

The same theme is repeated in Louis Malle's movie *Lacombe Lucien* (1974), whose scriptwriter is Patrick Modiano. This film is intended to dynamite the triumphant image of the Resistance. The eponymous hero, a young farmboy from the southwestern occupied France, becomes a member of a pro-German gang that gives him power. Lucien's love for France Horn - the beautiful pianist of Jewish origin, trying to escape from the occupied country - makes him think again about his error. His final execution, at the end of the war, has a highly symbolic value, since it points out the dual aspect of France during World War II: collaboration and resistance.

It is "the Hexagon" that is the space-time background of the novels that followed Modiano's "apprenticeship", during the last decades of the 20th century, where - with the same accuracy - the author reconstructs the Algerian war period or the atmosphere of the sixties modernity; he brings to light marginal, excluded characters, who seem to float without any roots at the edge of society: *Rue des boutiques obscures* (1978); *De si braves garçons* (1982); *Dimanches d'août* (1986); *Voyage de noces* (1990); *Un cirque passe* (1992); *Chien de printemps* (1993); *Dora Bruder* (1997); *Accident nocturne* (2003); *Un pedigree* (2005); *L'herbe des Nuits* (2012). Whatever the event-texture of these writings, they crystallize around some great thematic veins, which ensure the cohesion and consistency of the entire work.

The identity search (of the father, brother or lover, dead or missing in unclear circumstances) is a "*fil conducteur*" for most of Modiano's novels, because he is the author who impeccably deals, in a Proustian manner, with forms and failures of memory, associated with the obsessive search, that starts over and over again, like a ceaseless game of the eternal return. Maybe that's why the writer often turns to the formula of the "policier" novel, where the original enigma remains the same at the end of the novel and the questions still need an answer. This happens, for example, in *Dimanches d'août,* a dark history in which Sylvia, a beautiful young woman, is kidnapped for a valuable jewel around her neck; her lover, the narrator, will never succeed in clarifying the ambiguous case, which he remembers with a sense of guilt and pain.

The foreigner forced to live in an unknown, hostile environment or the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, the abandoned, orphaned child / adolescent,

living illegally in the margins of society are other, unavoidable, core themes in Modiano's fiction. Most of his characters are seen at the beginning of life, such as Ingrid Teyrsen, the fragile Austrian Jew, who found refuge in occupied Paris. These young people easily become victims of their own innocence, exploited by unscrupulous adults, and such is the case in *Le café de la jeunesse perdue,* where Louki, a Parisian teenager, during her mother's absence, finds an antidote for her fears in esoteric practices and especially in drugs, the so-called "snow" which her friend Jeanette provides:

> He pulled out a metal box. He said it was white powder to snuff, that they called snow. For a short time it gave me a feeling of freshness and relief. I was certain that the anguish and emptiness that had overcome me on the street would not come back again. (Modiano 2012: 108).

Suicide will be the only salvation for the "wounds of childhood and adolescence", except for the narrator, who finds his peace through art.

All these characters wander in an ambiguous space, a trap-universe in which the main points are objects with special meanings: old photographs, newspaper clippings, obsolete directories, posters and Bottin almanacs, from which the search starts without knowing exactly where it would go. Bernard Pivot noticed more than twenty years ago that Modiano's prose rests on a paradox: very concrete space details (streets, buildings and squares of Paris and other cities of France and Europe are described and catalogued with the precision of a surveyor), together with an unclear, ambiguous, vague atmosphere. These elements are meant to complete the construction of the novel, a perfect narrative structure, based mainly on circularity. "So, always go through the same places at different times and, despite the distance between years, we'll end up meeting."(Modiano 2014: 25) says Jean B., narrator of the honeymoon, for whom time is not linear drain, but a circle. Moreover, temporal perception disorder manifests itself in the Modiano's prose through a phenomenon often cited in his texts, pertaining to the art of photography: imprinting; images of the past are much more visible and contoured than the present moment, which leads to confusion not only of ages, but also of identities.

The wide orchestration of themes and motifs, all the spatial and temporal details related to Modiano, come from an art of composition of almost mathematical precision. The technique of the musical counterpoint and the ternary structure give a special rhythm, a kind of "*petite musique*" to his writing, which often has the effect of an incantation.

Paris: space and memory

In his speech to the Swedish Academy, when awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, "*pour son art de la mémoire*", Patrick Modiano evoked - not without a certain nostalgia - the main stages of his biography and the milestones of a work that made him famous, emphasizing the importance of Paris in the construction of his identity: "Paris, my native city, is linked to my first impressions. They were so

strong that ever since I have never stopped exploring the mysteries of Paris."
(Modiano 2014: 24-26) Indeed, from the appearance of his first novel, *La Place de
l'Étoile* (1968) to the recent *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier* (2014) this
ville-lumière - generator of so many innovations in thought and art - appears as a
landmark of identity, as a self-forming space, an oneiric, highly metaphysical city,
without which Modiano's *oeuvre* would not have been born. As pointed out by the
speech mentioned, the writer has been exploring Paris for more than 40 years. This
city appears to him as an artefact shaped by time; memory labour is therefore
essential in discovering hidden, almost lost meanings, because Paris appears to
him as a puzzle which he "composes, decomposes and recomposes incessantly."
(Commengé 2015: 10) Throughout this process, the traumatized memory becomes
an important segment of Modiano's work (especially the so-called "trilogy of the
Occupation") as it refers to the Paris seized by Nazi troops, symbolically deprived
of light, during the blackout, at night.

     In the essay *Poétique de la ville,* Pierre Sansot makes a statement that seems
fundamental to the understanding of the author's relation to the Parisian space:
"The real urban space is the one that changes us, we will not be the same when
leaving it" (Sansot 2004: 52). Of all urban areas present in the Modiano's fiction -
where cosmopolitan characters often live clandestinely and spend great vacations
on the Côte d'Azur or in other luxury resorts on the Atlantic shore - Paris appears
very often as a self-matrix space. Paris, depicted either during the occupation
period or in the sixties, is much more than a background to the story.
Arrondissements, squares, boulevards, monuments, buildings, shops, cafés,
bookstores, restaurants, all of these occur with geometric precision in Modiano's
novels, as producers of meaning.

     So, Paris appears in Modiano's work as a space of identification, a *locus
amoenus* with which the self finally mingles, as it happens to Ambrose Guise, a
Parisian disguised as an Englishman, after 20 years on the banks of the Thames:

> I was becoming one with this city, I was the foliage of trees, the reflections of the
> rain on the sidewalks, the hum of voices, dust among the millions of street dust
> particles ... In that time, Paris was a city that corresponded to my heart beats. My
> life could not exist anywhere but in its streets. It was enough for me to walk alone,
> at random, in Paris, and I was happy. (Modiano 1985: 119)

Modiano's Paris cannot be otherwise than divided, so as to better correspond with
the self-rupture, a classical identity *Spaltung*: the Seine separates its right bank
forever, *Rive droite* (especially the sixteenth and seventeenth arrondissements
associated with the terror of the occupation) from the *Rive Gauche*, where
universities, bookshops and cinemas can be found, a space where time seems to be
suspended.

     Rive droite is the territory of all embezzlements, here are the Cimarosa
Square, place d'Alma and rue Lauriston, headquarter of the Gestapo and other
pro-German gangs during World War II. In "the trilogy of the Occupation", this
Paris is evoked through a *sui generis* reconstitution of the atmosphere of the forties.

La Place de l'Étoile (1968), the first part, is simply Raphael Schlémilovitch's inner monologue, in which this young Jewish writer – forced to wear the yellow star by the Vichy government – is trying to define his identity, relating most often parodically to the great French literary tradition. In the novel *La Ronde de nuit*, the central hero is caught in a double play; his identity is split between two camps, two spaces. On the one hand, he is designated as "Swing Troubadour", a member of a pro-fascist gang, the main holders of shares on the parallel market during the Occupation; on the other hand, the narrator becomes "La Princesse de Lamballe", an agent infiltrated in a network of resistants. The symbol of French collaboration is played here by a former prisoner of common law - Le Khedive– a grotesque figure, in which Modiano outlines a real character, Henri Lafont, tried and shot after the war. Finally, the double agent leaves Paris, which he calls *"Mon terroir. Mon enfer. Ma vieille maîtresse trop fardée"* (Modiano 1969: 154). Lost between two identities, Swing Troubadour /Lamballe proves to be a victim of circumstances and decides his exit from the stage and from life in a discourse that has the structure of a dream or of delirium.

Concluding the trilogy, the novel *Boulevards de ceinture* (1972) evokes the Parisian world during the last months of the Occupation (July-August 1944). The period investigated is "cloudy" and its oppressive atmosphere is reconstituted with precision. A group of pro-Nazi journalists is in the spotlight, surrounded by all kinds of starlets of the moment. These are joined by the so-called "baron" Chalva Deyckecaire, father of the narrator. Discreet investigation is undertaken, in order to (re)discover the lost father, in a village near the forest of Fontainebleau, where the Parisian leaders of the moment gather in houses requisitioned or purchased on little money. Modiano denounces the anti-Semitism and collaborationism of the French media during World War II, symbolically embodied by a character like Gerbère, inspired by the figure of Robert Brasillach.

We find, therefore, that an important layer of time structure in Modiano's fiction is associated with *Rive droite*, the space of moral and social disintegration.

The other bank of the Seine, *Rive Gauche*, is inextricably linked to the Eden of childhood. The family apartment, situated Quai Conti, 15, is described by Modiano in *Livret de famille* (1977), a volume consisting of 15 narrative sequences, each turning around a tutelary figure of the narrator's existence. The penultimate section, perhaps more than others, is a return in time, for the occasional visit to the former home of the 15, Quai Conti. It is written in a Proustian manner, revealing some of the most enchanting moments of childhood, especially the passing of a *bateau-mouche* on the Seine:

> In this instant the *bateau-mouche* appeared. It glided toward the tip of the island, its projectors pointed at the houses of the dock. The walls of the room were suddenly covered with spots of light that turned on the ceiling. In this same room, the fleeting shadows captivated my brother and me when we would turn off the light to watch the passing of the same riverboat. (Modiano 1977: 174-175)

Metaphor of the fragility and ineffable moments of plenitude, the boat sliding along the border, between light and shadow, is just a weak obstacle against forgetfulness, a bridge between present and past.

In its triple function (referential, narrative and symbolic), "Modiano's mythical topography" - which was analysed in the volume *Patrick Modiano: une lecture multiple* (1998) - creates a vast network of intertextual relations that establish a specific microcosm, an increasingly fragile memory network.

Maybe that is why in the latest novel by Modiano - *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier* (2014) - the main character, Jean Daraganne, an old amnesiac, finds no other source of refreshment than walking in the streets of Paris. A palimpsest that the narrator does not cease to study, Paris incites to immortalization by writing, which the old scribe does incessantly, in his black notebook.

"Sunken city, just like Atlantis" (Modiano 2014a: 26), Modiano's Paris is saved by the game of memory and the never-ending energies of art.

References

Modiano, P. (1969) *La ronde de nuit.* Paris: Gallimard

Modiano, P. (1977) *Livret de famille.* Paris: Gallimard

Modiano, P. (1985) *Quartier perdu.* Paris: Gallimard

Modiano, P. (2007) *Dans le café de la jeunesse perdue.* Paris: Gallimard

Modiano, P. (2012) *L'herbe des nuits.* Paris: Gallimard

Modiano, P. (2014a) *Pour que tu ne te perdes pas dans le quartier.* Paris: Gallimard

Modiano, P. (2014b) *Discours à l'Académie suédoise.* Paris: Gallimard

Critical sources

Bachelard, G. (1961) *La Poétique de l'espace.* Paris: PUF

Commengé, B. (2015) *La Paris de Modiano.* Paris: Alexandrines

Laurent, Th. (1997), *L'œuvre de Patrick Modiano: une autofiction.* Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon

Sansot, P. (2004) *Poétique de la ville.* Paris: Payot & Rivages

Steiciuc, E. (1998) *Patrick Modiano: une lecture multiple.* Iasi: Junimea

Van Montfrans, M. (1993) « Rêveries d'un riverain » in *Patrick Modiano. Etudes réunies par Jules Bedner.* Amsterdam: Rodopi

Ezra Pound and the Transformation of Culture

Pompiliu ŞTEFĂNESCU[*]

Abstract

To the contemporary reader, the world re-created by this pioneer of High Modernism bridges references from such different cultural spheres, that Poundian discourse as a whole confuses and defies interpretation. The anthropology of culture has brought forth a concept which reaches beyond the pure meaning of the discourse; by analysing together various references, from the cultural background to the intentionality of the writing and, further on, to the influence which the published texts are responsible for: the concept of culture transformation. To apply this to Poundian criticism, one must neglect neither the biographical nor the political or literary contexts, and develop a special interest in the efforts made for a shift in perspective to take place. Such changes, resulting from a cultural patching and comparing, will be the object of this paper and of subsequent research.

> "I am that terrible thing, the product of American
> culture,
> Or rather that product improved
> by considerable care and attention.
> I am really quite modern, you know" (CEP: 216)

From an anthropological point of view, to go back as early as 1871, to Edward Taylor "culture… is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (qtd. in Kottak 1996: 21). As culture acquisition is a result of contact and communication, literary discourse in general, seen as a mirror for cultural communication, may show better than any other product the interactions at work between cultural intertexts and hybridisations. To acquire new cultural traits, specific groups in contact use mainly two relevant tools: observation and interaction. The transformation of culture has provided the grounds for the manifestation and reflection of all the above-mentioned spheres of beliefs, customs and values in contact and in continual change. The interactive dimension of culture represents the starting point in dealing with the concept of *cultural transformation*, our final goal being to specifically target that which High Modernism intended to record, to express, and to make new, in the lapse of time from the clash of modern civilization (which was World War I) to the changes in perspective and re-fashioning of a new set of values for the Western world.

---

[*]Independent researcher, PhD, pompi_stefanescu@yahoo.fr

For Thomas Rochon, the transformation of culture deals with "the replacement of existing cultural values with new ones" (Rochon, 1998: 55-56) following transnational contacts and exchanges. For the purpose of this paper, I shall interpret "replacement" by remodelling and rethinking paradigms. This process, underway especially during the early 20th century, stimulated or precipitated by transatlantic contacts, furthermore experienced by Hemingway's "lost generation", ultimately manifested itself in the lives and works of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Henry James. In this respect, transgressing the boundaries of fiction, Ezra Pound's prose in particular called for a transformation of the Western ideological spheres: from the inside, with reference to Pound's rethinking his inborn American roots, but most of all from the outside, by re-interpreting the American letters along new (even exotic) cultural grounds. If tradition and rootlessness are the two poles of modernist expression, then the modernity of the "lost generation" might appear as something "unhoused" and out of place. Gertrude Stein said that Modernism really began in America but went to Paris to happen (in Ruland 1992: x). In this respect, we may speak about cultural diffusion, extending beyond national boundaries. Through diffusion, migration and borrowings, culture specific traits, trends and traditions reach an international dimension and scope.

To mention just one example: for someone like William Carlos Williams, immune to "the virus of the land" (SL 31), (because of his Spanish blood), America provided what he needed, a "homemade world", as Hugh Kenner puts it, a stimulus and a recipient for creative renewal. For Pound, however, the remaking of America meant leaving it. This culture shift is not to be understood as merely escapism, but as a form of ambivalent enthusiasm for an intellectual return to the sources and the perspective of change. The purpose of such an endeavour was to provoke a shift in perspective on the part of his international readership (and of his listeners), one which would translate into a transformation of the American way from the outside, modelled on the European ways.

The American Spectant from Europe

As an American who lived abroad for more than 50 of his 87 years of life, Ezra Pound saw fit to change the cultural spectrum of his nation, considered "a half savage country, out of date" (P 185). What he found in exile was the European paradox: a land rich in historical and political structures but, at the same time, a place of freedom from convention, a place of myth, as well as a time of renewal, of dream and decadence in the American imagination. Throughout his literary career, Pound, together with T. S. Eliot, moved modernism out of their native America into the land of artistic creativity and tradition. From this *ex-centrical* movement from the New World, they concocted an idea of Europe as the new *centre* for cultural innovation, a model of *cultural* meaning. Around it, Pound moulded his vision of modern culture combining occidental and oriental textual forms. Despite Pound's sixty-four years spent in exile from his native America and twelve years as an exile within it, he remained an American all his life and never

thought of himself as anything but an American. In *Patria Mia* he says: "it would be about as easy for an American to become a Chinaman or a Hindoo as for him to acquire an Englishness or a Frenchness or a Europeanness that is more than half a skin deep" (PM: 47). His interest in America turned into a longing for an American Renaissance that would surpass Italian *Renascimento*. It was his American restlessness, energy and ambition for the highest international standards that drove Pound to Europe. Establishing himself in London and later in Paris, he became a relentless advance guard and tirelessly supported American poetry, although W. C. Williams called him "the best enemy United States verse had" (SL: 169). Williams was speaking in favour of those American poets who preferred to stay inside the national borders, unlike such "exotics" as Pound and Eliot, who had chosen as models the foreign and the continental, and who had eventually migrated to Europe. Just as Eliot wrote of Henry James, "It is only an American who can choose to be a European" (in Eder 1984: 44). In his quarrel with Williams, Pound replied he was more American than Williams himself and it was because of that that he had to leave to the continent. What Pound tried to transform was precisely the American tradition of abstract thinking, with inclinations toward propaganda and insufficient demarcation between the public and the private life, together with a 'thin logical faculty' and maybe even Puritanism (SL 156-59). Back in the States, not only did Pound lack the intellectual support he needed as a writer, he feared that the support America could actually offer might eventually transform him into a propagandist and a pamphleteer rather than an acknowledged writer.

Pound's close friends never denied his Americanness. For his wife he always remained "quintessentially American". An European, said Archibald MacLeish, would contend himself with a single culture; only an American would spend his lifetime sampling other cultures, then collecting and combining the samples, like Pound did: "because Pound is so international, he is so American" (Reck 1968: 117).

Pound's exile followed in the line of many American artists hungry for beauty, culture and pleasure who emigrated or spent part of their careers in Europe starting with the 19th century. It was a movement from the margins to the centre – as George Steiner put it, "a nostalgic, obsessed voyage through the museum of high culture just before closing time… a final trace through the stacks before the illiterates and the bookburners take over". (1972: 136)

Pound's America and the Transformation of Ideology

In "How I began" Pound describes the high ideals that led him to London, walking in the footsteps of his favourite writers and studying their work: "This, perhaps means little to a Londoner, but it is a good fun if you have grown up regarding such things as about as distant as Ghengis Kahn or the days of Lope de Vega". Seen in this way, Steiner remarks, "the marginal origins of Pound, Eliot and Joyce, their upbringing on the frontier of the declining cultural imperium,

make beautiful sense: only a man from Idaho or St. Louis would bring such indefatigable zest, such "tourist passion" to the job of discovering and cataloguing the old splendours of Europe" (Steiner 1972: 136). Venice, London, Paris and Rapallo, closer to his cultural desire than his native land, failed sooner or later to become his ideal city, his Dioce and his initial ravishment with Europe was not his final feeling. Eventually, by the early 1960s, Pound concluded that the roots of civilization were no longer in contemporary Europe and referred to himself as "the last American living the tragedy of Europe" (Schulman 1974: 35).

Despite many theorists' and historians' perception of the American stage of letters as modernist from its beginnings, American reactions to high modernist poets often denied their essential American sensibilities: Eliot was considered a polyglot and to many a naturalized British poet, Stevens – a French dandy and Pound an aristocratic troubadour. Pound, despite his interest in Adams and Jefferson, was often felt as involved in some international movement and the centre of an "era". If Robert Frost and Williams shared a distinctly American style and voice, Pound, strangely seemed just to sound American but not in a way to which American readers were familiar, closer in tone to Homer or Villon or Dante, at times, than to Emerson or Whitman or James. The critics' complicity with Pound's efforts to escape an uninspiring native tradition proves just how essentially American his desire was. Pound's cosmopolitanism and his displacement and criticism of America may well be illustrative of how the American Pound was in search of the proper language and form for his epic, experiencing the distrust of the American artist at the feeling that he had no traditional language, form or sign. Consider, for example the foreign titles of the table of contents of Personna. Pound's own criticism of American literature seems to have made up his reputation of an *international modernist* dismissive of his domestic heritage. Except for Henry James, no American writer had enjoyed his full endorsement. Moreover, Pound wrote in his essays that "studying American literature is self-defeating as studying American chemistry" (LE: 218). The simile implies that literature, like any science, can be understood as a system: "if you were studying chemistry you would be told that there are a certain number of elements, a certain number of more usual chemicals, chemicals most in use, or easiest to find. And for the sake of clarity in your experiments you would probably be given these substances pure or as pure as you could conveniently get them" (ABC: 38). Pound couldn't find this degree of purity in American literature: "No American poetry is of any use for the palette. Whitman is the best of it, but he never pretended to have reached the goal" (LE: 218). In *Patria Mia* Pound portrays Whitman as a "reflex, the first honest reflex in an age of papier-maché letters" (SP: 110) creator of derivative forms of poetry and fiction: "America's position in the world of letters is, relatively, about that which Spain held in the time of the Senecas. So far as civilization is concerned America is the great, rich, western province, which has sent one or two notable artists to the Eastern capital. And that capital is, needless to say, not Rome, but the double city of London and Paris" (SP:

114). Pound saw American letters as modelled according to historical parallels, which displace America into the classical world.

Pound's remarks about the American literary scene build an imagotype of the nation lacking cultural traditions and literary authority. The figure of Emerson, among others, seems as the typical American authority; Hawthorne is categorized as the colonial Englishman, while Edgar Allan Poe is the "inventor of macabre subjects", "a rhetorician, not a model" of good writing (LE 218, SL 55). Thus Pound liberates himself of the American tradition and promotes himself onto the continental scene. Hugh Kenner, Pound's pioneer critic and supporter starts from these premises and makes Pound the iconic international poet. But Pound was capable of breaking loose of the American heritage and this is visible in his significantly Italian titled "Patria Mia". American thought, in order to gain interest for Pound's literary project, had to pass through Japan and China before it could be fashioned in the form of Fenollosa's works on the ideogram.

According to Joseph Riddel, it was Fenollosa's contention that American thought, or Transcendentalism, was not only compatible with Oriental thought or Zen doctrine, but that it had been a virtual recuperation of the Oriental (in Kubersky 1992: 35). Fenollosa's influence guided Pound into a direction of American influence otherwise ignored. In exchange, Fenollosa's Buddhism is completely dismissed in the Cantos. In his *Cathay* volume, Pound describes an imaginary land where American ideologies and concerns can find their application without contamination of ignorant or false reverence.

Pound's America is still waiting for a Renaissance that only Pound could sustain and direct through his Cantos. Pound's America is re-discovered in China and has as its founders both Confucius and Adams. Pound's Chinese-Adams cantos (LII-LXXI) superpose episodes of Confucian history of China (translated via French sources) and an Adamsian history of the United States in a corpus of poetry only Pound could have wrote. Both Confucius and Adams spoke in favour of a language of simplicity, without figuration or marks of duplicity. In practice, Emerson and Whitman, however, encourage this duplicity by inventing new forms of discourse. Both authors revel in the possibility of admitting contradiction, in language and intention:

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then… I contradict myself;
> I am large… I contain multitudes (Whitman 2008: 62)

One might even see a disavowal of the I as one which unites all speakers in the manner of Rimbaud's *Je est un autre*. The incipient act of Whitman's poem and poetics is a casting of the signifiers of the self into a system of substitution at a universal scale of signification. For Pound, Whitman, like Emerson, is too much connected with the historical, banal realities of America, just as their perspectives are too domestic to stir Pound's interest in any profound way. In his 1909 poem "What I feel about Walt Whitman" he states that only from abroad was he able to

re-read Whitman. "… He is America… I honour him for he prophesied me while I can only recognize him as a forebear of whom I ought to be proud" (SP: 145). In his poem-to-poem dialogue with Whitman, and with other congenial literary predecessors, the perspective of assimilation of American tradition changes with time and location, as well as with the appropriation of the European points of view.

Settling in Europe, Pound re-reads and feels obliged towards his literary fathers, Whitman most of all. "Personally I might be very glad to conceal my relationship to my spiritual father and brag about my more congenial ancestry – Dante, Shakespeare, Theocritus, Villon, but the descent is a bit difficult to establish."(SP: 146). A few years later he remarks: "[Whitman] never said "American poetry is to stay where I left it": he said it was to go on from where he started it" (LE 218). In a similar voice, his poem "A Pact" reads: "I have detested you long enough/ We have one sap and one root- / Let there be commerce between us".

Three decades later, in his *ABC of Reading*, Pound writes: "From an examination of Walt made twelve years ago the present writer carried away the impression that there are thirty well written pages of Whitman; he is now unable to find them" (ABC 192). In the 1930s, having found his own America in the Jefferson Cantos, the exiled poet no longer needs his condescending link to Whitman and he dismisses him mostly for technical reasons. Still, in the Pisan Cantos, Pound is again willing to offer Whitman a place in his literary lineage: "Hier wohnt the tradition as per Whitman in Camden" (C 80: 508).

Such examples of ambivalence in Pound's comments are symptomatic of the relationship linking the *Cantos* to *Leaves of Grass*; to be noticed especially in Pound's borrowing of Whitman's serial form. The model of *Leaves of Grass* is assimilated in the Cantos and the two feel satisfied with such titles as the "leaf" and the "canto" for works intended to transform the readers' perception and to assimilate into the epic vast subjects and multinational dimensions. Whitman argues that he was "jetting the stuff of more arrogant republics" whereas in Pound's cantos we read "By prong have I entered these hills" (238: 47). Still, the Cantos do not develop on Whitman's concept of the universality of the self. The author of the Cantos builds his open poem around the Odyssean motifs of discovery, voyage and return.

Pound's dismissal of his thematic and linguistic affinities with Emerson or Whitman should make the readers suspect his full endorsement for Henry James. James is for Pound the figure of the incontestable *American* precursor, but also an exponent of mere textuality, whose accomplishments are related to his threatening modernity. These accomplishments may be seen in Pound's criticism of James's "great labour of translation, of making America intelligible" (LE 296). Pound's remarks suggest that America should be accounted for in terms of Pound's own great efforts of translating and adapting Cavalcanti (1912), Li Po (1915) and Arnaut Daniel (1920), which means a labour of adapting medieval Europe, China and Provence to the intelligence of modern America. The dangerous account

appears in Pound's critic of *The Awkward Age* and its numerous "velleities, atmospheres, timbres, nuances, etc.": "One's complaint is not that people of this sort don't exist, that they aren't like everything else a subject for literature, but that James doesn't anywhere in the book get down to bedrock. It is too much as if he were depicting stage scenery not as stage scenery, but as nature" (LE: 324-26). Pound's reverence for James combines subtly with his dissatisfaction with James's unwillingness to touch a foundation. In the *Cantos* James significantly appears under the form of a ghost:

> And the great domed head, *con glioocchionesti e tardi*
> Moves before me, phantom with weighted motion,
> *Grave incessu,* drinking the tone of things,
> And the old voice lifts itself
>   Weaving an endless sentence (Canto 24)

Whereas Tiresias' ghost drinks blood and utters prophecies and instructions, James's ghost only drinks the "tone of things" and his "voice lifts itself" to utter an "endless sentence". Analysing these difficult relationships, Robert Gregory comments, in his preface, on a sentence in Henry James's *Art of the Novel* "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle within which they shall happily *appear* to do so." (James 2011: 5) The so-called "endless sentence" which James weaves in Pound's seventh Canto stands both for the lure and danger of a sign detached from his bedrock, founding stone, or from nature.

Pound's dismissal of Emerson's centrality, Whitman's long verse and James's groundlessness are intended both to hide his attachment to the American literary tradition and to facilitate an evasion of their modernist reflections from the limitations of language. Yet, in a broader sense, Pound's dismissal of Romanticism could be seen as a distrust of the repressed literary self-consciousness starting with Wordsworth and Emerson and continuing with James and Joyce. Working to bypass the consequences of finding a simultaneous origin in the duplicity of the sign, Pound laboriously and single-handedly re-shaped his own mystical-rationalist tradition from Europe and the Orient and his own America of Jefferson and Henry Adams. If Pound had looked further into the American tradition instead of reinventing his own "civilized" rationalist America, he would never have attempted the writing of the Cantos. However, the collected corpus of abandoned preludes, literary fragments, shipwrecked voyages etc. finds its appropriate epitaph in the Cantos.

Changing the Code

By the late 19th century, Jackson Lears (1981: xv) claims, three reactions to the collapse of American rationalist values were observable on the literary scene: the celebration of warfare, culminating with the Spanish-American war, a longing for the sufficiency and simplicity of medieval life and the taste for Oriental art and

thinking. The anti-modernist views of Longfellow, Lowell or Fenollosa are not, according to Lears, "simply escapism; it was ambivalent often coexisting with enthusiasm for material progress." The implied modernism of Ezra Pound is thus overshadowed by his anti-modern researches for authentic and simple forms of life he discovers in medieval societies, mystical experience and pagan vitality. Dante, according to Lears (1981: 155) "became a prophet of spiritual certainty in an uncertain excessively tolerant age." Oriental art interested Fenollosa and Henry Adams, and Oriental thinking, Buddhism and Confucianism in particular, involved all those in search of an ideological background neither spiritually dogmatic nor materialistic in essence. Lears argues that the *antimodernists* were attracted to these by-gone cultures and values because they provided a refuge from the burdens of self-consciousness affecting the intellectual aristocracy in an industrial culture.

Pound's fascination with the Middle Ages, with Oriental cultures and thinkers, and his celebration of war and martial values in *Sestina: Altaforte* "Damn it all! All this our South stinks peace" (CEP 327) are obviously part of these intellectual currents of late 19th century America. Pound's early poetry and criticism describe the crisis of the European and American cultural state of the time, yet he decides to alienate himself from his cultural background in order to attempt single-handedly to "gather the limbs of Osiris", to rebuild a mythical and cultural tradition. By criticizing the failure of the American literary canon, Pound attempts to hide his own ties to the tradition of *antimodernism.* In *Patria Mia* he notes: "[America] wanted a tradition like other nations, and it got Longfellow's Tales of a Wayside Inn' and 'Hiawatha' and 'Evangeline'… American poetry is bad, not for lack of impulse, but because almost no one in that country knows true from false, good from bad." (SP 124, 127)

Characterizing the American morality problems caused by sloth and popular ignorance rather than searching for their cultural origins, Pound assumes the "neutral" standpoint of a "technical" expert. Thus he disavows his anti-modern bonds with America and enhances his apparently modernist claims to an objective discourse. Nonetheless, Pound's long lasting quarrel with America is representative of his dismissal of the philosophical issue of how words can be made 'true'. Instead, the poet advises the American readership to study the classics, learn the meaning of words and reform American literary institutions. "If literature is to reappear in America it must come through, but in spite of, the present system of publication." (LE: 226) The crisis of representation affecting Nietzsche, James, Lowell is resolved by Pound through the study of literatures and cultures, clarifying the means of expression, and reforming the mercantile publication policies.

Pound's shift or predilection for certain cultural codes represents his own literary self-consciousness and endeavour for a cultural renewal. The "errand" of the 19th century cultural heritage is to restore a system of values through purification and a closer attachment to the emerging European forms of freedom and individualism. For the elite, America was not, then, a recovered sentiment of

identity, but the transcription of a re-discovered artistic heritage projected upon a new continent.

Pound's America would rediscover its strength from its actual difference from Europe, but it would pursue the same tradition that Victorian and materialist cultures had abandoned: the spirit of romance.

Abbreviations

ABC – *ABC of Reading (*1934) reprinted in 1960, New York: New Directions
C - *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (1986) New York: New Directions
CEP – *Collected Early Poems of Ezra Pound* (1976) King, M. J. (ed), New York: New Directions
LE – *Literary Essays*, Edited by T. S. Eliot (1954) New York: New Directions
P – *Personae* (1926) Reprinted (1971), New York. New Directions
PM – *Patria Mia and The Treatise on Harmony* (1962) P. Owen (ed.) London: Peter Owen Ltd.
SL – *Selected Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941* Paige, D.D *(*1971) (ed.). New York: New Directions
SP – *Selected Prose* (1973) W. Cookson (ed.), New York: New Directions.
SR – *Spirit of Romance* (1968), New York: New Directions.
T – *The Translations of Ezra Pound* (1978) Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers

References

Eder, L. D. (1984) *Three Writers in Exile*, Whitston Pub. Co., New York
James, H. (2011) *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces.* London: University of Chicago Press
Kenner, H. (1971) *The Pound Era* Berkley. University of California Press
Kottak, P.C. (1996) *Mirror for Humanity*, McGraw-Hill
Kronick, J. (1993) *Resembling Pound: mimesis, translation, ideology- Ezra Pound - Post-ing Modernism* in *Criticism* Michigan: Wayne State University Press
Kuberski, P. (1992) *A Calculus of Ezra Pound.* University Press of Florida
Lears, J. (1981) *No Place of Grace.* London: The University of Chicago Press
Levi-Strauss, C. (1990) *Anthropologie Structurale.* Paris: Plon
MacGowan, C. (ed.) (1991) *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, Vol. 1: 1909-1939.* New York: New Directions.
Reck, M. (1968) *Ezra Pound: A Close-Up.* London: R. Hart Davis
Rochon, T. R. (1998) *Culture Moves: Ideas, Activism, and Changing Values*, Princeton U. Press
Ruland, R, Bradbury M. (1992) *From Puritanism to Modernism*, Penguin
Schulman, G. (ed.) (1974) *Ezra Pound: a Collection of Criticism*. New York: McGraw-Hill
Steiner, G. (1972) "The Cruellest Months". *The New Yorker*, April 22, 1972, p. 136
Whitman, W. (2008) *Leaves of Grass (1855 First Edition Text)* Radford: Wilder Publications
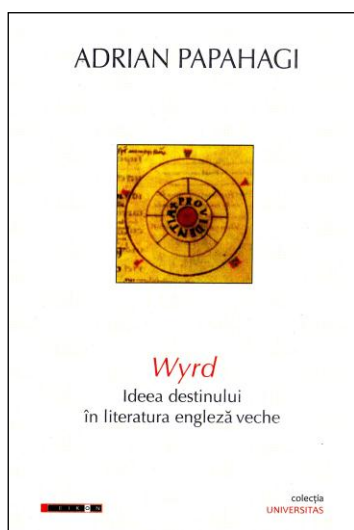
Adrian Papahagi, *Wyrd. Ideea destinului în literatura română veche*, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, Colecția Universitas, 2014, 430 pp., ISBN 978-606-711-065-4 (paperback)

"Preserved like an insect within the amber of a poetic formula"- **A Brilliant Display of Scholarly Endeavour**

EUGENIA GAVRILIU
Retired Associate Professor,
egavriliu@yahoo.co.uk
"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați

Reviewed here is a comprehensive piece of literary archaeology which deals with the foundation stones of Old English literature wherein the notion of **wyrd** lies embedded like a cultural relic.

Adrian Papahagi's is mainly a philological approach relying on textual evidence, with special focus on historical context, time posts (*ante quem/post quem*), lexical meaning and doctrinal connotations. He displays ingenious intelligence sustained by sound, erudite information in summoning up the whole gamut of Anglo-Saxon literature, with occasional opportune trespassing into the Old German, Saxon or Icelandic tradition.

A signifier of multiple meanings, **wyrd** appears subject to a process of semantic changes from the 'strong' denotation of **destiny**, through the 'weak' meaning of **human fate** to reach its most 'diluted' sense, that of **event** or **fact**.

Significantly enough, **wyrd** has survived in Modern English vocabulary only as the adjective "*weird*", immortalized in the Shakespearian "*Wierd Sisters*".

It is to be hoped that Adrian Papahagi's *Wyrd* will fill a blank in the Romanian cultural memory, hardly in the know, if at all, with the Anglo-Saxon literature as the most impressive achievement at the crossway between the late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

In the *Introduction* (pp. 13-33) the author embarks upon a necessary clarification of the scope and direction of his research and aims at highlighting his operational strategy.

Though intended as a close perusal into the whole literary corpus of Old English writings, the study does not purport to be a history of Anglo-Saxon

literature. Nor is it meant to be a survey of the history of religions and ideas, although its object of research is **wyrd**, a philosophical construct followed by a long array of religious and doctrinal notions such as astrological fatalism, divine will, free will, predestination, providence.

What the book actually stands for, maintains its author, is a philological survey which follows two concurrent directions according to the long-trusted German method of *Wörter und Sachen* (words and things). As a philologist, Adrian Papahagi [1] declares his allegiance to the study of words, hence his preference for a close reading text analysis with special concentration on the etymology, meaning, poetic and/or philosophical connotation while the rate of occurrence is scrupulously extended to the cases of *hapax legomena*, i.e. words or forms evidenced by a single appearance. As such an enterprise cannot be properly accomplished without a sound examination of the underlying ideas and beliefs, whenever necessary, the philological exploration has been sustained by rigorous philosophical awareness.

The author acknowledges his indebtedness to the *Dictionary of Old English Corpus* (DOEC) that afforded him direct access to the corpus of Anglo-Saxon writing, which renders his book the first exhaustible research into the primary lexical sources: glosses, glossaries, and vocabularies, all carriers of lexical and historical information.

The *Introduction* concludes with a splendid description of **wyrd** as a "*palimpsest*" in which the "*discarded image*" of a distant past emerges from beneath the superimposed successive layers to be revealed in all its compelling fascination of meaning (p. 33). The research proper starts with the chapter *Tradiţia antică* (*Ancient Tradition*, pp. 36-51) where the problem of destiny is considered within the classical, Greek and Roman, tradition which associated the notion of an impersonal *Moira* with a fatalistic *Fatum* decreed by divine will. These stoic and neo-platonic concepts were disseminated into Old English culture through Boethius' *Consolatione Philosophiae* and, later, through the works of the great Latin Fathers of Early Medieval Christianity, Augustine and Gregory the Great.

In the next chapter, *Vocabularul destinului în Glosele anglo-saxone* (*The Vocabulary of Destiny in the Anglo-Saxon Glosses*, pp. 55-77) the author finds *Glosses* the earliest reliable sources to evince the use of the term **wyrd** bearing upon the idea of destiny in the Anglo-Saxon texts. The high rate of occurrence is an undeniable evidence that as early as the eighth century **wyrd** used to denote a fatal force with destructive effects. There is no theological rivalry to be proved between the power of God contained in such concurrent vocabulary as *casus*, *condicio*, *historia* or *Parcae* and the idea of indomitable **wyrd**. He considers **wyrd** a poetic topos, a prosodic fossil, marked by the formulaic characteristics of Old

English poetry while Christianity, with its denial of an intermediary between man and divinity, was definitely the religious creed of the Anglo-Saxons.

With the next comprehensive section: *Destin şi providenţă în proza engleză veche* (*Destiny and Providence in Old English Prose*, pp. 81-160) the study moves nearer to its core. A close examination of the translations of the Alfredian period (*The Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius, *The Universal History* by Orosius, the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, the homiletic and hagiographic literature, the same as the occasional secular texts) leads the author to the conclusion that **wyrd** was used in its 'strong' meaning to translate **fatum** and **fortune**, while employed in its 'diluted' connotation it was a generic equivalent for **haphazard** or **event**.

The exploration reaches its densest in *Destinul în poezia engleză veche* (*Destiny in Old English Poetry*, pp.163-297) which surpasses by far all horizons of expectation in the reader. The material is organized in *Heroic and Pastoral Poetry* (*Beowulf, The Death of Edgar, The Battle of Maldon, Waldhere, Widsith,* with a welcome excursus into the Old German poem *The Song of Hildebrand* in search of a possible case of intertextuality), *Gnomic Poetry* (*Solomon and Saturn II, Maxims, The Fate of Men,* Anglo-Latin and Anglo-Saxon *Riddles*) and *Elegies* (*The Seafarer, The Rhyming Poem, Resignation, The Ruins*). Employing a one by one analysis strategy, Adrian Papahagi draws salient conclusions upon the occurrence of **wyrd**, followed by a large number of lexemes and phrases relevant for a possible fatalistic outlook. The gnomic poem *Solomon and Saturn II* arrests the attention due to the multitude of references to **wyrd** denounced as an omnipotently destructive agent epitomizing evil and death and defying God. Similarly, the *Maxims* tend to associate **wyrd** with unhappiness and unstableness to culminate in proclaiming its supremacy over the power of God epitomized in the well-known pronunciamento "*Great are the powers of God. Wyrd is the stronger*" (Maxim II 4b-5a).

The study continues with a subchapter on *Religious Poetry* which includes the "Caedmonian Poems" (*Genesis A, Exodus, Daniel*) and the "Cynewulfian poems" (*Helena, The Fates of the Apostles, Juliana*). The section is completed with *Other Hagiographic Poems* (*Andreas, Guthlac B, The Dream of the Rood*). Most suitably, the author draws a parallel between two poems of comparably equal length, *Beowulf* and *Genesis*, to conclude that **wyrd** appears to have suffered a process of dilution in the religious text while preserving its 'strong' meaning associated to misfortune and death in the heroic one.

The scope of the research is enlarged by a bird's eye survey of two other great literatures circumscribed to the Nordic tradition. In *Literatura biblică germanică* (*Germanic Biblical Literature*, pp. 355-365) **wurt** (in Old German) is found to occur exclusively in the traditional alliterative Germanic poetry, which sustains the poetic origins of the term.

In *Observații asupra poeziei islandeze vechi* (*Remarks on Old Icelandic Poetry*, pp. 369-379) the author emphasizes the notable differences between Scandinavian **urðr**, one of the three Scandinavian *Norns* (projections of the Greek *Moirai* and the Roman *Parcae*) and the Anglo-Saxon **wyrd**.

At the end of this laborious demonstration, a conclusive chapter *Concluzii,* (pp. 383-388) retraces the stages of the research and reiterates the results which could be summarized as follows:

- **Wyrd** is a Pan-Germanic, pre-Christian construct identified as **uurd** in Saxon, as **wurt** in Old German and **urðr** in Icelandic. It is only in Old English Literature that **wyrd** could be isolated as a poetic term of remarkable frequency of occurrence.

- **Wyrd** is found to carry three main categories of meaning, 'strong', 'weak' and 'diluted' that may appear concurrently in one and the same text. The 'strong' denotation that of *hostile destiny* tends to be prevalent in the original Anglo-Saxon poetry, independent of any Latin sources, while the 'weak' and 'diluted' meanings, with **wyrd** denoting a force subordinated to a divinity that governs human existence, mainly occur in translations from the late Antiquity and Patristic Theology.

- The fatalistic view in Anglo-Saxon poetry differs from the Graeco-Latin one in so much as it is strictly connected to a heroic stance that perceives cowardice as a human flow conducive to death. The triad destiny- fight-death (*wyrd- wig-dea*ð) is found to be underlying the notion of destiny inextricably linked to fighting and death. Hence the permanently negative connotation of **wyrd** as a destructive agent.

- There is neither a philosophical, nor a theological rivalry to be seriously considered between the power of God and the indomitable force of **wyrd**. As a literary-philosophical construct, **wyrd** was fashioned along the centuries at the intersection of more than one tradition when the Germanic pagan outlook of **destiny** was being attenuated by the notion of **providence** of Christian extraction.

The huge store of information that sustains this impressive cultural journey is displayed in the *Bibliography* (pp. 391-415) scrupulously subdivided into A. *Texte anglo-saxone și anglo-latine* (*Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Latin Texts*); B. *Texte antice* (*Ancient Texts*); C. *Texte medievale* (*Mediaeval Texts*); D. *Lucrări de referință* (*Reference Works*). Similarly, the section of *Indices* (pp. 416- 422): A. *Index nominum et operum;* B. *Index rerum;* C. *Index Codicae* turns out to be of most needed assistance in guiding the reader through this maze of philological erudition. The footnotes

prove equally helpful when they entice comparison to the scholarly opinions presented from a polemic stance, whenever the author appears to disagree with generally accepted opinions. Cross references, diagrams, tables, original quotations are frequently embedded and contribute to the exceptionally thorough argumentative force of this study.

Adrian Papahagi's *Wyrd* invites various types of readers, and it is to be expected that it might stir some degree of interest in Anglo-Saxon culture among the reading public at large. However, his is not a book addressing a casual readership that may find these erudite analyses a challenge hard to cope with.

As it documents one particular phase in the English literary history, *Wyrd* might be of interest for English tutors in those universities where Old English literature continues to be taught as part of English studies programmes. It is during such pedagogical practices that students might accept the invitation to cast a fresh look at the early stages of English literature.

But, above all, *Wyrd* addresses the restricted group of connoisseurs, the few, very few, "the happy few", indeed, in the academic media where this study of a commanding status is sure to inspire scholarly emulation along the paths opened by Adrian Papahagi's remarkable explorations. Feedback responses from the intellectual community have not been late to come, and Alexandru Baumgarten has recently commented on the philosophical implications of destiny as revealed in Adrian Papahagi's study [2]. So has Sever Voinescu, who praises the book for opening break-through vistas to any intellectual person in this country with an interest in the intricate ways thereby a philological study can reveal the age-long human concern with destiny. Voinescu only hopes that Adrian Papahagi's own academic destiny might not be hampered by his momentary political pursuits [3].

Exploring paths of research that have seldom attracted the scholars in this country, Adrian Papahagi's *Wyrd* will hopefully stand out as an impeccable case of learned information and intelligent, intellectual diligence.

Notes

[1] Adrian Papahagi is currently a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Letters of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj, where he founded CODEX (The Centre for the History of Books and Texts) for the study of mediaeval manuscripts in 2007. He has a PhD in Medieval Studies from the University of Sorbonne (Paris IV) and previously taught at the Sorbonne and the Institute Catholique in Paris. His researches in Mediaeval literature have been published in *Scriptorium, Medium Aevum, Notes and Queries, Neuphilologische Mittelungen, Aevum, Comptes rendus de l' Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Léttres*. He also authored *Boethiana Mediaevalia* (Bucureşti: Zeta Books, 2010) and edited *Vocabularul cărţii manuscrise* (Bucureşti: Editura Academiei, 2012) in addition to the four volume proceedings of several conferences on Mediaeval Studies. The reviewer cannot but rejoice at Adrian Papahagi's

academic accomplishments, which could be predicted early in his career when, as an undergraduate at the "Babeş-Bolyai" University, he would contribute thought-provoking papers to the annual sessions of the Students' National Shakespeare Symposia hosted at "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi back in the late 90's.

[2] Baumgarten, Al. (2014) "Regele Alfred şi destinul limbii engleze". *România literară*, XLVI (43), 6.

[3] Voinescu, S. (2015) 'Wyrd' in *Evenimentul zilei*, no. 7337/ 20.02, 13.

The professor, the historian, the writer

Ruxanda BONTILĂ
"Dunărea de Jos" University of Galaţi

When a literature professor speaks about a writer, she mainly concentrates on the minutiae of the fictional universe, which might provide understanding of the respective world of representation; if the writer's life casts a shadow upon that world of representation, then she speaks about the fictionalization of the self or about a split self in search of the other-within-the self; but most often, the professor can't stress enough that the real writer is not to be confounded with the narrator/writer-in-the-text, who lives a life independent of that of its creator. Compassion then for a writer's life stands in the way of an unbiased judgement of a writer's work. However much the professor is impressed by the misfortunes befalling a writer, she must either ignore them, or assume the charge of biographical reader. Either way, she is no less a hypocrite, since, as Elias Canetti rightfully pointed out in his *Die Blendung/The Deception* (1935), not one single professor has ever confessed shame for making a leisured, well provided and straight academic living out of the life of a writer who lived in misery and despair. What about the literary biographer/historian? Her duty is to objectively document a life, which contours itself out of all the traces the writer more or less fortunately leaves behind— which doesn't make her less biased, though, she is by profession bound to check on the existential details, and is liable to posterity for the verity of her reconstruction.

What is the case of the writer who writes a (biographical) *novel* or literary prose about a writer? Whose pose does she assume? That of the literature professor or that of the literary historian? The writer in point will certainly internalize the respective writer's work, very much like the professor does, but also check on all the biographies to date, which can render the factual reality of the writer in question, similar to the literary historian's endeavour. Nonetheless, the writer's devotion goes to fleshing out a living mind and soul, who can easily step out of the book pages and have a cup of gossip-flavour tea with the reader.

Here is the case of young American writer Therese Anne Fowler (b. 1967)—sociologist, creative writing professor, literary assistant editor-in-chief—, who, by chance (as she confesses in an interview given to Anca Peiu, her Romanian translator—*România Literară*, No. 14/2015), had the daring idea of writing about Zelda, Francis Scott Fitzgerald's wife and mother to Frances-Scottie, but, most significantly, the true daughter of the beginning of the century America.

Fowler's disclaimer and long list of acknowledgements, added at the end of her novel *Z: A Novel of Zelda Fitzgerald* (2013), stands proof of the laborious work of documentation that went into the making of the book. Those acknowledged are: biographers, the famous couple's daughter, Frances Scott "Scottie" Fitzgerald's *The Romantic Egoists,* Scott's and Zelda's rich correspondence and own works, as well as editors, sponsors, friends, family. Much in the above mentioned spirit, Fowler describes her endeavour as based "not on factual minutiae, but rather on the emotional journey of the characters," and her method, as that of a detective, who will consider all "known motivations, character, and events." Fowler best senses the difference between a novelist writing fictional biography and the literary biographer: "My respect and affection for both Scott and Zelda inspired this book, which, again, is not a biography but a novelist's attempt to imagine what it was like to be Zelda Sayre Fitzgerald" (p. 374).

 With the precise aim in view "to create the most plausible story possible, based upon all the evidence at hand" (p. 374), Therese Anne Fowler manages to come up with a novel on Zelda by Zelda herself, which immediately gains the appreciation of The Press that counts, trespasses more than twelve national territories in translation, and is now being turned into a TV serial by the Amazon, the Killer Films, and Christina Ricci studios. This challenging cultural blending certainly bases on the writer's sleight of hand of impersonation, which benefits from an ample dialogue between arts—music (classical and jazz), dance (classical and modern), painting, and writing. The novel stands under the sign of delusion, the illusory, the unreal, thus replicating the post-war America of the so-called Jazz Age, as well as the all-dreams-come-true atmosphere of a lost generation's Paris. The game of seeming, believing and truth as writing strategy is set from "The Prologue": "Look closer and you'll see something extraordinary, mystifying, something real and true. We have never been what we seemed" (p.6). Hence forth, we are taken to real places (the American South—Montgomery, Alabama—, New York, Great Neck, Paris, Capri, The French Riviera, etc.), we meet real people (family members, nannies, friends, artists—writers, critics, editors, film producers, actors, painters, dancers), fact which gives the reader the titillation of déjà-vu/lu towards reinforcing *l'effet de réel* so much coveted with such literary productions. Of special interest to the novelist is the trio-relationship Zelda-Scott-Ernest (Hemingway), which is tentatively explored to the purpose of, on the one hand, flavouring the avant-garde world even more, and on the other hand, tackling the conflictual/schizophrenic disposition of Zelda Seyre—vacillating between a traditional Southerner with deeply embedded conservative views on most things, sex included, a "flapper" defying convention and eager to try on new experiences, and a postfeminist avant-la-lettre, who ironically contemplates the feminist movement of her time while striving hard for artistic self-affirmation in dance, writing and painting. Zelda Fitzgerald's self-portrait illustrates T. S. Eliot's words, prefacing the first part of the novel: "If you aren't in over your head, how do you know how tall you are? (p.8) Fowler's Zelda has pushed her limits to find out how tall Scott and she really are.

What is indeed memorable about this fictional autobiography, besides keeping the reader in a referential turmoil, is how Therese Ann Fowler manages, through a fractured chronology, a reluctantly decodable writing, at times, create a delusory perspective, reflective of Scott Fitzgerald's words prefacing the second part of the book: "Everybody's youth is a dream, a form of chemical madness" (p. 70). Also memorable is the pictorial quality of Zelda's language, which points to all her more or less failed artistic longings: writing, ballet, and painting. Here is how Zelda describes her first encounter with Scott, a lieutenant-officer in the American Army:

> A pair of tall boots paler than the others caught my eye. As I straightened, I followed the boots upward to olive-colored breeches, a fitted uniform tunic, and, above it, an angelic face with eyes as green and expressive as the Irish Sea, eyes that snagged and held me as surely as a bug sticks in a web, eyes that contained the entire world in their smiling depths, eyes like — (p. 21)

Or, how she describes her strenuous efforts when taking ballet lessons with Madame:

> In Madame Egorova's studio, I spent my hours lined up at the barre next to fourteen other women, all of them clustered at the cusp of twenty years of age. The day my twenty-eighth birthday came, I observed it silently except for the huffs and grunts and sighs that corresponded with my motions. The other girls all knew I was older than they were, that I had a husband and a child. But if my arabesques looked like theirs, if my jetés were executed as crisply, if I could turn, and turn, and turn, and turn, and turn, and turn, and turn, I wouldn't be bullied more than anyone else was, and I'd be allowed to stay (pp. 282-283).

But, what remains remarkable in case of such novels, despite the many possible pitfalls, is the deep feeling for understanding the emotional trajectory of the characters' lives. In Fowler's case too, this feeling is obsessively voiced by the heroine: "I wish, oh, you have no idea how much, that I could bottle up those days and then climb inside that bottle too" (p. 330), echoing Scott's own words ending *The Great Gatsby*, "SO WE BEAT ON, BOATS AGAINST THE CURRENT, BORNE BACK CEASELESSLY INTO THE PAST" (p. 372).

A feeling that neither the literature professor nor the literary historian bothers too much about.

Contact:

UNIVERSITATEA „DUNĂREA DE JOS "
FACULTATEA DE LITERE - DEPARTAMENTUL DE ENGLEZĂ
Str. Domnească nr. 111, corp AS, camera AS 113
Galați, Romania
http://litere.ugal.ro

Contributions may be sent electronically, as editable documents, to oana.gheorghiu@ugal.ro .
Every manuscript is single-blind peer-reviewed by two senior researchers or academics. The authors will be notified of the editorial decision in maximum 90 days.

Cultural Intertexts uses *Harvard Referencing Style.* Please refer to the guide before submitting a paper.