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REVIEWS

TRANSLATING NOVELS IN ROMANIA: THE AGE OF SOCIALIST REALISM.
FROM AN IDEOLOGICAL CENTER TO GEOGRAPHICAL MARGINS

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ABSTRACT. *Translating Novels in Romania: the Age of Socialist Realism. From an Ideological Center to Geographical Margins.* This article uses quantitative research methods to explain the situation of novel translation during the first decades of communism in Romania. The widespread ideas about the period imply that realist-socialism was a univocal ideology that did not permit real cultural development, as it happened in Western countries. However, as the statistics on literary translations in Romanian during the 1940s and the 1950s show, this was one of the first periods of reevaluation for cultural peripheries. Even though it was a result of a strong propaganda mechanism, this kind of cultural program puts a minor self-colonizing culture "as theorised by Alexander Kiossev," in front of an impressive international diversity. The main objective of this article is to discuss the morphologies of novel translation during socialist-realism from an objective, quantitative point of view.

Keywords: *Socialist realism, translation of novel, Romanian culture, Soviet literature, periphery cultures*

REZUMAT. *Traducerea romanelor în România: Epoca realismului socialist. De la centru ideologic la margini geografice.* Acest articol foloseşte metodele cercetării cantitative pentru a explica situaţia romanului tradus în primele decenii ale comunismului românesc. Viziunile cu circulaţie largă asupra perioadei tind să înfăţişeze realismul socialist ca rezultat al unei ideologii univoce care nu a permis o dezvoltare cultural reală – asemănătoare ţărilor vestice. Dar aşa cum reiese din statisticile făcute pe traducerea romanului în anii '40 şi '50, această perioadă a fost una dintre primele care au reevaluat periferiile culturale. Deşi venea ca rezultatul unui program propagandistic intens, acest tip de program cultural a pus o cultură mică, autocolonială, faţă în faţă cu o imensă diversitate cultural internaţională. Scopul principal al acestui

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articol este să discute morfologiile romanului tradus în timpul realismului socialist dintr-un punct de vedere obiectiv, cantitativ.

Cuvinte cheie: *Realism socialist, traducerea romanului, cultura română, literatură sovietică, culturi periferice*

There are two main clichés that underpin the core of twentieth century literature in Romania. According to the former, the diversity and cultural freedom of the interwar period were corrupted by the communist regime after World War II. According to the latter, the 1940s and the 1950s were plain and arid decades that could not offer too many incentives to those willing to study the mechanisms of the literary field[2]. The former may be partially true: there was, of course, a great tendency towards imitation and there were offshoots of original local literary production consisting of the appropriation of Western culture (mainly French, English and German) during the interwar period, but I believe that true diversity (understood also as focusing on the peripheries) only comes after World War II. The latter cliché was dismantled, I believe, by several recent studies: the writings of Sanda Cordoş on Romanian and Russian contexts, the studies of Alex Goldiş on literary criticism during socialist realism, and Ioana Macrea Toma's sociological statistics based on literary field data from the communist period, to name only a few. Their works, along with the dictionaries of novels published by the *Sextil Puşcariu Institute* – of which I used *Dicţionarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România de la origini până la 1989* (*The Chronological Dictionary of Translated Novels in Romania from the Origins untill 1989*) as a source for this research – or the chronologies of literary life published by the Romanian Academy, made it possible to overcome the generally reductionist view on the literary life of the period.

However, such a reductionist view is not specific to some Eastern European complex. In 1981, Katerine Clark described a similar situation among American scholars: "Soviet Socialist Realism is virtually a taboo topic in Western Slavic scholarship. It is not entirely taboo, for it can be discussed, but preferably only in tones of outrage, bemusement, derision, or elegy" (ix). Clark claims that there are three reasons for such approach: the fact that the Soviet Literature of socialist-realism is often seen as *poor literature*, the general development of literature through moral compromise in the Soviet States, and the preconception that the dogmatic ways of this literature may infiltrate any theoretical approach.

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[2] Actually these considerations refer to the period up to 1964, the year that marks the beginnings of a certain liberalization inside the communist regime

Nevertheless, if we analyze from a theoretical perspective the translation of novels, the first decades of Romanian communism are far from that. As Brian James Baer explains, "translation under communism was shaped by the tension between xenophobia and internationalism" (9). I find this second characteristic to be the most important aspect of translations during the 1950s. Namely, well into the Cold War, the Soviet Union tried to create an alternative literary scene which still retained a 'global' outlook or coverage. The translation projects implemented in the Soviet Union's entire area of influence represented an appropriation of some previous utopian programs launched at the end of World War I: "On the one hand, Soviet Russia did much to promote the translation of world literature into and from Russian. In fact, World Literature Publishing House, founded by the writer Maxim Gorky in 1918, had the lofty goal of translating" 'all world literature – every world classic in all languages of all times, people, and cultures' (…). On the other hand, the regime exercised censorship at virtually every stage of the publication process" (Baer 9). This kind of international approach was developed by the Soviet Union in different manners after the 1930s and engendered two major translation systems: inside Soviet Russia, with great concern for the RSFSR literary production (for example, Uzbek novels or literature from Azerbaijan were translated everywhere), but also with strong focus on the world literature, with the specific mention that any writer who could be considered socialist internationalist was appreciated as worth translating.

Thus, the first observation I make on the statistics presented in this article concerns the high-level connection between the political background and the Romanian literary translation projects of the 1940s and 1950s. The translation of novels did not resemble at all the same process in the free market during the period because this activity was intensively coordinated and financed by the state (and implicitly followed the orientations in the Soviet Union programs, since the Soviet armies which entered Romania in 1944 stationed here until 1958). Some of the books that had already been published were withdrawn and reprinted in order to make sure that the translators had never been collaborators of the *ancient regime*[3]. Also, some of the authors were retranslated into Romanian, following the intensive debates regarding whom to promote as a good literary model (against any bourgeois legacy and against what was seen as dangerous politics, decadent values, or bad

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[3] In *Politicile cultural comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (*Communist Cultural Policies during Gheorghiu-Dej regime*), Cristian Vasile writes: "A document of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party dated 29th of November 1954 (…) wrote: *The Ministry of Culture organizes an action of withdrawing of inadequate books from libraries. For this action there have been organized, along the Regional Peoples' Gatherings, collectives of prepared comrades, to whom has been made available the list of books that must be withdrawn from libraries* (…) *After the whole operation is finished, these books will be sorted*" (60-61).

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morals). A very good way to capture the essence of this period is through the concept of *double readership* used by Brian James Baer following Ioana Uricariu's *double spectatorship*[4]. It states that many forms of *Russian difference* were actualized by the enormous difference between what many knew about literature during the interwar period and what literature became in the first period of the communist regime.

However, this kind of data is hard to quantify: it serves mostly as a note on the complex profile of translation under communism and it can provide explanations for some specific situations such as, for example, the reception of French literature during the socialist-realism. The first aim of this article is to look for patterns that can also be quantified: while the great center of the translation of novels lies in the Soviet literature of socialist-realism, the projects implemented in this area generated unintended structures and unnoticed side-effects. I shall deal with two of those major side-effects: the actual diversity of the socialist realism canon (without ignoring that, since it became propaganda literature, the number of translated novels and their circulation increased considerably) and the increasing number of translations from periphery literatures (the diversity of cultures that enter the Romanian literary scene through the novel in the 1950s despite their common ideological foundation is, indeed, surprising for any researcher).

I chose the translation of novels into Romanian during this period as a subject for this quantitative research mainly because of the importance of the genre in this much discussed political context. If poetry and drama were the dominant genres of the pre-revolutionary socialist movements (preferred because of their immediate ideological impact), after 1918, in Russia, the novel became the main instrument of propaganda. Consequently, this has to be the first consideration: for the European and Russian socialist movements, the novel becomes a dominant genre relatively late because it used to be considered a secondary type of literature from the perspective of the great(er) ideological cause (even unimportant, often described as *Schundliteratur*). Only after the Revolution of 1917 (the beginnings of the *proletarian novel*) and after the crystallization of what will be known as *socialist-realism* does the novel gain a central place within the ideological programs. According to Michael Denning (and this idea is also present in Katerine Clark's works[5]), the latter

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[4] Brian James Baer writes: "At the same time, multilingualism made possible a kind of «double readership». That is, readers could and did compare the source and target texts, which made visible the translator's decisions and highlighted the (Russian) «difference» - or, in Venuti's terms, the remainder – in the large text. Under construction of censorship, this became central to the construction of translation as a site of resistance for many readers, whose ability to decode oppositional content allowed them to best the censor, which served as a metonymy for the state" (8).

[5] Katerina Clark writes: "Thus, rather than a comparative study of the Socialist Realist novel and other text types, what I have attempted here is an interpretive cultural history that uses the novel (and novella) as its focus because the novel is the privileged genre of Soviet Socialist Realism, occupying the same structural slot as the opera does in China" (xiii).

half of the nineteenth century was dominated – when we speak about a *socialist literature* – by poetry and drama[6]. In post-war Romania, this shift can be observed in the statistics published by Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu and also employed by Ioana Macrea Toma, according to which there was a major difference between the translation of poetry and the translation of novels (or prose fiction, in general) from 1953 to 1960. Although their work only contains data from 1953 to 1989, we can safely assume that during the 1947-1953 period we will find the same disproportion. That literary debates were more focused on the situation of the novel during the second half of the 1940s and all along the 1950s can be verified (in an almost exhaustive manner) using the chronology of literary debates from 1944 to 1960 as published by the Romanian Academy.[7] Therefore, if prose translations reached around 150 titles and reprints per year, poetry struggles somewhere between 10 and 30 titles.[8] Also, since the structure of local prose production and publication imitates that of the literary translation, the high interest of the communist regime in publishing novels and translations becomes a strong argument. Moreover, the preferences of the readers had also changed: if readers preferred novels of 80 to 130 pages during the interwar period, during the 1950s they showed a taste for novels of over 300 pages.

Secondly, I decided to work exclusively on the translation of novels for this study, without including a comparative approach between local production and translations, in an attempt to avoid a possible *aporia*: although there is a large centralized database about the Romanian novels of this period (results obtained by the same research institute that published the Dictionary of the foreign novel translated into Romanian). The fact that it does not always contain detailed descriptions of subgenres and typologies makes it useful mainly for observations on the big picture of novelistic production and reception, but not for the study of influences.

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[6] Michael Denning writes: "In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the novel was not central to socialist cultural thought. Poetry and drama were the heart of socialist notions of *Bildung*, which stressed the appropriation and mastery of the classics by working people rather than the development of an independent radical or working-class art. Following the lead of Mark and Engels, socialist critics championed the classics of the epoch of an ascendant and revolutionary bourgeoisie – Lessing, Schiller, and Goethe – against the bourgeois culture of the time. The novel was generally seen as merely a form of entertainment, and socialists both criticized and tried to supplant the commercial dime novels and *Schundliteratur* that proliferated in working-class culture" (707).

[7] See Eugen Simion (general coordinator). *Cronologia vieții literare românești – Perioada postbelică (1949-1957)*, vol. IV-VII. Bucharest: Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române, 2014.

[8] See figure V.11., *The Dynamics of the Yearly Production in Prose and Poetry (Figura V.11. Dinamica anuală a producției de proză și poezie)*, in *Privilighenția. Instituții literare în comunismul românesc* (*Priviligentsia Literary Institutions during Romanian Communist Period*) by Ioana Macrea Toma, 169.
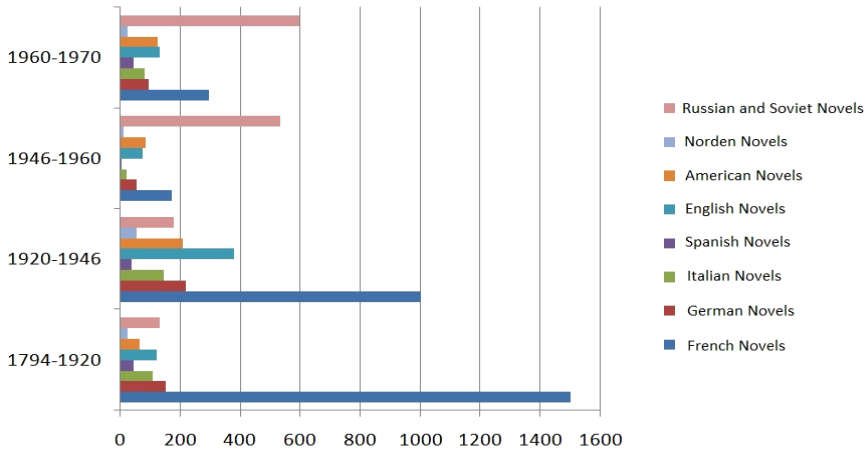
Chart 1: The quantitative representation of the novels translated into Romanian from the major European literatures from 1794 to 1970. It also contains data about the translations of American and Russian novels for a general view on previous literary contexts in this area.

In order to follow and explain the morphologies of the translation of novels during the communist regime, I had to determine the *macro* situation of the translation patterns in the nineteenth century (I used the concept of *long century* that spans from 1793 to 1920) and during the interwar period. The *macro* chart (*Chart 1*) represents this situation. In the nineteenth century, many French novels were translated, and this happened even though most of the readers had a good command of French and could read the novels in the original language. The Romanian literary production of this period was also marked by a general preference for the imitation of French models. Novels from other cultures were also translated but they were fewer than the French novels. The interwar period was dominated by French literature, but English, American and German novels were also on an ascending trend; and Russian literature started to claim its grounds.

What actually impresses one is the situation of French literature after World War II: although it lost ground in favor of the Russian novel, it managed to maintain its dominance over all the other cultures. Thus it becomes clear that the decline of translations from Western literature during the 1950s was compensated by the rise of the Russian and Soviet novels (*Chart 3.1.* proves that it is mainly Soviet literature that fills the graph). But during the most radical decade – from a political perspective – French literature still held its important position with almost 200 novels being translated or reprinted in the People's Republic of Romania, an effect of the great influence of French culture in Romania before World War II. *Graph 1.1* shows the Russian & the Soviet novels *vs.* the French novels as they were translated into Romanian.
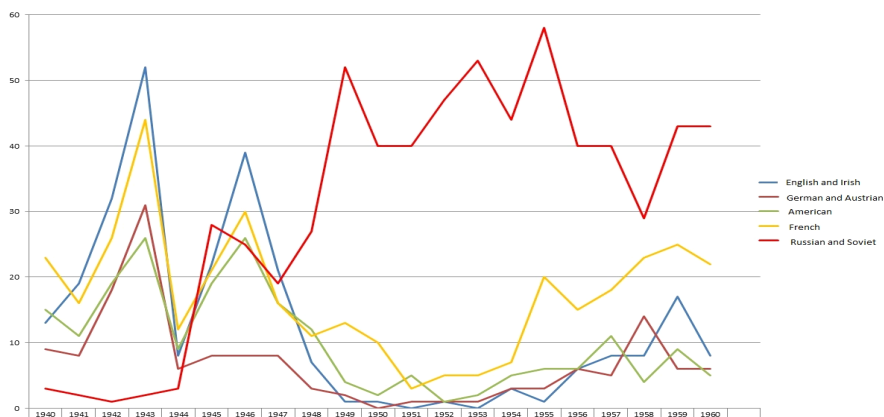
Graph 1.1. Novels translated into Romanian from 1940 to 1960 from main European literatures, American literature and Russian and Soviet literature.

More precisely, *Graph 1.1* illustrates the situation of translation from 1940 (the beginning of World War II) to 1960 (the late phase of socialist realism). Russian and Soviet literatures (barely translated during the war) became prominent rather quickly after 1945, when the translation programs began. The number of translations from these literatures reached impressive figures[9] after 1947 and they maintain this position until 1959. The translation of American and English novels fell during the war and decreased to insignificant figures during the first decade of communism: the only American authors published during this period are Howard Fast (member of the Socialist International) and others like him. German novels were not translated after 1945, because of the stigma associated with Germany after the war. German novels were translated again only after the small (or so called *fake*) liberalization of 1958-1960.

Considering any banal result that the graphs may provide a valid research hypothesis for is, in my opinion, of utmost importance. Some trends can be easily understood from the graphs, such as: the disproportionate allocation of the translations of Russian and Soviet literature compared to other literatures, or the fact that political events are strongly connected to literature (see literature in 1944, when Romania capitulated to USSE or the situation in 1948 when the Soviet literature translation programs began in Romania. Revisiting the situation on a large scale provided by quantitative research allows the reconsideration of some of the secondary leads. For example, *Graph 1.1.* shows that French novel translations imitate the pattern of the Russian and Soviet novel translations for short periods, which may need more detailed explanations.

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[9] The number of articles about Soviet authors also increased.

From 1949 to 1956 the morphology of the French novel translation is shaped by two important factors. First of all, there were many authors belonging to the French nineteenth-century *classical* realism (or *critical realism*, as it was called in the Romanian reviews of the 1940s and 1950s). Their number was comparable to the number of Russian authors with the same artistic preferences.[10] Secondly, among the interwar or post World War II French writers, there were many socialists. The publishing plans of the People's Republic of Romania in the 1940s and 1950s, as imposed from the centers in Moscow, aimed at creating the image of a solid realistic and proletarian legacy. French literature brought a great contribution to this monolithic literary propaganda project: it had a huge reception background in the area before World War II so it became a guarantee for the Soviet translations, and it provided – as the nineteenth-century Russian authors did – the image of a legitimate heritage for *socialist realism*.

A short note should be made here: the difficult aspect of interpretation comes with notable exceptions referring to the translation of the French novel. For example, although Camus or Sartre were very often discussed in the national publications of the 1950s, their novels were not translated in Romania until 1964 (as can be seen in *Graph 1.2.,* 1964 is the year when the number of translations of French novels overcame the Russian and the Soviet ones). So we can say that it was not an '*any socialist goes'* attitude, but a very intense and continuous debate with great political stakes. As Sanda Cordoş puts it, the canon of socialist-realism in literature was built in Romania under the same pressure as in Russia: the debaters could easily pay with their lives for the *wrong aesthetic* program[11]. So the activity of translation was directed according to the principles established in Moscow: many important contemporary promoters of socialist-realism and some of the older novels that belonged to this socialist legacy[12].

Graph 1.2. illustrates the translation of novels in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Since this article focuses mainly on the 1950s, its purpose is to illustrate the fall of Russian and Soviet translations in 1964. What strikes the

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[10] Many works by Balzac, Zola and such authors were translated during this period.

[11] See Sanda Cordoş, *Literatura între revoluție și reacțiune. Problema crizei în literatura română și rusă a secolului XX*, 77-84.

[12] Michael Denning writes: "If Gorky (1868-1936) and the Chinese writer Lu Xun (1881-1936) were to become international communist icons (Gorky's *Mother* [1907] would be a central book in this tradition), this generation would also include Europeans like H. G. Wells (1866-1946), George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Anatole France (1844-1924), Romain Rolland (1866-1944), Martin Anderson Nexo (1869-1954), Pio Baroja and the authors of classic antiwar novels of World War I, Henri Barbusse (1873-1935), and Jaroslav Hasek (1883-1923); North Americans like Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), Upton Sinclair (1878-1968), and Jack London (1876-1916); and South Asians like Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Prem Chand (1880-1936). By the 1920s and 1930s, they were 'the grand old men of socialist literature', the classic 'fellow travelers'. Though several (including France, Dreiser, and Du Bois) were to join the communist party just before their deaths, it is worth emphasizing that the generation of Gorky marked the beginnings of an international literary culture before 1917" (706-707).

most is that European and American novels were translated again in large numbers, even if not as many as the French novel. The downfall of Russian and Soviet literatures can be explained by the less closely monitored market and by the liberalization measures in 1964-1965. It is really interesting that French literature, which had resisted remarkably during socialist realism, gains an authority similar to that of Russian and Soviet literatures in the 1950s. Also, other literatures (German, Italian, English or American) behave similarly to free markets, in which fluctuations are considerable and contextual, and cannot be followed as easily as in the case of rigid state policies.
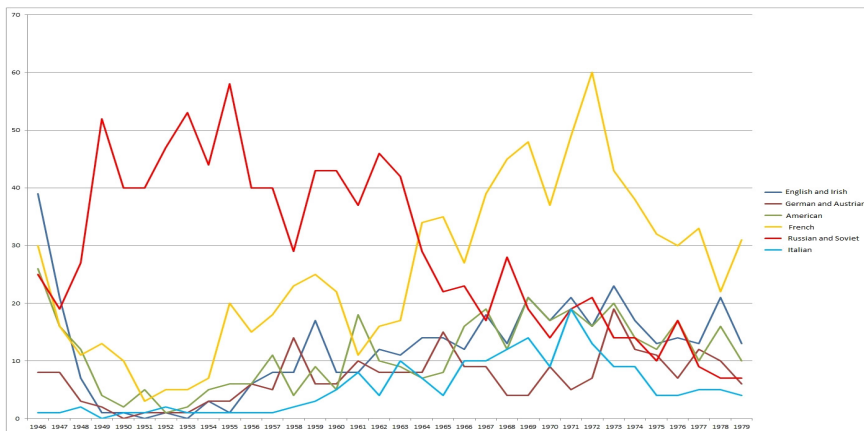
Graph 1.2. Novels translated into Romanian from 1946 to 1970 from main European literatures, American literature, and Russian and Soviet literature.
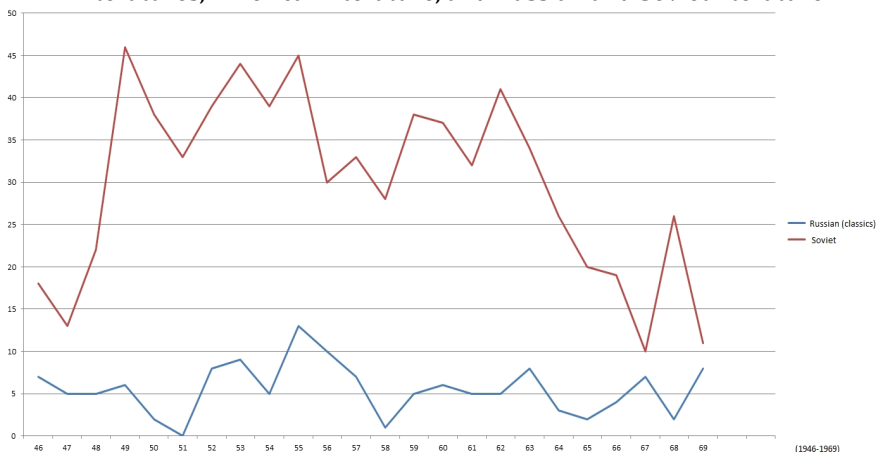
Graph 2.1. The comparative situation of the translation into Romania of the novels by classical Russian authors, such as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Turgenev, and by Soviet Union socialist realist novelists.

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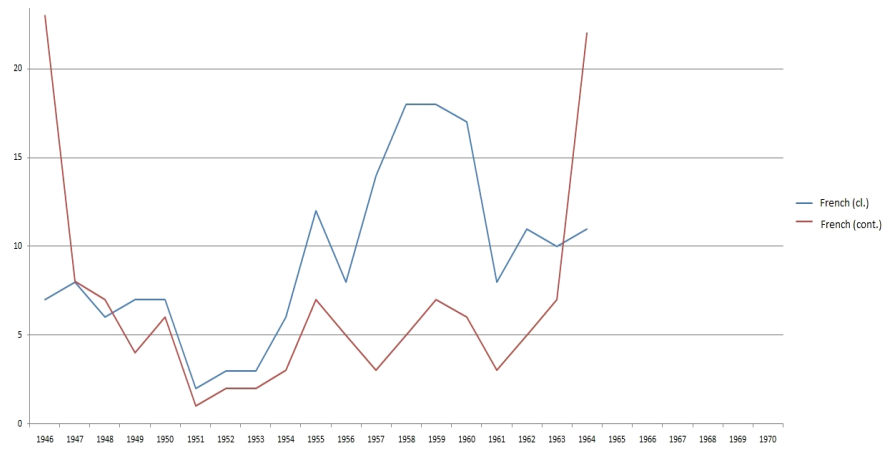
Graph 2.2. The comparative situation of the translation into Romanian during the first communist decades of the novels written by classical French authors and the French novelists of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

The pattern resemblance between the translation into Romanian of French and Russian novels led me to a statistical analysis of the relation between the translation into Romanian of the contemporary Soviet novel and the classical Russian nineteenth-century novelists (and some of the first works by socialist-realism novelists), on the one hand, and the translation into Romanian of the contemporary French novel vs. the French classical realist novel during the nineteenth century, on the other hand. The main purpose of this small auxiliary research was to see whether the authority of the Russian and the French classical novelists increased on the translation market. The data computed in *Graph 2.1.* and *Graph 2.2.* offer more interesting results.

It was already obvious that the field of new Soviet literature would turn out to be the leader in the translations of novels: any author who received the Stalin Award for prose was immediately translated into every language in the Soviet Union. Also, the international project of translation in the Soviet Union was mainly focused on the 'small' cultures inside the union or inside its sphere of influence. Therefore, the number of socialist-realist novels grew more than anyone could have imagined and had an impressive and well-controlled/guaranteed reception in the mainstream reviews. Of course, the articles were written in a standardized language, celebrating without restrain every Soviet entry, but this aspect is beyond the scope of this paper. What interests more is the similarity between forms: the ups and downs of classical Russian novels are the same as those of contemporary Soviet *socialist realism*. This means that the regime tried, by all means, to symbolically merge the epochs.

Some of the authors presented as the *hard center* of the socialist-realism canon[13] (such as Gorky, Sholokhov, and Gladkov) had already been translated into Romanian from 1900 to 1940, more frequently from 1930 to 1940. Other authors considered to be pillars of the canon, such as Furmanov, A. Serafimovich, A. Tolstoy, Ostrovsky, or Fadeev, were only published after 1945, but their novels were constantly republished until 1964. Still, at this point their impact was much bigger: in order to understand the huge difference in reception between the Soviet novels and other novels one must think of a proportion of 100 to 1. The classical nineteenth-century Russian authors entered a more complex translation schema: Dostoyevsky, for example, was not translated or reedited for almost a decade (from 1944 to 1955); although from 1885 to 1944 he was one of the most translated Russian novelists into Romanian. This can be explained by the socialist-realist rejection of the psychological intrigue. Tolstoy's novels, however, were translated and reprinted every year from 1947 to 1964, but they were neither translated nor reprinted from 1934 to 1947. Other important cases are the novels written by authors like Turgenev, Gogol or Goncharov. The only author from the canonical list of socialist-realism writers who had enjoyed such a good reception in Romania before 1945 was Gorky.

The most important result of these statistics is the quantitative representation of a solid program: great efforts were made towards reinforcing the authority of the socialist-realism newcomers by using a generally accepted, valuable legacy. The second result is related to the so-called liberalization of 1964: what is often seen in Romania as a return to the interwar literary values was actually (at least concerning the French influence) a radical update of the local contemporary literary field. The moment when the figures representing translations of French novels exceeded those representing Russian and Soviet translations was actually a result of translating contemporary French authors.

This kind of pattern in novel translation affected Romanian literary scene in rather surprising ways: because of its enhanced status of cultural colony, Romania has always neglected scouting for new literatures in other cultural peripheries. Besides the influential Western cultures, only the neighboring small states were really present in Romania's novel translation programs until the 1950s (*Chart 3.2.*). And this is the paradox of the internationalization of literature generated by the Soviets: while trying to create the image of a global socialist movement in the 1940s and 1950s, they

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[13] I am using the *socialist-realism canon* as theorized by Katerina Clark for the Soviet area. Katerina Clark writes: „However, there is a core group of novels that are cited with sufficient regularity to be considered a canon. These include M Gorky's *Mother* and *Klim Samgin*; D. Furmanov's *Chapaev*; A. Serafimovich's *The Iron Flood*; F. Gladkov's *Cement*; M. Sholokhov's *Quiet Flows the Don* and *Virgin Soil Upturned*; A. Tolstoy's *The Road to Calvary* and *Peter the First*; N. Ostrovsky's *How the Steel Was Tempered*; and A. Fadeev's *The Rout* and *The Young Guard*"(4).

created a field of translations that had no precedents in small or peripheral cultures. Alex Goldiş finds this paradox inside the socialist-realism dogma itself: "The great ambitions of the first period do not manifest only through the desire of a literary exhaustiveness of the new Soviet realities, but also through the ideological monism of every literary work" (34). So the monism of ideology was actually sustaining the diversity of motifs, realities and – this is my thesis – geographical exotics. If the intentions of the regime had been to create the image of a widespread socialism, they resulted in translating South-American novels, Asian novels, or African literature in a country that had manifested no intention of doing this kind of translations before (*Chart 3.1.*).
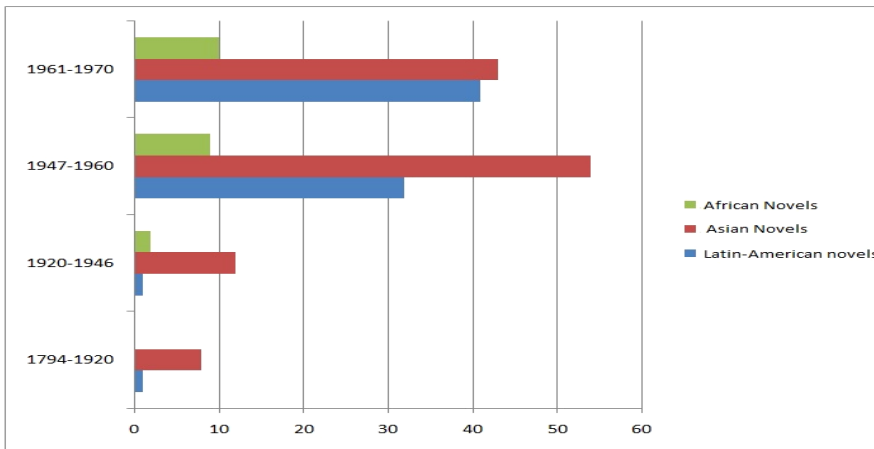
Chart 3.1. Translation of novels from Asian, African and Latin-American cultures from 1794 to 1970.
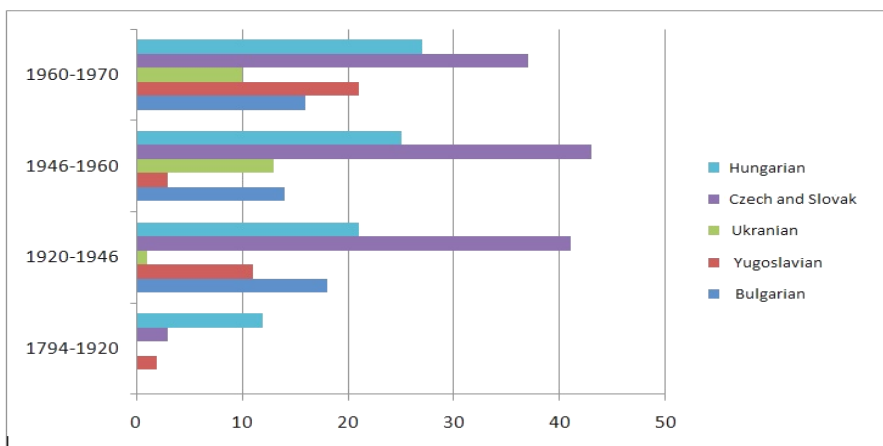
Chart 3.2. Translation of novels from neighboring cultures from 1794 to 1970.

During the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century Asian literature was only present through some Japanese novels (almost 15 for a century and a half) and some prominent figures such as Rabindranath Tagore.[14] During the first decade of Romanian communism over 50 Asian novels were translated. Almost half of them were written by Chinese writers. These texts were often discussed in the national magazines as novels from the Chinese *free world*. The Japanese novels translated into Romanian were authored by authors, such as Sunao Tokunaga or Takakura Teru (the latter being a member of the Japanese Communist Party Committee). This new behavior generated strong debates in 1956 when, at the First Congress of the Writers' Union in the People's Republic of Romania, the debaters desperately tried to prove the multicultural (even the exotic opening) dimensions of Romanian communism.

As concerns Latin-American writers, their novels were translated after 1954. One exception was Jorge Amado, one of the most published authors of the 1950s in the People's Republic of Romania and a representative of the Brazilian Communist Party. His novels were translated as soon as they came out from 1948 to 1957, even though the author left the Party in 1954. Around 30 novels of Latin-American origin were translated into Romanian from 1947 to 1960, which is, of course, astonishing, even beyond the unorthodox political reasons. A very interesting aspect is that those South-American translations were made even before the Latin-American international literary *boom* of the 1960s.

In conclusion, I believe that the Romanian socialist-realism is far from being a closed case. I consider the subject crucial not only for the understanding of local literary developments during the post-war decades, but also for understanding a larger ideological construct that reshaped Eastern European minor cultures and had a considerable impact on their further literary trajectories. If during the interwar period the Romanian culture was flourishing and developing literary tendencies akin to the modernist (mainly) European trends, the post-war period completely changed the direction of this development. However, the panoramic view of the period as offered by the quantitative approach offers surprising results. First of all, although many contemporary socialist realist writers were translated, the core of the cannon consisted of strong novels (widely acclaimed in the Western world as well, such as those by Gorky or Sholokhov). Secondly, the entire translation process undermined the economic and the ideological characteristics of the Romanian society (the lack of free market and the censorship of Western discourses) through its main side-effect – that of putting a small self colonizing culture in front of an international index of authors and cultures.

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[14] Tagore won the Nobel Prize in 1913. One of his novels was translated and published in Romania, in 1924.

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A CONTRE-POIL. UN'ALTRA LETTURA DI FRANCO MORETTI (E QUALCHE DETTAGLIO PER UNA STORIA DELLA POESIA ROMENA)

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ABSTRACT. A contre-poil. *A Different Reading of Franco Moretti (and some Details for a History of Romanian Poetry).* Starting from a close reading of the Italian version of an essay from Franco Moretti's (Italian) youth (titled *L'anima e l'arpia* and first published in Italian, 1982), the author plays with the concept of „unbearable inactuality" (as defined there by Moretti himself), applying it first to the very essay of Franco Moretti, and then – to the history of Romanian modern poetry (the period in which Mihai Eminescu also wrote). It is an argument for a "slow literary history", a "boring" one (the concepts belong, again, to Moretti), as this model could substantiate – in a kind of reverse action, *a contre-poil*, as the French could put it – the very claim to aesthetic superiority of the work of Eminescu, the Romanian national poet.

Keywords: *boring literary history, unbearable inactuality, Franco Moretti, Mihai Eminescu, Romanian modern poetry.*

REZUMAT. *A contre-poil. Un altfel de lectură a lui Franco Moretti (și cîteva detalii pentru o istorie a poeziei românești)*. Plecînd de la microlectura versiunii italiene a unui eseu „de tinerețe" al lui Franco Moretti (*L'anima e l'arpia*, apărut inițial în 1982), autoarea exersează, în cheie ludică, conceptul de „inactualitate insuportabilă" (definit de Moretti) asupra scrierilor lui Moretti însuși, respectiv asupra poeziei românești moderne, din perioada lui Mihai Eminescu, pledînd pentru o „istorie literară lentă" și „plicticoasă" a epocii (conceptele îi aparțin, din nou, lui Moretti), care să substanțieze, printr-o reacție inversă (*a contre-poil*, în termeni francezi), tocmai pretenția de superioritate a poetului național român.

Cuvinte cheie: istorie literară plicticoasă, inactualitate insuportabilă, Franco Moretti, Mihai Eminescu, poezie românească modernă.

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> Form is power.
> (Hobbes, *Leviathan*)

> Ignorance is bliss. ...I don't think I can stand so much bliss.
> (*Calvin and Hobbes*)

Moretti, insopportabilmente inattuale?

Sono senza dubbio una lettrice avida e assidua degli studi che fanno, da più di due decenni, la fama del grande teorico di letteratura Franco Moretti. La loro attualità mi sembra evidente e incontestabile.

Però io faccio lo storico letterario (di mestiere) e, da buona lettrice di Franco Moretti (nello stile della moglie di Archie Bunker, "*a reader of sublime simplicity*", per usare l'espressione di Paul de Man, chi l'ha resa famosa "*this side of the moon...*"), non posso dimenticare che dobbiamo proprio a lui l'insegnamento secondo il quale lo storico letterario deve cercare "questa insopportabile *inattualità* del suo materiale"[2] (di studio). Il brano recita esattamente così: "(Ma) il compito dello storico della cultura ...lo impegna piuttosto ad affrontare le convenzioni generalizzate, i grandi accordi ideologici con cui ogni epoca storica si distingue dalle altre?...". E' un'esortazione che nasconde, già, una negazione. Essendo io la lettrice "*of sublime simplicity*", come potrei non ubbidirgli, fino alla fine della frase, fino alla fine della lettura, fino alla fine dell'interpretazione che, lontana dal testo, ma vicina al sacro (della teoria letteraria) posso offrirle? "...Ma è proprio di questa insopportabile *inattualità* del suo materiale che lo storico deve andare in cerca". E allora, quello che provo a fare attraverso questo esercizio di ammirazione (teorica e letteraria, nonché storica e culturale) è di (ri)leggere il Moretti precedente al "grande Moretti", quello che avevo letto con grande compiacimento in gioventù, quello che ho in mente, molto vivo e molto attuale, ogni qual volta mi confronti con un problema specifico della storia letteraria romena, quello che ho scoperto da sola, tanti anni fa, nella biblioteca privata della mia nuova (a quel tempo) amica

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[2] Franco Moretti, *L'anima e l'arpia. Riflessioni sugli scopi e i metodi della storiografia letteraria*, in Id., *Segni e stili del moderno*, Torino, Einaudi, 1987, p. 18. Tutte le nostre citazioni si riferiscono a quest'edizione, italiana, del testo di Moretti, ad eccezione delle situazioni esplicitamente indicate. La versione italiana dello studio fu pubblicata, secondo le dichiarazioni dell'autore (nei paratesti delle edizioni inglesi), per la prima volta nel 1982, in "Quaderni piacentini". La prima edizione in volume è datata 1983 (Londra, Verso) ed è realizzata in lingua inglese. Questo *va e vieni* dell'autore tra l'italiano e l'inglese, tra la consacrazione mondiale e la consacrazione in patria (quest'ultima successiva, attraverso l'edizione Einaudi) ha un aria "coloniale" affascinante. L'ultima edizione anglo-americana dello studio è accessibile anche su http://www.amazon.com/Signs-Taken-Wonders-Sociology-Literary/dp/0860919064/ref=la_B001JSE7ZQ_1_5/182-2389838-4281218?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1451734108&sr=1-5#reader_0860919064 (consultata l'ultima volta il 2 gennaio 2016 13h33).

italiana, la quale si specializzava, come me, nello studio della letteratura romena, presso l'Università "La Sapienza" di Roma. Era, quello, un Franco Moretti pubblicato dal grande editore italiano Einaudi, in una prestigiosa collana di saggistica. Suo fratello, il regista, era già più celebre di lui, e quelli come me sentivano, più che esprimerla, una crisi dei metodi nella storia letteraria romena in rapporto con 1. il proprio oggetto (canonico), così come con 2. un altro oggetto della stessa storia, però nascosto, innominato (perché non-canonico).

Nel frattempo, tutti i sintomi sono diventati più evidenti: la storia della letteratura romena (in crisi) ha ingaggiato battaglie canoniche, revisioni e giochi di potere in campo letterario (politico…) le cui vittorie (incerte, come ogni vittoria su un fronte di guerra) ciascun partecipante attribuiva a se stesso, mentre la riflessione teorica su tale realtà iniziava a coagularsi in saggi e volumi. Discrete sotto l'aspetto della novità concettuale, le rispettive concretizzazioni sono diventate visibili nella misura in cui hanno beneficiato (oppure no) di un buon meccanismo di promozione, ovvero di una posizione di favore sul campo di battaglia cui accennavo più su. E questo è sufficiente a chiudere il cerchio. D'altro canto, oggi mi sarebbe difficile affermare quale dei fratelli Moretti sia più celebre. Anche gli studenti mediocri hanno imparato a citare Franco (senza leggerlo) e invocare Nanni (senza vederlo). La popolarità del riferimento bibliografico è, ai nostri tempi, un segno chiaro di celebrità. Tuttavia, la capacità di Moretti (Franco) di indicare e nominare i nodi concettuali del campo letterario è unanimemente riconosciuta, incontestabile e consacrata.

Se la sua ascesa, durante i decenni trascorsi dalla mia prima lettura, italiana, dei suoi saggi, mi è sembrata legittima, recenti ricerche venivano a contraddire in modo clamoroso la mia opinione rispetto allo "spazio culturale di consacrazione". Quello che io avevo scoperto nei testi del giovane (a quel tempo) Moretti, è diventato, in maniera implicita, inattuale: la carriera americana del professore di letteratura e studi culturali sembra essere, in tutte le fonti biobibliografiche accessibili on-line, l'inizio di tutto, come se Moretti non fosse esistito (non avesse scritto, non avesse insegnato…) prima di arrivare (dalla sua Italia nativa e meridionale) alla Columbia University – per passare, poi, alla Stanford University. Nella versione della sua biografia offerta da Wikipedia (che presumo lui accetti - il mio pregiudizio fondandosi sulla convinzione che gli intellettuali di sinistra credono più facilmente alle wikipedie del mondo virtuale), il periodo italiano è evocato soltanto da una frase ("*Moretti earned his doctorate in modern literature from the University of Rome in 1972, graduating summa cum laude.*"[3]) e con un solo titolo (*Il Romanzo*, l'enciclopedia che è stato il suo primo successo mondiale), quest'ultimo seguito immediatamente dal riferimento alla versione tradotta in inglese. Nessun titolo tra quelli pubblicati in Italia "*before*

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[3] V. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco_Moretti (consultato il 2 gennaio 2016, 16h10).

coming to Columbia". Nessun riferimento critico a qualcosa pubblicato prima del 2005. Nella versione bibliografica della Standford University (che sospetto essere quella ufficiale, trattandosi della pagina web del professor Moretti), ovviamente, è solo il presente a contare ("*Danily C. and Laura Louise Bell Professor and Professor of Comparative Literature and, by courtesy, of German Studies*"), trattandosi di impegno contrattuale (*note to self*: la storia letteraria si costruisce al di là delle consacrazioni contrattuali, però, chissà quanto dipendono le sue gerarchie di valori dai contratti – oppure dai contatti? – extraletterari? e, ancora, "la noiosa storia letteraria", di cui scriveva il giovane Moretti, è costretta a tornare ai contratti nelle sfere più basse del valore letterario? problema sul quale bisognerà, prima o poi, ritornare.)

Torno però ora ad una delle esortazioni con cui ho aperto queste pagine: "ma è proprio di questa insopportabile *inattualità* del suo materiale che lo storico deve andare in cerca". Insopportabile, in quanto inspiegabile, è questa inattualità, implicita, dei suoi volumi italiani. Quando pubblicava presso Einaudi il volume da cui sto citando, Moretti aveva già 37 anni – e non era affatto un anonimo, altrimenti non avrebbe suscitato l'interesse di un editore così prestigioso ed esigente. Moretti fu consacrato nel momento in cui fu accolto dagli anglo-americani, con la prima edizione, nel 1983, di questo volume (Londra, Edizioni Verso), la quale includeva anche studi pubblicati precedentemente in italiano, su alcuni periodici. Questo rapido passaggio sul periodo italiano della sua formazione e consacrazione merita, come qualsiasi inattualità, come qualsiasi movimento (lento) su un argomento (noioso?) di storia letteraria, tutta l'attenzione. Soprattutto quando essa è confermata da situazioni nelle quali la volontà dell'autore è decisiva. Per esempio, nella biografia che Moretti stesso mette *on-line* su un sito al quale collabora e dove cerca, in modo elegante e abile, di stemperare l'imponente prestigio accademico: si tratta di *Shmoop* ("*we speak student…*"), a www.shmoop.com[4]. Qui, tutto quello che fu prima di "*my first gig at Columbia University*" si riduce alla seguente spiegazione: "*Because I'm still alive, you're not going to find a bunch of biographical information about me floating around. Plus, I'm busy talking about my work, not myself. But here's what I will tell you: I got my Ph.D. from the University of Rome. I know it's not Harvard, but look how much that mattered.*" Ironia voluta o no, Moretti non parla neppure qui di tutta la sua opera ("*my work*"), cioè, non parla della sua opera e del modo in cui fu accolta in Italia. Tutto questo si traduce, praticamente, in una sottile costruzione di sé, nell'assumere una postura (nel campo accademico americano, per lo meno, al quale si rivolge il sito in questione). Secondo questa logica, "*he is oh so busy talking about himself, allright*". Se, nei riguardi del suo PhD italiano, il riferimento ha

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[4] http://www.shmoop.com/franco-moretti/bio.html (consultato il 2 gennaio 2016, 16h31).

qualcosa della studiata negligenza di una postura elegante[5], il silenzio sugli scritti italiani, come quello sul modo in cui è stato accolto nella propria patria è, di nuovo, sorprendente. Soprattutto se si tiene conto del fatto che la soluzione ironica di un eventuale "*I know it's not Harvard, but look how much that mattered*" era a portata di mano. La lettrice "*of sublime simplicity*" rintraccia qui i segni di un'inattualità – di una caduta nell'inattualità – che chiede di essere rivista come tale. Tracce cancellate? Vaghe fumosità sopra limpide linee (contrattuali)? Non è forse questa una rappresentazione emblematica del divenire storico dell'oggetto della nostra lettura "specializzata"? Non dobbiamo, per caso, essere attenti a questo, se vogliamo veramente leggere? Secondo lo stesso grande Moretti, non ci è consentito fermarci agli episodi interessanti (perché attuali) della storia letteraria; anzi: l'inattualità stessa è quella che crea l'attrattività di un episodio, perché – se la consacrazione è, implicitamente, sopportabile – essa, l'inattualità, è insopportabile. L'esempio di Moretti è molto eloquente: "E poi – per inciso – se tutti dovessero comportarsi come il critico letterario, che studia solo ciò che «gli piace», perché mai i medici non dovrebbero limitarsi a studiare i corpi sani e gli economisti le condizioni di vita dei benestanti?"[6].

La sua esortazione è tanto più valida in quanto nasce da una situazione presente nell'ambito della letteratura comparata europea, erede di un modello specifico di scrivere/di fare storia letteraria, come storia del canone letterario (assunto come… astorico). Franco Moretti qualifica questa realtà, implicitamente, come "malsana", in quanto condurrebbe ad una prospettiva per definizione incompleta – quindi vulnerabile – rispetto all'oggetto stesso. E rielabora la rispettiva "*(mis)conception of the literary object*", in questo saggio di (soltanto) una trentina di pagine (con un'intuizione fondamentale che dice molto sull'*insight* concettuale dell'autore e sulla sua capacità di sintesi culturale), sui fondamenti del discorso vetero-cristiano europeo. Egli denuncia, in altre parole, i limiti storico-geografici di questo discorso. Retrospettivamente, oggi, posso dire che l'anticipazione del teorico di geografia letteraria nel suo saggio giovanile era grandiosa – piena di novità, sintetizzata in poche frasi, con l'aria di trarre delle conclusioni su qualcosa che (forse se al lettore può sfuggire) è tuttavia già ben presente all'autore/teorico. Riferendosi al luogo comune "dell'attualità" dello scrittore o dell'opera del canone letterario (una vera ossessione delle storie letterarie europee), egli lo descrive, senza esitare, così: "è un rapporto con i testi

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[5] Wikipedia gli atribuisce l'ottenimento del titolo PhD presso l'Università "La Sapienza" di Roma nel 1972, cioè all'età di 22 anni. Questo può voler dire o che Moretti è uno dei più giovani dottori in Lettere d'Europa, o che Wikipedia omologa in modo veloce – con l'accordo dell'autore su Shmoop – l'ottenimento del titolo "laureato" in Lettere con il PhD in "British style" (in realtà, nell'università italiana del dopoguerra, nel vecchio sistema di Educazione, i laureati erano considerati "dottori", in quanto scrivevano una tesi di laurea e… basta).

[6] Franco Moretti, op. cit., p. 18.

che ha le sue lontane radici nell'allegoresi greca, e soprattutto cristiana, e si fonda sulla credenza, per quando oramai banalizzata e inconsapevole, che nel passato esistano messaggi che non solo ci riguardano, ma in un certo senso furono scritti proprio e solo per noi; il cui significato si paleserà appieno solo alla luce della nostra esegesi. Superstizione gradevole e utilissima alla vita, ma che appunto per questo riguarda lo studioso della mentalità contemporanea – non lo storico. Il quale (…) deve concentrarsi sulle discontinuità e le fratture: su quel che s'è perduto ed è diventato irrimediabilmente estraneo, e che possiamo render di nuovo «familiare» solo usandogli una tale violenza da deformare quella consistenza oggettiva, materiale di ogni opera che è invece compito della conoscenza storica ricostruire e «salvare»"[7]. Ciò che il giovane (a quel tempo) teorico italiano esponeva al nostro sguardo annebbiato da pregiudizi eurocentrici, era l'incompatibilità ideologica (se non addirittura epistemologica – forse, non ancora, almeno non negli studi degli anni '80 di Moretti…) tra la prospettiva culturale cristiana (eurocentrica) e un nuovo discorso della storiografia letteraria (transcontinentale, globale, postcoloniale ecc.). Oppure, magari, rilette oggi, dopo tanti decenni (e tante crisi delle discipline letterarie, e tante possibili soluzioni a queste crisi…), queste saranno le idee più sorprendenti di quel saggio?

Eminescu prima di Eminescu. E i suoi contemporanei

Il saggio smonta, con un'ammirabile acribia e con sicurezza concettuale del medesimo calibro, uno dopo l'altro, alcuni dei principali luoghi comuni che affliggono la storiografia letteraria europea. Quello ricordato in precedenza, sull'"attualità del grande scrittore classico" è soltanto uno di essi. Ero compiaciuta, allora, di leggerne la decostruzione perché provavo, al pari dell'autore del saggio, la frustrazione delle crisi metodologiche del settore (ovviamente, senza avere come lui la capacità di dare loro un nome ed una diagnosi tanto precisi). Era forse questo il motivo della mia felice scoperta[8]? Oppure era il fatto che essi mi facevano comprendere più chiaramente come dovrebbe essere affrontato uno degli argomenti più studiati e allo stesso tempo più "delicati" della storia letteraria

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[7] Ibidem, pp. 17-18.

[8] La gioia di allora la conservo in modo indelebile, addirittura nella mia memoria affettiva: mi ricordo la luce di quel mezzogiorno afoso nella stanza (in Italia, vicino a Roma, sulle rive del Tevere…), l'odore del gelsomino sulla terrazza, le fusa arroganti dei gatti di guardia e l'entusiasmo delle frasi ellittiche con le quali interpellavo la mia amica: „Chi è l'autore? Lo conosci? E' diventato nel frattempo professore da voi? Posso andare ai suoi corsi?". E lei, sibilla saggia: „No, cara, è andato alla Columbia University. Mi sa che è diventato famoso là". Columbia, un altro pianeta. Sono rimasta in biblioteca, dove avrei potuto andare? Però sono rimasta, felice, con il libro in mano. Io venivo da un mondo nel quale la disponibilità dei libri era, già, un motivo di felicità ed una libertà.

romena. Quello del poeta nazionale, con tutti i suoi derivati ("l'attualità di Eminescu" e la "mitizzazione di Eminescu", "l'astoricità del canone" e "le revisioni dei valori nazionali" ecc., ecc.), che aspettava sul mio tavolo di essere affrontato. Per il lettore romeno o, in modo particolare, per lo storico della letteratura romena, egli definisce in anticipo il cliché della ricezione di Mihai Eminescu, nella sua posterità manipolatrice, così come nella maggior parte delle storie letterarie nazionali, che hanno costruito le narrazioni principali basandosi su questi luoghi comuni. La prospettiva innovatrice di Franco Moretti mi aiutava a distinguere i due assi sui quali la storiografia letteraria romena incontrava (e perpetuava) le disfunzionalità essenziali, in grado di metterla in crisi e di influenzare anche la ricezione dello scrittore in questione (Eminescu – un grande scrittore, al di là dell'attributo "nazionale" con cui fu incoronato fra i posteri). Da un lato, si trattava di focalizzare (inutilmente) l'attenzione esclusivamente sui capolavori letterari, ignorandone la contemporaneità e, in generale, i contesti di consacrazione. D'altro canto, Moretti rivelava le radici di una partigianeria ideologica che fungeva da pregiudizio iniziale, dal punto di vista storico precedente persino alla costituzione del discorso storiografico. Nessuno dei due assi era – *horribile dictu!* – specificatamente romeno, però ciascuno di essi, per ragioni di contesto storico, politico e culturale, aveva trovato nella cultura romena un suolo propizio per svilupparsi. I frutti possono essere ammirati, del resto, fino ai giorni nostri. Dal punto di vista sociologico, i discorsi che continuano, qui da noi, la loro propagazione, sono quelli che tengono campo nei centri di potere.

Altrettanto meritoria, come visione d'insieme che gli permetteva di denunciare le disfunzionalità del modo in cui si scrive la storia della letteratura europea, nell'ambito del saggio del 1982, era anche la capacità di Franco Moretti di denunciare i grandi discorsi letterari, storiografici, metodologici. Nell'insieme, quello che Moretti dimostrava in queste pagine, erano le sue capacità di essere quello che „*names the pain*". Per quanto riguarda poi i dettagli metodologici dei quali io, allora giovane storica letteraria, avevo bisogno per dare alle cose la dovuta consistenza concettuale, farò ricorso a un solo esempio concreto, estratto da tutto ciò che Moretti proponeva. Scelgo questo perché, forse, è quello al quale mi sono avvicinata meno, fra tutto ciò che ho scritto, finora, sul ruolo giocato dall'opera di Eminescu nella storia della letteratura romena ed europea[9]. Tuttavia, nei corsi che ho tenuto, ho avuto l'opportunità di osservare che – affrontata in tal modo – è una tematica in grado di generare molte reazioni di sorpresa negli

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[9] E il quale si sarebbe concretizzato, per quanto mi riguardava, in studi su argomenti correlati, inclusi nei volumi Ioana Bot (ed.), *Mihai Eminescu, poet naţional român. Istoria şi anatomia unui mit cultural* (Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001), Ioana Bot, *Histoires littéraires* (CST, Cluj-Napoca, 2003), Ioana Bot, Adrian Tudurachi (eds.), *Identité nationale* (ICR, Bucureşti, 2008), Ioana Bot, *Eminescu explicat fratelui meu* (Bucureşti, Art, 2012).

studenti di Lettere. Come se agli occhi dei miei studenti troppo assuefatti alla lettura di Eminescu, si svelasse un intero continente sconosciuto, la cui esistenza non era nemmeno lontanamente sospettata. Si tratta del panorama "della letteratura normale" del tempo di Eminescu. Il concetto di "letteratura normale", opposto a quello di capolavoro/alta letteratura/canone letterario, è difeso da Franco Moretti perché, osserva l'autore, "non ha nessuna cittadinanza nella critica"[10]. Come principio, notiamo il ripetersi del medesimo postulato, secondo il quale ciò che è (è diventato) inattuale è "insopportabile", non può rimanere in questa posizione: il ruolo del commentatore/lettore/esegeta è di ristabilire un equilibrio nel binomio "convenzione-innovazione", dove la convenzione significa "normalità", cioè "l'accettazione unanime di un codice", e non l'esclusiva sopravvalutazione del termine innovatore. Il giudizio è, alla fine, molto semplice, e recita così: "Proprio se si vuol mantenere la coppia convenzione-innovazione, e attribuire a quest'ultima tutto il peso storico e formale che le spetta, bisogna prendere atto che il primo termine del binomio non è ancora divenuto, per la critica letteraria, un «oggetto di conoscenza» in senso proprio. L'idea di «letteratura normale» (…) non ha nessuna cittadinanza nella critica. E questo fa sì che, oggi come oggi, la nostra conoscenza della storia letteraria ricorda molto, ma molto da vicino le carte geografiche dell'Africa di un secolo e mezzo fa: si conoscono le frange costiere, ma si ignora un intero continente. (…) ogni volta che ho studiato I generi «bassi» (…) ho sempre finito col trovare dei significati nient'affatto «previdibili» o «banali»: molto spesso, per la verità, diversi o anche opposti da quello che in genere si ritiene a uno primo sguardo"[11].

Nel campo della poesia romena del XIX secolo, dalla quale Eminescu si distacca con un'energia capace di creare interi universi lirici nuovi, una tale posizione porta a (ri)scoprire il contesto contemporaneo di Eminescu, che nessuno ha più letto dopo il 1900 (e persino gli storici letterari lo oltrepassano a una velocità tale da impedire di scorgerne il panorama) a causa di Eminescu. Ma senza il quale, tuttavia, la dimensione dell'innovazione attribuita ad Eminescu non può essere apprezzata, rimanendo addirittura impercettibile o impossibile da spiegare. Nonostante Eminescu sia radicalmente diverso dai suoi contemporanei, non può certo essere definito un "extraterrestre". Se il suo successo ed i cambiamenti introdotti nella scrittura, come pure la sua profonda comprensione del poetico, sono epocali, essi sono il risultato del distacco da quel contesto. Alcuni recenti deliri mitizzanti che attribuiscono al poeta nazionale romeno origini inverosimili (extraterrestri, extragalattici ecc.), mi sembra che si possano spiegare solo come riduzioni all'assurdo, dovute ad una interpretazione letterale di una situazione disfunzionale della narrazione imperante della storia della

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[10] Franco Moretti, op. cit., p 18.
[11] Ibidem, pp. 18-19.

letteratura romena. Quella narrazione che istituisce la poesia di Eminescu come valore assoluto, senza più tenere conto dell'orizzonte "noioso" dal quale si era separata. Leggere e commentare questo orizzonte complessivo significa scrivere la storia letteraria "completa" (anche questo, tuttavia, è un mito, in quanto nessuna storia può mai essere considerata completa, soltanto più verosimile delle altre…) della poesia romena di due secoli fa.

Ignorare i contemporanei di Eminescu significa scrivere una storia "tanto per scriverla", con il rischio di non vedere (cioè di non essere in grado di spiegare) il fenomeno Eminescu, perché non è messo in rapporto con alcunché. Scrivere la storia dei contemporanei di Eminescu (Theodor Şerbănescu, Matilda Cugler, Samson Bodnărescu, Vasile Pogor, Nicolae Scheletti – per nominare solo alcuni dei tanti le cui opere sono divenute oggi, anche per gli specialisti, non leggibili e non citabili) significa, naturalmente, rallentare il processo di "canonizzazione" del più grande poeta. Ma significa anche cercare di capire perché un poeta con una biografia intellettuale e con opzioni tematiche molto simili a quelle di Eminescu, come Samson Bodnărescu (per citare un esempio), non è contenuto nel canone della poesia romena moderna. Significa, per usare i termini di Moretti, scrivere una storia letteraria "lenta", "una storia letteraria più lenta e più discontinua…", in quanto "in ogni epoca coesistono infatti forme simboliche diverse e persino in conflitto fra loro, e dotate ognuna di una diffusione e di una durata storica differente. La storiografia letteraria deve proporsi di rappresentare il proprio oggetto come una sorta di campo magnetico, il cui equilibrio o squilibrio complessivo non è che la risultante delle singole forze attive al suo interno…"[12].

Di fatto, ciò che mi insegnava questo saggio del giovane Moretti, più di 15 anni fa, era apprezzare il valore della lentezza nella storia letteraria. Mi esortava a ripensare non tanto i motivi per i quali, alla fine del XIX secolo, la consacrazione di Eminescu, come "valore assoluto della poesia", fosse avvenuta così rapidamente, ma piuttosto quali fossero le conseguenze di questa rapidità nella costruzione del discorso di integrazione della storia letteraria romena. Mi spingeva a vedere meglio le crepe, i difetti, gli intoppi ed a comprendere da dove ripartire per riscriverlo: dal trasformare "l'insopportabile inattualità" dei poeti contemporanei di Eminescu in un oggetto letterario "sopportabile", cioè – studiabile. Perché le forme (le forme poetiche, le forme letterarie, le forme del discorso) si muovono lentamente.

Oppure come un giovane letterato (romeno) avrebbe potuto leggere il giovane Moretti, in un'altra vita. *A contre-poil*.

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[12] Ibidem, p. 20.

CANONICAL ADVENTURES OF A POPULAR GENRE. AESTHETIC REVISITING OF MELODRAMA WITH O. PAMUK AND J. BARNES

OANA FOTACHE[1]

ABSTRACT. *Canonical Adventures of a Popular Genre. Aesthetic Revisiting of Melodrama with O. Pamuk and J. Barnes.* This paper analyzes the reframing of a popular genre, melodrama, in the novels of two already canonical postmodernist writers: Orhan Pamuk and Julian Barnes. Their quite recent novels, *The Museum of Innocence* (2008) and, respectively, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) draw on the features and techniques of melodrama (the use of love triangles, suspense, the trespassing of social boundaries and norms, etc.), while at the same time employing refined intertextual readings of Flaubert and Proust. Thus melodrama proves its dynamism and metamorphic qualities by transgressing the borders of genre and medium, as well as the division between "high" and "low" culture.

Keywords: melodrama, canon, literary history, genre, popular, aesthetic, Orhan Pamuk, Julian Barnes

REZUMAT. *Aventurile canonice ale unui gen popular. Valorizări estetice ale melodramei la O. Pamuk şi J. Barnes.* Articolul urmăreşte reinterpretarea unui gen popular, melodrama, în romanele a doi scriitori postmodernişti din canonul literaturii universale: Orhan Pamuk şi Julian Barnes. Romanele acestora publicate recent, *The Museum of Innocence* (2008) şi, respectiv, *The Sense of an Ending* (2011) valorifică trăsăturile şi tehnicile specifice melodramei (triunghiul amoros, suspense-ul, depăşirea graniţelor şi încălcarea normelor sociale etc.), propunând totodată lecturi intertextuale rafinate din Flaubert, Proust ş.a. Astfel, melodrama îşi demonstrează dinamismul şi calităţile proteice, depăşind frontierele genului şi mediului, ca şi diviziunea dintre cultura de elită şi cea populară.

Cuvinte cheie: melodramă, canon, istorie literară, gen, popular, estetic, Orhan Pamuk, Julian Barnes

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During the '60s, with the advance of the structuralist theory of literature and its accent on immanent textuality, the historical interest, although marginal, was not at all absent from literary studies. In his groundbreaking and deeply polemical *Sur Racine,* Roland Barthes includes a reflection on the life of literary forms and on the possibility of a literary history that would not be simply and exclusively *historical* or *literary*. Barthes's approach derives from the theories of the Russian formalist school, particularly Yuri Tynyanov's, with regard to the issue of literature's historicity as a system of relationships among various series (literary, social, historical, etc.).

In his article *The Constructive Factor* (1924), Tynyanov deconstructs the prejudice that this principle at work within literature is a static one. The Russian theorist criticizes, as early as 1924, the view on the literary hero as a static construct and proposes alternatively that "the form of a literary work [must] be realized as a dynamic form" (in Pop 512). The more so this dynamism is actively functioning in the case of the literary series as a whole. In another much quoted study, "On Literary Evolution" (1929), Tynyanov advocates for a vision of literature as a system and for a corresponding approach on literary genres. This dynamic perspective on literary history will be continued and "materialized" by the Italian-American theorist Franco Moretti in many of his books: *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1983), *The Way of the World* (1987), *Modern Epic* (1995), *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800–1900* (1998), and others. For instance, in *The Way of the World. The* Bildungsroman *in European Culture,* Moretti analyzes the trajectory of this "symbolic form" of modernity since Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1795-6), and explains its success by the strong connection it establishes between the values of youth and those of modernity. Originally a "weak form" in its context of emergence, the *Bildungsroman* paved the way for many other narrative forms and survived in new guises due to its "vocation to compromise", as Moretti argues (Moretti *The Way of the World* 152).

The following pages propose an exercise in analyzing the dynamism of another popular form by excellence, *melodrama*, in postmodern times. When considered from the traditionalist-canonical perspective, melodrama is also a "weak form" that seemingly appeals to a not-too-refined public taste. Its heavy insistence on excessive passion, suspense, lack of verisimilitude, unrealistic violation of social norms, and the like, makes it hardly appropriate for (and resistant to) an aesthetic revaluing. Yet melodrama proves its metamorphic qualities by transgressing the borders of genre and medium, as well as the division between "high" and "low" culture.

In an important study of *The Melodramatic Imagination* published in 1976, Peter Brooks discusses the avatars of the genre with such canonical writers as Honoré de Balzac and Henry James. Brooks begins his theoretical

narrative by pointing towards issues of meaning and interpretation: definitions, the revisiting of the genre's history and melodrama's structural analysis are postponed as they seem to fall under this impulse (staged by the narrative voice) to fully grasp and interpret "the facts". Let me quote from the first page of Brooks's study:

> The gestures of life call forth a series of interrogations aimed at discovering the meanings implicit in them. The narrative voice is not content to describe and record gesture, to see it simply as a figure of interplay of persons one with another. [...] we can observe the narrator *pressuring the surface of reality (the surface of his text) in order to make it yield the full, true terms of his story*. (Brooks 1-2; *italics mine*)

This vision reconsiders the relationship that melodrama entertains with realism. Far from contradicting a realistic depiction of "the story", the melodramatic primarily attaches to a deep, pathetic understanding of life beyond its aesthetic guises.

The rise of the melodramatic genre owes a lot to the new aesthetic categories that came to prominence during the Enlightenment and then the Romantic Age: the value attached to sentiment and sensibility, the interesting as a literary topic, the sublime paired with the everyday setting of the story, and consequently the middle style that is called forth to join the high and the low and thus render the modern dehierarchization of society (see also Robert Doran, "Literary History and the Sublime in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*", 2007). This literary-historical (and by all means social) context favored the development of a genre (or mode, according to some theorists), that appeals to a wider readership than the classical forms used to attract. This popular penchant explains both the critical controversies around the canonical status of melodrama, and the success and capacity to reinvent itself proved by the genre in its relatively short but intense history.

Let me summarize the features that any poetics of this genre in its "original" form (that is, 19th century drama) might include: "strong emotionalism; moral polarization and schematization; extreme states of being, situations, actions; overt villainy, persecution of the good, and final reward of virtue; inflated and extravagant expression; dark plottings, suspense..." (Brooks 11-12). Or, according to Michael Booth (in his *English Melodrama*, 1965): a combination of clarity, optimism, rapid succession of events, a concentration on plot, an emphasis on the negative character, distribution of narrative roles by stereotypical patterns. Ben Singer (*Melodrama and Modernity,* 2001) groups together five characteristics that form a "cluster concept": pathos, overwrought emotion, moral polarization, nonclassical narrative structure, and sensationalism. Many

other theories of melodrama draw on a combination of these features. All these aspects of the theatrical melodrama were later accommodated by realism in literature (Balzac, Dickens…), and later on, by several genres of film and especially television, and we are still witnessing this spectacular development.

Considering the genre's insistence on ethical issues, melodrama was relegated by Brooks and other theorists to a prestigious ancestry that includes myth and tragedy. That is because all of these genres (or again, modes) employ their specific devices and particular ethos to the end of restoring moral order and providing a cure for human suffering. Whether melodrama is an artistic mode that stands beside tragedy, comedy and farce (as Robert Heilman suggests, in his *Tragedy and Melodrama,* 1968) or an inheritor of classical tragedy concerns me less in the present context. What I am interested in is the potential that this apparently schematic and popular form holds for aesthetic appropriation and integration in the "high" literary canon.

Let us analyze the reframing of this originally popular genre in the recent novels of two already canonical postmodernist writers: Orhan Pamuk (*The Museum of Innocence,* 2008) and Julian Barnes (*The Sense of an Ending,* 2011). Alongside Jonathan Coe's *House of Sleep* (2008), Ian McEwan's *The Children* Act (2014), and many others at the high-end of contemporary literary production, they illustrate a kind of attention to the "practical interest" theorized by Wayne C. Booth (*The Rhetoric of Fiction,* 1961) that used to be very familiar to 19th century writers such as Jane Austen, Dickens, Thackeray[2].

What is melodramatic in these novels? To start with Pamuk, almost everything. His *Museum of Innocence* (frequently associated with *Madame Bovary* and *Lolita*) develops on the fine line between tragedy and melodrama, constructing at the same time a thoroughly realistic setting with a historical tinge: the city of Istanbul during the late 1970s and its tensions between the conflicting drives of modernization and respect for traditional values. What starts as the story of a young and rich couple planning their engagement party gets complicated with the apparition of the beautiful Füsun, a relative of the male protagonist, Kemal. The two are passionately drawn to one another, but Kemal's hesitations make Füsun leave him. Kemal eventually breaks his engagement to Sibel but still cannot win his lover back. The next eight years of his life are dedicated to Füsun's pursuit and strange courtship. Meanwhile she has got married to another man but the marriage appears to be a formal one. Then the story told in the first person by Kemal develops around this new love triangle. The trio enters the world of Istanbuli film production and plans to make a movie casting Füsun as the main actress and her husband as director.

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[2] For a study of postmodernism's drawing on popular culture set against modernist aesthetics, see John Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, 1994.

That was the time when melodramatic productions flourished (as they are up to now in Turkish television series). The novel exquisitely exploits on its compositional level this half-ridiculous, half-dramatic parallel between the melodrama planned and the one lived by the three characters. When the plot finally evolves towards a happy ending, with Füsun divorcing her husband and rejoining Kemal after years of silent suffering, she unexpectedly dies in a car crash. Kemal finds no other way out than to continue looking for memories of her and to collect traces of her to be displayed in a nostalgic, touching, kitschy and self-ironical "Museum of Innocence".

As for Barnes's novel, the much simpler plot line follows the intricacies of Tony Webster's endeavors to assign meaning to an awkward period of his youth: the failure of his love affair with Veronica, a beautiful and smart, yet complicated fellow student who is eventually attracted to his best friend, the mysterious and fascinating Adrian. The latter commits suicide after a couple of years, seemingly because of Veronica's giving birth to a handicapped child. At the time the narration begins, Tony is in his 60s, divorced but in good terms with his ex-wife and daughters, planning holidays, meeting his nephews, in short leading a calm and accomplished life. Suddenly[3] (this being a favorite melodramatic device, of course) he receives a letter informing that he was the inheritor of Veronica's mother. This course of events leads to his quest of Adrian's diary (also part of this unexpected heritage) and to several tormenting and confused encounters with Veronica. The trio's common past is resurfaced again: there are letters that are read again, and some emails that spark the action. Not many things are happening in the present of the narrative, but the past events appear in a new light (or shadow) as they are revisited and reinterpreted in the process of this troubled inheritance. In the end Tony finds out, to his great dismay, that the child was born not by Veronica but her mother's, who had a totally unacceptable and monstrous relationship with his son-in-law to be. This was the real motive behind Adrian's suicide. That unexpected and tragic love triangle broke as Veronica was the one left to take care of her brother and her mother. Eventually Tony realizes that his intellectual reading of people's lives (and his own) has not only failed, but proved to be irresponsible and inconsiderate. Too late.

Coming back now to the safe ground of critical analysis, I wish to draw attention to the chronotope inscribed in these two novels. The temporal level is in both cases double-structured, as it generally stages the banality of the everyday, from which suddenly emerges the moment of revelation. This revelation involves not only the epistemological effort of making sense of

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[3] On the role of coincidence in popular novels, see M. M. Bakhtin's essay, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel", in *The Dialogic Imagination,* 2010.

reality, but also the psychological and moral levels of getting to know one's self. There is much that reminds the reader of Proust's view on time and duration. Time is not only a category that structures the existence of human beings in the world, but a central theme (alongside love) of the two novels. There are many passages that convey the characters' reflections on and personal appropriation of time: in Pamuk's novel, these passages contain Kemal's flashbacks and anticipations, or fleeting moments of happiness that open the self to the world and make the world a safe – because very limited – place, like a nest; in *The Sense of an Ending* (where "ending" means death and, on another level, closure), these fragments reflect Tony's awareness of the strangeness of time as encapsulated and objectified by watches and clocks.

By way of contrast, the space that supports this alternative temporal flow is quite limited and repetitive: an urban scene that brings forward the same places (streets, buildings, public areas, places of waiting) again and again, as in a TV series set that runs on a low budget. Nothing contradictory in that, and nothing very modern also. There is unity of action and somehow of space, and there is a drive towards cancelling time and making it freeze in moments of total understanding and experience.

The role played by coincidence is not a minor one at all. "The series of events and coincidences that were to change my entire life had begun a month before on April 27, 1975, when Sibel happened to spot a handbag designed by the famous Jenny Colon in a shop window" (Pamuk 3), writes Kemal at the beginning of the second chapter; in fact, the writer of this story is the "real" author himself, Orhan Pamuk, as the reader finds out at the very end of this 700-page novel.

In Barnes' novel, this narrative device is reworked by means of the decisive events that mirror one another and make the story advance while at the same time bringing the past back to life (as it happens with the two suicides in the novel, or with the almost magical instantiation of Tony's curse that affects his ex-lover and ex-best friend).

In the above mentioned essay on the chronotope of the Greek adventure novel, Mikhail Bakhtin analyzes the logic of the plot as alternating between *coincidence* (i.e., being in the same place at the same time) and *sudden break* – what he terms as "pure chance". Just a few moments prove to be decisive for the course of actions and for the characters' fate. Bakhtin speculates on the longevity of this chronotope, that would again come to prominence in Walter Scott's historical novels, in 19th century popular and mystery novels (Sue, Féval, and the like), and, one may add, in adventure movie series such as *Indiana Jones.* Even though the aesthetic code of realism recommends writers to avoid the use of this device and employ instead the compositional or psychological motivation of every important scene/ act, we discover much of it with Balzac or Alphonse

Daudet[4]. At this point I will only suggest and not insist on the role of fate in these two novels – tragic fate, by all means, yet in the modern guise of a melodramatic narrative.

Not only melodrama draws heavily on coincidence, but detective novel too, in its hermeneutical endeavor of discovering and interpreting clues. It is not by chance that both Kemal and Tony, the male protagonists and also narrators of these two stories, behave like detectives in search of their past and their loved ones.

Until this moment in analysis I have been emphasizing the melodramatic side of Barnes' and Pamuk's novels. Yet this involves more than the reiteration of a set of devices that would assure public success. In view of Umberto Eco's theory of layered interpretation[5], there is also an undermining of the melodramatic pattern here that appeals to a more sophisticated readership. With Pamuk, this subversion involves a refined high modern intertext (Flaubert, Proust, Nabokov, and quite a few others), while also casting the narrator in the role of an anthropologist of his life and emotions:

> Having become – with the passage of time – the anthropologist of my own experience, I have no wish to disparage those obsessive souls who bring back crockery, artifacts, and utensils from distant lands and put them on display for us, the better to understand the lives of others and our own. (Pamuk 39)

Or again:

> Now the only way I could ever hope to make sense of those years was to display all that I had gathered together – the pots and pans, the trinkets, the clothes and the paintings – just as that anthropologist might have done. (Pamuk 681)

There are other passages that stress this would-be interpretation of the novel as an adventure of knowledge, not in a philosophical sense, but as real, applied knowledge of a person's being and actions, be it the other or one's self.

Julian Barnes develops another *topos* to the same subversive end: the decadent/ aestheticist scenario of life-that-imitates-art, in the footsteps of Oscar Wilde. Here are some examples: "This was another of our fears: that Life wouldn't turn out to be like Literature. Look at our parents – were they the stuff of Literature?" (Barnes 32)
And:

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[4] Cf. what Gérard Genette called "Balzac's hand" ("la *main de Balzac"*) in the story, meaning by it the authorial manipulation of the plot that results in a lack of verisimilitude. („Vraisemblance et motivation", 1968)

[5] See "Postscript to *The Name of the Rose"* in Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 2014.

> I remember a period in late adolescence when my mind would make itself drunk with images of adventurousness. This is how it will be when I grow up. I shall go there, do this, discover that, love her, and then her and her and her. I shall live as people in novels live and have lived. Which ones I was not sure, only that passion and danger, ecstasy and despair (but then more ecstasy) would be in attendance. However … who said that thing about "the littleness of life that art exaggerates"? (Barnes 175)

Both writers make an ambiguous use of the first person, thus distancing from the objective narrative of Flaubert or Henry James. It is through this subjective penchant of the storytelling that the sophisticated readership I was talking about is drawn to identify themselves with the characters and enjoy the story. As tempted as we are to call this mixture of the aesthetic and moral interest "postmodern", Wayne C. Booth would remind us that this was an important feature of traditional (pre-modern) narrative as well. When a writer strives to meet the expectations of an elite and a popular readership at the same time (yet by different means), the cathartic effect and the construction of aesthetic pleasure through recognition and identification patterns are not to be neglected.

In search of a form able to convey the vicissitudes of experiencing an unsuitable love affair, the choice of melodrama made by Pamuk and Barnes further illustrates also the *hybris* of excessive passion that constitutes the central argument in Denis de Rougemont's *Love in the Western World.* In these postmodern remakes of a two-century old genre, the mixture of Romanticism at the thematic level and realist devices at the technical one is another argument in favor of the supremacy that melodrama and realism share in the novel market beyond the 19th century[6]. For quite a long time relegated to the margins of the literary canon, melodrama confirms through the contemporary revival of its patterns that literary evolution cannot be understood without reconsidering the dynamism of popular forms and their impact on the canon construction[7].

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[6] Cf. Moretti *The Novel 1* 480.

[7] In "The Slaughterhouse of Literature" (2000), Franco Moretti discusses "the great unread" corpus that provides the basis for a thorough interpretation of the canon and of genre evolution.

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BARTHES, MORETTI ET L'INNOMMABLE « BOURGEOIS ». REMARQUES SUR DEUX « INTELLECTUELS CRITIQUES »

ALEXANDRU MATEI[1]

ABSTRACT. *Barthes, Moretti, and the no-name 'bourgeois.' Notes on two 'critical intellectuals.'* Franco Moretti and Roland Barthes have always been critical intellectuals. Their interest in literature has always been more than pathos for a summa of good & beautiful, human, eternal truths: a means of expanding and deepening knowledge of dialectic human truth as revealed within history. They have focused on a few seminal topics and principles. In the following article, we want to draw attention to one of those topics – the "bourgeois" – and on some methodological principles: a historical and sociological reading of literary texts stemming from the importance given to the nineteenth century as the reverse point of European modernity and the moralities one can draw out of considering the relationship between literary style and social realities (sort of materialist formalism). It will be no wonder that both theoreticians focus, at a given moment, on the idea of neutral as a mode of existence of (or out of) the "bourgeois" life. Literature would be, for Moretti and Barthes, not the place meant for power production (through hierarchy building), but one of the places in which human societies reveal to themselves.

Keywords: Franco Moretti, Roland Barthes, bourgeois, neutral, world literature, formalism

REZUMAT. *Barthes, Moretti și indefinibilul „burghez". Note asupra a doi „intelectuali critici".* Franco Moretti și Roland Barthes au fost întotdeauna niște intelectuali critici. Interesul lor pentru literatură a reprezentat mereu mai mult decât patosul pentru examinarea îndeaproape a unei sume de adevăruri umane, bune, frumoase și eterne : o modalitate de extindere și aprofundare a cunoașterii adevărului uman dialectic așa cum este dezvăluit de istorie. Demersurile lor se concentrează pe câteva teme și principii fundamentale. În acest articol, ne propunem să atragem atenția asupra uneia dintre aceste teme – „burghezul" - și asupra unor principii metodologice: o lectură istorică și sociologică a textelor literare bazată pe importanța acordată secolului al XIX-lea ca punct revers al modernității europene și moralitățile ce pot fi extrase din evaluarea relației dintre stilul literar și realitățile sociale (un soi de formalism materialist). Nu e de mirare

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că ambii teoreticieni se concentrează, într-un anumit moment, pe ideea de neutru ca mod de existenţă a (sau în afara) vieţii „burgheze". Literatura ar fi, pentru Moretti şi Barthes, nu spaţiul de generare a puterii (prin construirea unei ierarhii), ci unul dintre acele spaţii în care societăţile umane se dezvăluie lor înselor.

Cuvinte cheie: *Franco Moretti, Roland Barthes, burghez, neutru, literatură universală, formalism*

Peut–être est-ce là que l'obstacle réside – et résiste – pour celle ou celui qui voudrait connaître non pas une minorité (quelle qu'elle soit : les minorités, c'est tout ce qu'on aime), mais la majorité : dans la nomination. Barthes emploie, dans ses textes déjà publiés, le mot « bourgeois », pour la première fois de manière significative, en 1951, dans un article polémique publié dans *Le Combat*, le 21 juin, en réponse au livre de Roger Caillois *Description du marxisme*. Barthes est à l'époque marxiste, et il par conséquent anti-bourgeois. Le mot y est employé en tant qu'adjectif : « lecteur bourgeois », le lecteur auquel Caillois s'adresserait, et qui doit être conforté dans sa doxa et non pas encouragé à penser, au « débat d'idées »[2]. Le bourgeois y est défini en creux ; qui plus est, ce n'est pas un nom, c'est une qualité : « lecteur bourgeois ». C'est, dans le texte de Barthes – on est en 1951 – une classe sociale. Tout au long de ses textes de jeunesse, Barthes fera un emploi négatif du vocable, et d'emprunt : c'est un mot de Marx que Barthes endosse sans réserve. Même dans *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture*, en 1953, alors que Barthes avait fait le pas décisif vers une lecture socio-politique de la littérature, les mots (*bourgeois* et *bourgeoisie*) ne sont jamais mis en question :

> On verra, par exemple, que l'unité idéologique de la bourgeoisie a produit une écriture unique, et qu'aux temps bourgeois (c'est-à-dire classiques et romantiques), la forme ne pouvait être déchirée puisque la conscience ne l'était pas ; et qu'au contraire, dès l'instant où l'écrivain a cessé d'être un témoin de l'universel pour devenir une conscience malheureuse (vers 1850), son premier geste a été de choisir l'engagement de sa forme, soit en assumant, soit en refusant l'écriture de son passé[3].

Autrement dit, Roland Barthes s'oublie (il s'en ressaisit plus tard, mais ce n'est pas là notre propos) en tant qu'écrivain critique : il se laisse écrire un nom qu'il croit *voir* tel une nature, cette nature que la culture « bourgeoise » s'efforçait d'imposer auprès de la société toute entière, alors que lui, Roland

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[2] Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes I*, Paris, Seuil, 2002, p.125.
[3] Idem, p. 171-172.

Barthes, était là pour dénoncer le canular, pour gratter jusqu'à ce que les contours de la construction devenaient visibles sous le poli du « naturel ».

Autrement dit, le bourgeois serait l'impensé du discours critique. Et c'est précisément « the bourgeois » que, bien des décades plus tard, en 2013, Franco Moretti se donne pour tâche de penser, afin de sortir ce nom du discours apophatique qu'il avait engendré et qui, par conséquent, n'avait jamais pu être critiqué de fait. C'est là qu'il reprend, à dessein ou non, mais c'est anodin en fin de compte, le projet de savoir – et non celui d'écriture – qui avait été celui de Barthes : une histoire de la littérature en tant qu'histoire de ses formes (il s'en tient au roman, comme Barthes) en tant qu'expression d'un certain caractère, d'un certain mode d'être, d'une certaine identité (tous ces noms sont interchangeables et aucun n'est définitif). Les titres, les auteurs, les périodes diffèrent – et c'est important – mais le projet est là :

> Des formes esthétiques considérées comme des réponses structurées à des contradictions sociales [...].Dans un livre sur la culture bourgeoise, ce choix [éliminer dans cette étude le spectre des variations formelles de la littérature qui ont été disponibles le long de l'histoire] me semble plausible ; il souligne néanmoins la différence entre l'histoire littéraire comme histoire de la littérature – là où la pluralité, voire l'aléatoire des options formelles est un aspect clé dans le paysage général – et l'histoire littéraire en tant que (partie de la) histoire de la société : là où, cette fois-ci, ce qui compte c'est le rapport entre des formes spécifiques et leurs fonctions sociales[4].

Et voici ce qu'annonçait Barthes dans l'introduction au *Degré zéro de l'écriture* :

> Il est donc possible de tracer une histoire du langage littéraire qui n'est ni l'histoire de la langue, ni celle des styles, mais seulement l'histoire des Signes de la Littérature, et l'on peut escompter que cette histoire formelle manifeste à sa façon, qui n'est pas la moins claire, sa liaison avec l'Histoire profonde[5].

Un même projet, mais deux histoires différentes : alors que Barthes voulait, dans les années 1950, prendre la littérature à témoin pour l'agonie de la bourgeoisie, Moretti tâche– mais c'est peut-être beaucoup plus difficile –de voir comment cette « bourgeoisie » a pu, en variant ses significations, échapper à tous les complots, se sortir de tous les embarras que d'aucun ont concocté pour la détruire ; et, en fin de compte, comment cette histoire et son argument (sa morale) passe par le langage. Et, coïncidamment, par la littérature.

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[4] Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature,* London, Verson, 2013, p. 15. La traduction est la nôtre (ce livre de Moretti n'est pas encore traduit en français, et ni les articles de Moretti que nous allons citer *infra*).

[5] Roland Barthes, *op. cit.,* p. 171.

La prose, et les mots-clés : deux fils parallèles qui vont refaire surface tout au long de notre argument, aux différentes échelles des paragraphes, des phrases et des mots individuels. C'est à travers eux que les spécificités de la culture bourgeoise vont surgir de la dimension implicite, voire enterrée du langage : une « mentalité » faites de structures grammaticales inconscientes et d'associations sémantiques plus que d'idées claires et distinctes[6].

Le discours des formes : des années 1960 aux années 2000

Dans son livre chaleureusement intitulé *Lettre à Roland Barthes*[7], Jean-Marie Scheffer, un philosophe né luxembourgeois, devenu français par adoption mais cognitiviste par choix de méthode et par sensibilité, fait l'éloge du sémiologue dont le monde littéraire vient de fêter le centenaire. Venant de la part d'un intellectuel qui n'est ni un « French théoricien », ni ami ou biographe, et ni même « barthien », cet éloge est d'autant plus précieux : en proie aux critiques venues surtout de la part des apostats du structuralisme (Thomas Pavel) mais également des « cognitivistes » qui avaient déjà constitué camp à part lors du scandale Sokal-Bricmont[8] dans les années 1990, l'œuvre de Roland Barthes avait besoin d'être défendue. Mais on est loin d'un éloge caduc, chez Schaeffer : parmi tous ceux qui ont écrit sur Roland Barthes en 2015, il est le seul à repenser, depuis le présent des « humanités numériques », les « usages » de Roland Barthes, et en plus de faire saillir, encore une fois, la qualité de son écriture et des moralités contenues par ses derniers écrits. En un seul point la confiance que Schaeffer fait à Barthes défaille : dans le constat de la mise à distance, de la part de Barthes, de tout critère de vérification de ses théories. Parlant de *S/Z*, Jean-Marie Schaeffer concède qu'une « analyse structurale » ne saurait être exhaustive, faute de pouvoir déterminer avec précision des conditions de vérification. Ce n'est pas un reproche dirigé expressément vers Barthes – dans le cadre de cette convention discursive qu'est la lettre. Et pourtant:

[…]lors de sa sortie, *S/Z* fut salué par certains comme une réussite particulièrement virtuose de la mise en œuvre d'une analyse structurale exhaustive – l'équivalent pour le récit de l'article de Jakobson et Lévi-Strauss consacré aux « Chats » de Baudelaire. Sa facture correspondait d'ailleurs *cum grano salis* au projet que vous énonciez en 1968 (donc alors que vous travailliez déjà sur *S/Z*) dans votre article sur « L'effet de réel » : il s'agissait de rendre

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6 Moretti, *op. cit.*, p.19
7 Jean-Marie Scheffer, *Lettre à Roland Barthes*, Paris, Thierry Marchaisse, 2015.
8 Voir par exemple Yves Jeanneret, *L'Affaire Sokal ou la querelle des impostures*, Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1998 et Jacques Bouveresse, *Prodiges et vertiges de l'analogie*, Paris : Raisons d'Agir, 1999

compte de « toute la surface du tissu narratif » afin d'atteindre « le détail absolu, l'unité insécable, la transition fugitive ». Je dis *cum grano salis*, car lorsqu'on compare *S/Z* à l'analyse du poème de Baudelaire par Lévi-Strauss et Jakobson, votre étude ne saurait évidemment prétendre à une exhaustivité réelle. D'ailleurs, même l'analyse des « Chats » n'est pas à proprement parler exhaustive. La raison en est qu'on voit mal *quelles pourraientêtre les conditions de vérification d'unetelle sorte d'exhaustivité analytique* dans le cas d'une structure discursive, ne serait-ce que parce que la nature proprement linguistique d'un discours sous-détermine toujours sa signification.[9]

On serait tenté de dire que, depuis l'époque de la *French theory* (dont le plus clair de l'oeuvre de Barthes fait partie), les études littéraires ont gagné non seulement en étendue, mais surtout en « positivité », rendant possible *la vérification*. Certes, tout gain a son prix qu'il faut payer, et peut-être que la perte majeure de ces dernières décennies ait été le déclin de la valeur accordée par toute étude littéraire à la « qualité esthétique » de son objet. Pour les tenants de celle-ci, la révélation du « mythe esthétique » est, on le sait, une expérience à laquelle ils se refusent et nous les comprenons. Nous, les « post-esthétiques », nous en excusons auprès d'eux, mais c'est tout ce que nous pouvons faire à l'égard de leur détresse.

Or, cette positivisation des études littéraires est tout de suite évidente chez Franco Moretti. Dans les années 2000, le monde de la recherche – les sciences humaines y comprises – aura changé: l'exhaustivité est certes impossible, mais la tentative de Roland Barthes ne pouvait pas y viser de toute façon: son analyse s'attachait à des texte en français (parfois en latin), son analyse était écrite en français et elle y était enracinée[10].Alors que Moretti est un Italien qui écrit en anglais et lit en plusieurs langues des textes produits dans les quatre coins du monde. Prétendre esquisser une histoire de l'écriture littéraire à travers des lectures quasi exclusivement nationales, c'est faire preuve d'une primesautière légerté (et d'audace tout à la fois, convenons-en!). Si Roland Barthes avait bien dès son bas âge intellectuel l'intuition du caractère social des formes et de la « responsabilité de la grammaire »[11], étayer, développer et transformer cette intuition dans une recherche lui était impossible à l'échelle de ce qu'on appelle de nos jours la « world literature » ou la littérature-monde[12].

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[9] Schaeffer, *op. cit.,* p.81. Nous soulignons.

[10] D'où, par exemple, les obstacles auxquels le traducteur de ses cours au Collège de France, je suis en train d'en faire l'expérience, se confronte.

[11] Roland Barthes, « La Responsabilité de la grammaire » (1947), *Œuvres complètes,* I, Paris, Seuil, 2002, p.96-98.

[12] Le terme anglais est la traduction du terme allemand *Weltliteratur* ; le terme français a été forgé en 2007, dans Michel Le Bris, Jean Rouaud et Eva Almassy, *Pour une littérature-monde*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007

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Impossible du point de vue « technique » – il n'avait pas accès à la base des données où puise Moretti – mais également impossible du fait que Barthes travaillait en « auteur », c'est-à-dire seul : il ne « disséminait » pas les résultats de ses recherches, sauf dans des séminaires restreints, il les écrivait ; il ne communiquait pas un savoir tel quel, il l'aiguisait, le mettait à profit en vue de l'écriture : s'il y a un domaine des activités de Barthes et de Moretti dans lequel les deux littéraires ne se ressemblent pas du tout, c'est bien leur style (on ne s'y appesantit pas, on remarque tout simplement : tandis que Barthes fait de l'écriture quand il écrit, Moretti, quant à lui, y fait plutôt de la parole).

Du point de vue du savoir, Moretti aurait raison : comment peut-on faire avancer le savoir si on tient plus à la forme qu'à la transmission des informations ? Certes, la validité d'un tel argument comporte des limites : puisque toute forme est aussi information, et Moretti est loin de ne pas s'en rendre compte. Dans un article consacré à la signification des titres des romans anglais entre 1740 et 1850, il tire toutes les conséquences de l'observation d'une plus grande fréquence des titres formés de constructions nominales. « Le but des phrases nominales, c'est *l'abolition de la contingence :* elles ne décrivent pas une situation [...] mais posent un absolu [...] ; elles posent un absolu, et cet absolu c'est, à l'évidence, la signification du roman. »[13]Or, une analyse structurale telle que celle entreprise par Barthes avait quelque chose de démonstratif, de « thétique » en elle: elle voulait faire comprendre que oui, le langage est de la matière, qu'on peut le diviser par conséquant jusqu'aux « atomes » et, au fur et à mesure, l'expurger de toute « connotation » qui en aimenterait les éléments; faire élever le langage au-dessus de l'idéologique, le faire émerger à la surface de la vérité (la vérité étant, dans cette version épistémologique, une surface sans épaisseur, du lisse à perte de vue).

Franco Moretti tranche net: il recommande, en iconoclaste, la « lecture distante », la seule qui puisse faire justice au champ littéraire conçu comme production globalisée[14]. La lecture « rapprochée » pratiquée par Barthes dans S/Z apparaît ainsi « réductionniste » (quoiqu'on on pourrait à tout moment démontrer son côté anti-réductionniste, puisque tout noveau système opère des dé-réductions pour aménager l'espace de pensée en vue d'autres réductions), muepar la volonté de renvoyer le langage à son « être pur ». C'est une approche du langage qui dégage aujourd'hui un parfum « révolutionnaire ». À force de travailler en vue de la « révolution », on oublie de regarder tout autour, dans ce que la littérature gardait de différent: les langues, tout d'abord, et puis les

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[13] Franco Moretti, « Style, Inc. Reflection on Seven Thousand Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850), dans *Critical Inquiry* 36 (Autumn 2009), p.151.

[14] C'est avec cette recommandation que commence son article « Conjectures on World Literature », *New Left Review 1*, January-February 2000, p.55.

interactions – on les appelle par commodité « culturelles » – qui en modifient à tout moment la forme et les sens.

Or, entre *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* et *S/Z, d'un côté, et Graphes, cartes et arbres*et *The Bourgeois* de l'autre, il n'y pas seulement quarante ans de passés, mais l'évidence de quelques réajustements qui, entre temps, ont profondément modifié les instruments et la méthode de la recherche littéraire à visée systémique: la conscience de l'individualité de la langue (écrite dans notre cas), un nouveau rapport aux discours du savoir et une nouvelle manière de comprendre et puis de pratiquer les positivités. Nous les avons déjà esquissées et ilustrées quant à l'approche des liens entre le social et le littéraire qui se trouvent au centre des deux œuvres, de Barthes et de Moretti, et nous allons finir ce texte par y revenir. Nous allons insister encore un peu sur les deux autres points qui articulent les rapports entre les démarches de Barthes et de Moretti, les langues et les savoirs. Tout cet exercice a comme point de départ une spéculation: Roland Barthes et Franco Moretti ont été toujours, plus ou moins, des critiques du monde capitalistes: des intellectuels de gauche, occidentaux, qui se sont baignés toute leur vie dans les mêmes eaux de la culture bourgeoise; pour eux, l'étude de la littérature n'est pas seulement un exercice intellectuel, esthétique et un marqueur de prestige social, mais une voie de comprendre leur monde et une tentative, ne serait-ce qu'implicite, de le « corriger ».

Savoir et langues

La littérature moderne regardée du point de vue de l'analyse des systèmes-monde[15] rejoint l'idée de la signification historique des formes. Dans ce sens, citer un critique tel que Roberto Schwarz disant que « les formes sont l'abstraction des relations sociales spécifiques »[16] ce n'est que renvoyer à l'idée barthienne de la responsabilité de la forme, « la Forme est la première et la dernière instance de la responsabilité littéraire»[17], cette fois-ci dans un

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[15] « (…) le passé et le présent de la littérature (un « long » présent, qui commence au XVIIIe siècle) devraient être vus non dans un rapport de « supériorité » pu d' « inferiorité », mais en tant que deux époques structurellement tellement différentes qu'elles demandent deux approches théoriques indépendantes ». Pour ce qui est de la seconde époque, « la 'seconde' littérature-monde est le mieux expliquée par (une version de) l'analyse des systèmes-monde ». « World-Systems Analysis, Evolutionary Theory, 'Weltliteratur' », dans *New Left Review* (FernandBraudelCenter), vol. 28, no 3 (2005), p. 228.

[16]« The Importing of the Novel to Brazil and Its Contradictions in the Work of Roberto Alencar », in *Misplaced Ideas*, London, Verson, 1992, p.53, cite dans Moretti, « Conjectures on World Literature », *New Left Review*, op. cit., p.65, en ligne ici: http://newleftreview.org/II/1/franco-moretti-conjectures-on-world-literature

[17] Roland Barthes, « Le Degré zéro de l'écriture », in *Œuvres Complètes*I, p.221

contexte argumentatif différent, dont le moins qu'on puisse dire c'est qu'il est constatif et non plus engagé. La confession méthodologique de Moretti est révélatrice d'une approche qu'il partage avec Roland Barthes :

> Les formes sont l'abstraction des relations sociales ; alors, l'analyse formelle c'est de sa façon, modestement, une analyse du pouvoir. (C'est pourquoi la morphologie comparative est un champ tellement fascinant : tout en étudiant comment varient les formes, on peut découvrir comment le pouvoir symbolique varie d'un lieu à l'autre.) En effet, le formalisme sociologique a toujours été ma méthode interprétative, et je crois que c'est quelque chose de particulièrement approprié à l'étude de la littérature-monde [...][18]

Nos deux auteurs partagent non seulement une pratique – ce matérialisme formel dont nous avons montré des bribes – mais aussi un principe d'analyse qui, pour eux, recèle le sens de la théorie. C'est Jean-Marie Schaeffer qui reprend le projet de Barthes esquissé dans « L'Activité structuraliste » : le structuralisme serait une pratique de « reconstitution d'un "objet" de façon à manifester dans cette reconstitution les règles de fonctionnement de cet objet [...]. » Cette « reconstitution » est la « construction d'un simulacre [...] dont la visée est de produire de l'intelligible »[19]. Or, c'est la visée même de Moretti, telle qu'il explicite dans son article « Operationalizing », s'appuyant sur un concept lancé par le physicien P. W. Bridgman en 1927. « Opérationnaliser », c'est reprendre en laboratoire, à l'aide d'instruments de mensuration, des mouvements qu'on peut observer dans la nature. Moretti : « opérationnaliser, c'est construire un pont entre concepts et mensurations, et après entre ceux-ci et le monde »[20]. C'est une autre manière de dire qu'on reconstruit, en laboratoire, un « simulacre » pour ensuite, à travers son analyse, faire un pont qui le lie au monde. Ce qu' « opérationnaliser » veut dire, c'est apposer une autre étiquette sur l'analyse « structurale ». La différence, de taille, entre le structuralisme de Barthes et l'opérationnalisation de Moretti consiste dans la logistique de leurs laboratoires – c'est tout.

Certes, la langue importe elle-aussi : écrivant en anglais, Moretti délaisse un projet « artiste » d'écriture qui fut celui de Barthes : les phrases simples de Moretti, les réitérations des mots-clés ne font que suggérer un autre lecteur-type que celui auquel s'adressait Barthes : le littéraire pour lequel l'anglais n'est pas le lieu d'une identité esthétique, mais celui d'une profession.

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[18] Moretti, « Conjectures », *art. cit.*, p. 65-66.
[19] Roland Barthes, *Œuvres Complètes II*, p.466, 467, cité in Schaeffer, p. 62.
[20] Franco Moretti, « Operationalizing », *New Left Review 84*, décembre 2013, p. 104.

Le bourgeois comme « neutre »

Passé cet intermezzo dans lequel nous avons souligné le poids d'un projet commun mené avec des outils différents, revenons à ce qui nous semble le cœur de la recherche de Moretti et de Barthes : le fonctionnement du langage au sein de la société contemporaine et les noms qui conviennent à cette société.

Si Barthes croyait devoir expliciter ce que c'est que l'écriture littéraire, suite à la crise de la bourgeoisie, Moretti lance sa ligne précisément là où, à l'issue d'une autre crise, le Moyen Age voit apparaître sur ses ruines une société nouvelle qu'on aura pris l'habitude d'appeler « bourgeoise ». Non comment on va faire pour supplanter la bourgeoisie, mais comment, malgré tous les efforts d'en détruire les assises, la bourgeoisie – dès le XVIe siècle – survit et poursuit sa domination. Moretti montre le chavirement indécidable entre le bourgeois et le capitaliste, selon un même partage chronologique que celui qui l'avait amené à distinguer entre une littérature-monde « prémoderne » et une littérature-monde « moderne ». Avant et après 1800, le bourgeois européen n'est pas une et la même chose, pose Moretti, et en fait ensuite la démonstration à l'aide de lectures de romans (et pièces de théâtre) occidentaux. Il montre l'évolution du « bourgeois » dès Jonathan Swift et jusqu'à Henrik Ibsen. La césure ne passe pas nécessairement par la Révolution de 1848 (début de la société industrielle en France), et Flaubert n'est pas le seul maître du discours indirect libre – Joseph Conrad, bien après lui, en est un autre. Pour Moretti, ce sont les années 1800 qui assistent – non, en termes psychologisants de « crise de conscience » - à l'apparition du capitalisme global, et c'est alors que le style « neutre » de Robinson Crusoe[21] se teint d'une profondeur qui annonce l'époque romantique. Et c'est Flaubert qui, pour Moretti, à la différence de Barthes, manifeste avec le plus de force une ambiguïté qui sera définitoire du style bourgeois – quand bien même on pourrait nommer quelque chose d'ambigu. 1800 c'est plutôt la marque conventionnelle de l'apparition du marché global, alors que la bourgeoisie, devenue classe dominante, n'ayant plus à quelle entité sociale s'opposer (pour s'octroyer une identité), s'effrite en elle-même : un effritement qui n'est pourtant pas justiciable d'une approche antithétique (par deux) – et c'est peut-être là que Moretti apporte, par rapport à ce qu'on était habitué à penser du bourgeois, sa pierre : le bourgeois n'est pas à déterminer en tant qu'opposition (à l'artiste, par exemple, pour citer Barthes[22] ; et toujours pour citer Barthes, il s'agit de

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[21] Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois, op. cit.*, p. 73.
[22] Voir la « Préface » de Thomas Clerc pour le cours de Roland Barthes, *Le Neutre*, Seuil, IMEC, 2002, p.17.

dépasser la pensée structurale qui fonctionne par antithèse[23]) : c'est la pensée *par addition* ou bien « and… and… and »[24] serait celle qui caractériserait le type « bourgeois », dont toute tentative de réduction est vouée à l'échec justement à cause son caractère *addictif* et non exclusif. A ce point, vers la fin du chapitre intitulé « Fog», Moretti cite Dror Wahrman :

> Entre les pôles de l'inclusivité indivise (radical) et celui de l'exclusivité aigue (conservatrice) s'érige « l'idiome de la classe moyenne ». L'habileté qu'ont ses partisans de marcher sur le fil … a été alléguée du fait qu'en termes de portée sociale, son langage était intrinsèquement vague. Peu de ses adeptes ont jamais voulu le définir ou bien en spécifier les référents.[25]

Si, tout au long de ses textes, mais surtout dans son cours sur *Le Neutre*, Barthes définit le neutre encore en opposition, le neutre de Moretti c'est une addition de contraires qui ne se fondent mais cohabitent et s'entrecroisent : raison et sentiment, rêve et réalité, immoralité et légalité, épanchement et retenue.

Chez Moretti, le neutre surgit sous un jour moral qui lui avait été octroyé par Adorno, par exemple dans la *Dialectique de la Raison*: le style des objets de la culture des masses, soutient Adorno, se révèle rien d'autre qu'un signe d'acceptation de la hiérarchie sociale en place: „ la barbarie de l'esthétique d'aujourd'hui achève la menace pesant sur toutes les créations de l'esprit depuis qu'elles ont été rassemblées sous la bannière de la culture et neutralisées comme telles."[26] Quoi qu'il en soit, Moretti revisite cette vue trop nette de la neutraliation « culturelle » des valeurs absolues charriées par la tradition prenant prétexte dans l'œuvre d'Ibsen :

> Or, de manière typique chez Ibsen, les malversations dans ses écrits ont lieu dans une zone grise dont la nature n'est jamais absolument claire. […] La zone grise c'est la grande intuition qu'Ibsen a de la vie bourgeoise.[…] C'est ce qu'est la zone grise : réticence, déloyauté, calomnie, négligence, demi-vérités… Tout ce qu'on en peut dire, c'est qu'il n'y a pas de nom général pour ces actions ; ce que j'ai trouvé, au début, vu la confiance dans des mots-clés pour la définition des valeurs bourgeoises, particulièrement frustrant. Mais, avec la zone grise, nous avons la chose, sans le mot.[27]

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[23] Voir « Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes », *Œuvres complètes IV*, p. 712.

[24] Moretti, « Bankspeak », op. cit., p.93

[25] Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class.The Political Representation of Class in Britain, C.1780-1840*, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 55-6, cité dans Moretti, *The Bourgeois, op. cit.*, p.143.

[26] Theodor Adorno, *Dialectique de la Raison*, premier chapitre, « L'Industrie culturelle. Les Lumières comme déception de la masse. » (source : https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/, notre traduction).

[27] Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois.op: cit.,* p. 171-172.

Il semble, à première vue, que cette « zone grise » caractérise une société – avec ses valeurs – dont le mot d'ordre et un genre d'action qui puisse laisser derrière elle toute possibilité de rattrapage nominal. Or, il ne s'agit alors plus d'un rabais, comme chez Adorno, puisque Moretti se garde de mettre cette zone grise en opposition avec une quelconque « zone blanche » précédente, pour en conclure à l'involution. Pour Moretti, tout comme pour Barthes, le neutre est tout d'abord une question de langage. Ce qui est évident dans le dernier article publié par Moretti dans *New Left Review*, « Bankspeak »[28], analyse de discours qui recoupe le projet sémiologique de Barthes dans *Mythologies* (1957) : leurs projets sont similaires – faire dire à des discours institutionnels qui donnent un vernis de « naturel » à des constructions verbales inventées de toutes pièces pour installer un pouvoir dont leurs auteurs sont les premier à profiter – et ce n'est que la méthode qui diffère : sélection au gré des circonstances pour les « mythologies » des Barthes et analyse d'un corpus donné pour Moretti (les *Rapports annuels de la Banque Mondiale entre 1948 et 2010*) qui, à la différence de Barthes, bénéficie des grâces d'un laboratoire informatique à Stanford. Qui plus est : le projet des *Mythologies*, fruit d'un âge « marxiste » de l'œuvre barthienne, ne s'arrête pas au seuil des années 1960 : dans son cours sur le Neutre, la leçon donnée sur les « idéosphères » ne fait que prouver l'intérêt que Barthes attache au problème du rapport entre pouvoir et langage tout au long de son existence.

Or, Franco Moretti l'y rejoint : les deux littéraires ne le sont pas sans reste, puisque leur approche commune du langage ne leur permet pas de prendre la sphère du « littéraire » pour du tout fait, pour du naturel : ainsi travaillent-ils (Barthes plutôt au début de sa carrière, Moretti plutôt pendant ces dernières années) à élargir leur champ de travail sur tout ce qui est langage, car ils savent bien que la collusion entre la forme et le contenu est la clé de la découverte du sens. Même dans ce dernier article déjà cité, « Bankspeak », Moretti constate « une 'bureaucratisation' du discours de la Banque mondiale, quelqu'un pourrait dire – sauf que là on a plus que ça : c'est un style qui s'auto-organise autour de quelques éléments qui se mettent à engendrer leur propre message. »[29]

En dernier lieu, qu'il s'agisse des *Mythologies* (ou du *Degré zéro de l'écriture*) ou bien de *The Bourgeois*, le lecteur y trouve le même effort de penser à travers son langage l'enveloppe sociale où leurs auteurs se trouvent en quelque sorte déterminés: comprendre une structure sociale où les oppositions surgissent pour se dissoudre viter et pour en laisser poindre d'autres avec une même durée de vie (brève) à travers le langage, c'est leur

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[28] Franco Morettiand Dominique Pestre,« Bankspeak », *art. cit.* p. 75-99
[29] Moretti, *art. cit.,* p.88.

voeux commun, mû peut-être de l'utopisme de la foi dans une « vérité » que Barthes est, vers la fin de sa vie, convaincu de ne pouvoir trouver que dans le singulier et dans le retrait (c'est là son vœu du Neutre), alors que Moretti croit encore découvrir à force de recherche raisonnable et rationnelle.

Dans les deux cas, la position critique envers le monde et envers le sujet humain se paient d'une sorte d'excentricité disciplinaire : est-ce Barthes un « critique littéraire » ? Est-ce Moretti de The Bourgeois un simple historien de la littérature ou, à plus forte raison, est-ce le Moretti de « Bankspeak » un littéraire ?

THE BOURGEOIS BETWEEN FACT AND FANCY: UTILITARIAN CALCULUS AND ITS PITFALLS IN *HARD TIMES*

OCTAVIAN MORE[1]

ABSTRACT. *The Bourgeois between Fact and Fancy: Utilitarian Calculus and its Pitfalls in Hard Times.* Starting from Franco Moretti's observations on the "seriousness" of the "middle-way," this paper proposes an examination of a number of topical aspects regarding the bourgeois ethos, as illustrated in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times.* The argument is constructed around the centrality of "innovation" and focuses on the limits and excesses of utilitarianism, as well as on the dichotomy Fact – Fancy and the way in which bourgeois virtue is regained through self-discovery.

Keywords: bourgeois, fact, fancy, ethics, virtue, Dickens, Hard Times

REZUMAT. *Burghezul între fapt și fantezie: calculul utilitarian și pericolele sale în Timpuri grele.* Pornind de la observațiile formulate de Franco Moretti cu privire la "seriozitatea" "căii de mijloc", studiul de față își propune să examineze o serie de aspecte importante legate de etica burgheză, așa cum sunt ele ilustrate în romanul lui Charles Dickens, *Timpuri grele*. Argumentația e construită în jurul centralității "inovației" și se focalizează pe limitele și excesele utilitarianismului, precum și asupra dihotomiei fapt – fantezie și a modalității prin care virtutea burgheză este recuperată prin descoperirea sinelui.

Cuvinte cheie: burghez, fapt, fantezie, etică, virtuți, Dickens, Timpuri grele

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way...
> —Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

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1. Victorian dualism and the "serious" middle-way

Of all periods of British history, the Victorian age is, undoubtedly, the one that brought about the most complex and far-reaching changes affecting all aspects of society. It was the age of groundbreaking inventions and innovations, of steady reform and sometimes violent revolt, of conquest, expansion and revision, of faith and doubt. From the railway to the bicycle, from the organised excursion to moving out to the suburbs, from the toothpaste to breakfast cereals, from heroic feats of cavalry to the foundations of modern hospitals and healthcare, from workers' rights to women's rights, the age had it all. In 1858, Sir Henry Holland, described it as "the age of transition." A few years later, in 1861, Benjamin Disraeli, claimed that it would be "an error to consider it a utilitarian age," when, in fact, it should be regarded as the age "of infinite romance," while two years on, William Makepeace Thackeray described the Victorians as being "of the time of chivalry [and] of the age of steam." The eminent orator, journalist and novelist Charles Dickens felt these realities so intensely that he couldn't avoid wearing the same spectacles even when writing of other times and places, as shown by the above epigraph from *A Tale of Two Cities*, a historical novel set in Paris and London around the time of the French Revolution.

While "transition," "dualism," "dichotomy," are apt descriptions of the Victorian age, by no means should we regard them as being exclusively Victorian. As with any other age, it is important to approach the period in context. In his thorough examination of the culture that defined about two centuries of modern Western civilization, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (first published in 2013), Franco Moretti situates Victorian literature and its contributions within the larger socio-political and cultural sphere of what he calls "the serious century" (67 ff.). An important characteristic of the literature of this century, Moretti explains (*apud* Diderot's *le genre sérieux*), is the placement "in the middle" (70). "[T] the aristocratic heights of tragic passion, and the plebeian depths of comedy, the class in the middle adds a style which is itself in the middle: neither the one nor the other," says the critic (73). As for its main thematic preoccupations, at least in the first half of the 19th century, they can be found in "everydayness"—the interest in the "habitual," "ordinary" and "repeatable" (71).

Indeed, such and similar adjectives are useful parameters for discussing many of the literary products of the Victorian Age. From Thackeray's "novel without a hero," to the domestic scenes in the works of the Brontës or George Eliot's forays into provincial life and provincialism, readers can find examples a-plenty of the Victorian novelists' interest for the Morettian "everydayness." As a rule, it signals a double intention: to reveal the underlying commonality of human existence (with all the pains, failures and occasional successes it entails) but also

as to contemplate how a given condition (dictated by birth, upbringing or experience) might be overcome by the protagonist(s) of the story. Nowhere is this intention more obvious than in Dickens's works, where the morality of both the authentic and the would-be bourgeoisie is checked by means of examining their habitual activities and routine convictions (for relevant examples, it is enough to turn to the enlightenment and redemption of Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* or Pip's progress as a "gentleman" in *Great Expectations*).

Starting from this preamble, in this paper I propose an examination of a number of topical aspects pertaining to the bourgeois ethic, as exemplified in a less canonical work by Dickens, one of the first novels of his mature period of writing, *Hard Times* (1854). By drawing on the ideas of literary critics, political analysts, as well as economists, I will try to argue that this text at once aligns itself to key ideas propounded by Moretti in the above quoted study and departs from them. The core of my investigation will consist in a critique of utilitarianism as a "philosophy of fact," complemented by an overview of its implications in Dickens's text.

Situating the argument about *Hard Times* within the discussions regarding the bourgeois ethos and thought is doubly justified, beyond what is dictated, by necessity, by the novel's theme. On the one hand, as Diniejko (2012) explains, Dickens's earlier texts reveal a relatively strong faith in the capacity of the middle class to provide a viable alternative to the ways of the old aristocracy but they also show an astute awareness of "the discrepancy between the ideas and practice of this new class and the principles of morality and ethic." In his later texts, though it does not disappear completely, the same faith subsides in intensity, giving rise to a more critical stance which puts a question mark not only by the individual's dearly-held beliefs and choices but also by the system and the institutions that have created and maintained them. As Elizabeth Starr explains (in reference to Margaret Oliphant's 1855 classic review of Dickens), in *Hard Times* the novelist's greatest merit is to reflect (not only attack, I may add) the bourgeois values and ethics, and he achieves this by placing the story within a setting that perfectly illustrates Moretti's aforementioned "everydayness":

> At his best, Dickens's strength as a novelist, according to Oliphant, rests in his faithful and complex representation of the middle class, a portion of the population that she assigns to the private sphere: "nowhere does the household hearth burn brighter—nowhere is the family love so warm—the natural bonds so strong; and this is the ground which Mr Dickens occupies par excellence." (Oliphant, 452, cited in Starr, 335)

Besides the novel's relevance for evaluating the bourgeois within what is simultaneously a familial and familiar medium (the effects of inflexible

utilitarianist education upon the destinies of the Gradgrind children, complemented by the typical middle-class business of money-making, money-keeping and wealth-aggregating), the choice of *Hard Times* for my study is also motivated in the light of the scholarly debates it has engendered since its rediscovery and revaluation by F.R. Leavis in the seminal *The Great Tradition* (first published in 1848). As Humpherys points out in her study dedicated to the novel, it is a piece that has been maligned by a lot of readers and appraised by as many:

> Though some post-Leavis critics have continued to see the novel as the least successful of Dickens's fictions because of what is perceived as thin characters and reductive critiques, others have turned from the debate about the inaccuracy of Dickens's representation of industrialism in Bounderby, utilitarianism in Gradgrind, union organizers in Slackbridge, or the working class in Blackpool, to the rich patterns of theme and language and to the complexity and paradox in the novel. (391)

For a more precise understanding of how irreconcilable these views are, it is enough to compare Leavis's stance with the viewpoint of one of the novel's detractors. Thus, if Leavis sees in *Hard Times* (together with James's *The Europeans*) a "moral fable" (Leavis 227) that is both untypical for the Victorian works and well ahead of its time, sufficient reasons to warrant this text a special place within the "Great Tradition", J. B. Priestley (writing less than two decades later from the position of the social commentator) looks at the same text with a disparaging eye, based on what he sees as the novelist's incapacity to understand adequately the complex realities behind the working class movements of the mid 19th century, his lacunary knowledge about industrial England, the overly simplistic antithesis between the free world of circus artists and the inflexibility of the utilitarian doctrine or the radical views of trade-union leaders—all of these leading, in the final analysis, to the conclusion that *Hard Times* is "the least worth reading" of all of Dickens's mature works (Priestley 167-168).

In what follows, my own investigation will focus not on how divergent such views might be, but, on the contrary, on the need to incorporate the apparently incompatible approaches mentioned by Humpherys (i.e., the social and textual one) in order to reveal the combination of norm and innovation in this *bourgeois* novel. Given the complexity of this type of endeavour, the expression it receives in my paper is mainly summative and explanatory in nature, and only secondarily critical.

2. The *(un)felicific calculus*: utilitarianism cross-examined

> We forge the chains we wear in life.
> —Charles Dickens, *The Cricket on the Hearth*

Dickens's intention to cast a discerning look beyond individual ills and evils is evident from the very first scene of the novel, through Thomas Gradgrind's famous opener "Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts" (*Hard Times* 1). The target, we soon find out, is the impact of utilitarianism on the minds of children and adults alike, where "utilitarianism" is understood in the Benthamite sense of *felicific calculus*—the judgement of the practical value of a thing solely by the precision-pinpointing of the degree of happiness it elicits. It is by instilling exclusively this principle in the minds of Louisa and Tom that Gradgrind, always equipped "[w]ith a rule and a pair of scales" and "ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature" (2) effectively precludes any chance of genuine happiness and harmonious, balanced development of his offspring, to the extent that one will find herself caught in a disastrous marriage (and on the brink of committing adultery) and the other will turn into a petty criminal, destined to take the road of exile. *Via* the Gradgrind morality tale, we can see that Dickens intends to offer the reader a *caveat emptor*, but it would be simplistic to regard this as categorical proof of an anti-bourgeois attitude. In fact, as we shall see, it is the limits and excesses of the doctrine as well as its blindfolded application, rather than its motives, that the novelist sets out to criticise.

In her extensive study of the forces responsible for capitalist growth, aptly titled *The Bourgeois Virtues: Ethics for an Age of Commerce* (2007), Deirdre McCloskey explains how the vision of a "balanced ethical system," the project propounded at the beginning of the eighteenth century, came to be ruined by both the romantic preference for "unbalanced love and courage," the Benthamite "apotheosis of prudence only" and the complementary Kantian insistence on "reason and temperance" (9). Given the relevance for the direction I have proposed, I consider it useful to devote further attention to McCloskey's ideas. I will rely, however, only on her insights as an economist and historian, as they can help in understanding the problems inherent to Bentham's utilitarianism. Beyond this point, her appreciation of the novelist is overly simplified. For instance, Dickens's "heroes," McCloskey claims, are essentially "crypto-gentlemen," whose worth is explainable principally in terms of "inheriting," in its turn indicative of a "conservative nostalgia for a simpler time when the rich were charitable and the poor unspoilt and income came down on a gentleman like a gentle rain" (471). While, doubtlessly,

Dickens might be considered "conservative" elsewhere (such as in the somewhat similarly themed *Dombey and Son*, where the sound morality is that of the "sea people," and the sea itself is the symbol of more enduring values than those embodied by the smoke-belching steam locomotive), it is most certainly not the case in *Hard Times*. If there is any "nostalgia" here, it is for the road not taken and the knowledge not held. As the enlightened Thomas Gradgrind puts it himself in one of his last confrontations with Louisa:

> I mistrust myself now. I have supposed the head to be all-sufficient. It may not be all-sufficient; how can I venture this morning to say it is! If that other kind of wisdom should be what I have neglected, and should be the instinct that is wanted, Louisa—" (Dickens 199-200)

Let me return to McCloskey's views, however. In her interpretation, the *bourgeois virtues* can be summed up as follows. At one end there are the "pagan" virtues. The first of them is *Prudence,* that is, "buying low and selling high," but also "the prudence to sell rather than invade, to calculate the consequences, to pursue the good with competence." Next, *Temperance,* "to save and to accumulate," but also "to educate oneself in business and in life, to listen to the customer humbly, to resist the temptations to cheat, to ask quietly whether there might be a compromise here." Thirdly, *Justice*, "to insist on private property honestly acquired," but also "the justice to pay willingly for good work, to honor labor, to break down privilege, to value people for what they can do rather than for who they are, to view success without envy." Last of these is *Courage*, or daring "to venture on new ways of business [and] to overcome the fear of change, to bear defeat unto bankruptcy, to be courteous to new ideas, to wake up next morning and face fresh work with cheer" (*Bourgeois Virtues* 507-508). This first lot of four is complemented by the "theological virtues": *Love*—"to take care of one's own," but also "a bourgeois love to care for employees and partners and colleagues and customers and fellow citizens, to wish well of humankind, to seek God [...]," *Faith*—"to honor one's community of business [and] the faith to build monuments to the glorious past, to sustain traditions of commerce, of learning, of religion," and *Hope*—to imagine a better machine," but also "to see the future as something other than stagnation or eternal recurrence, to infuse the day's work with a purpose, seeing one's labor as a glorious calling [...]" (*ibid.*)

If one looks at *Hard Times* superficially (or one-sidedly, as social critics like Priestley have done), it is easy to overlook the complex interplay of *virtues* that serves as the moral underpinning of the story. Surely, Sissy Jupe emerges as a symbol of the aforementioned "theological love," when, at the end of the

novel Dickens says "[i]n the innocence of her brave affection, and the brimming up of her old devoted spirit, the once deserted girl [shines] like a beautiful light upon the darkness of the other" (*Hard Times* 202). But it is also *love* (this time, of the bourgeois type) that motivates Mr. Gradgrind, "the eminently practical father" and "eminently practical friend" (9), to send his children on the path of the only thing he himself was taught to believe in, *felicific calculus*. He does this not for material gain but out of (misguided) conviction in the virtue of the doctrine, as we can see in his interest to provide for Sissy's welfare and education and his sincere disappointment upon the failure of the method:

> "No, Jupe, no," said Mr. Gradgrind, shaking his head in his profoundest and most eminently practical way. "No. The course you pursued, you pursued according to the system—the system—and there is no more to be said about it. I can only suppose that the circumstances of your early life were too unfavourable to the development of your reasoning powers, and that we began too late. Still, as I have said already, I am disappointed." (81)

For Dickens, this failure is not merely an effect, nor is Gradgrind the core of the problem or Sissy the only possible solution to it. Rather than an end in itself, they are actually the means to it. After all, the story *is* and remains *of the Gradgrinds*, despite the roles played by Sissy, the circus people, the working-class Stephen Blackpool (whose character can be read as evocative of Christian martyrdom—see, for instance, Jacobson, 2007). Dickens himself feels it necessary to contrast the genuine bourgeois Gradgrind to the profoundly hypocritical "self-made man" Bounderby:

> Mr. Gradgrind, though hard enough, was by no means so rough a man as Mr. Bounderby. His character was *not unkind*, all things considered; it might have been a very kind one indeed, *if he had only made some round mistake in the arithmetic that balanced it*, years ago. (24, my emphasis)

At a closer look, we can see that the problem does not lie with the total absence of virtue. Of those listed by McCloskey, some are clearly visible and felt throughout the novel, others can be regained, and only a few appear to have been hopelessly lost. *Love* of one's neighbour is found not only in the person of Sissy, but also in Rachael's devotion to Stephen, or in Sleary's willingness to help in the escape of Gradgrind's fugitive son despite the crime he has committed. A glimmer of *Hope* is brought upon the not exactly happy ending of the story both through the narratorial commentary on the possible fate of some characters and Dickens's invitation to empathise with them in the closing lines: "[i]t rests with you and me whether, in our two fields of action,

similar things shall be or not. Let them be! We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires turn grey and cold" (268). One should admit, indeed, that it takes a great deal of *Courage* to confront the cause of one's misery, try to surpass one's natural or self-imposed limits, and change heart (as both Gradgrind and Louisa prove). Furthermore, for characters like Sleary (and even the renewed Gradgrind) *Temperance*, understood as compromise, represents a common virtue:

> People must be amuthed, Thquire, thomehow," continued Sleary, rendered pursier than ever by so much talking; "they can't be alwayth a-working, nor yet they can't be alwayth a-learning. Make the betht of uth, not the wurtht. (36)

> Here was Mr. Gradgrind on the same day, and in the same hour, sitting thoughtful in his own room. How much of futurity did he see? Did he see himself, a white-haired decrepit man, bending his hitherto inflexible theories to appointed circumstances; making his facts and figures subservient to Faith, Hope, and Charity; and no longer trying to grind that Heavenly trio in his dusty little mills? Did he catch sight of himself therefore much despised by his late political associates? Did he see them, in the era of its being quite settled that the national dustmen have only to do with one another, and owe no duty to an abstraction called a People, "taunting the honourable gentleman" with this and with that and with what not, five nights a week until the small hours of the morning? Probably he had that much foreknowledge, knowing his men. (266)

Even *Faith* is present: we encounter it in the obvious instances associated with its Christian meaning (for a more detailed discussion, see again Jacobson, 2007), as is the case with Sissy, Rachel, and especially Stephen Blackpool (the scene of his death and the symbolic star that guides him come to mind), but also in the redemption granted to Louisa and her father, indicative of Dickens's allowance for at least the theoretical possibility of better, *softer* times. It is only *Justice* and *Prudence* that are apparently absent from this scheme. On one hand, nothing pertaining to Bounderby (not even his fabricated story of success) represents "property honestly acquired." Similarly, nothing of what Bitzer says, thinks or does shows that he "values" people "for what they can do rather than for who they are": "I was made in the cheapest market, and have to dispose of myself in the dearest," he confesses cynically (258). As for *Prudence,* Dickens wants us to believe that in the "hard fact" universe of Coketown it has been so perverted that productive work means merely the agglomeration of capital, that development through education is nothing more than a matter of "statistical calculus"—nay, even "[w]hat is called Taste is only another name for Fact"(5).

Prudence—more exactly, its absence—receives the harshest criticism in *Hard Times.* In combination with the lack of *Temperance*, it leads to "the murdering of innocents" (2). In fact, the consequences are not limited to the sphere of education. The effect is far more damaging, as we shall see. To discuss this, I will go back to Moretti, for a start.

One of the expressions of 19th century realism, the critic argues, can be found in the very same "seriousness" that defines the spirit of a significant part of the period. Understood (as in the Buddenbrook story) as an "almost religious respect for facts," it came to manifest itself as "reliability, method, accuracy, 'order and clarity'" (Moretti 87). Furthermore, "coming to terms with reality becomes, from the necessity it always is, a 'principle'; a value. Containing one's immediate desires is not just repressions: it is culture" (*ibid.*). But what happens, we may ask, when "the one thing needful" (*Hard Times* 1) is not complemented by "another thing needful" (*Hard Times* 197), when there is fact without fancy, where there is principle without discernment (or *Prudence*)? A tentative answer is given to us early on, when Dickens introduces the Gradgrind children:

> No little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon; it was up in the moon before it could speak distinctly. No little Gradgrind had ever learnt the silly jingle, Twinkle, twinkle, little star; how I wonder what you are! No little Gradgrind had ever known wonder on the subject, each little Gradgrind having at five years old dissected the Great Bear like a Professor Owen, and driven Charles's Wain like a locomotive engine-driver. No little Gradgrind had ever associated a cow in a field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn who tossed the dog who worried the cat who killed the rat who ate the malt, or with that yet more famous cow who swallowed Tom Thumb: it had never heard of those celebrities, and had only been introduced to a cow as a graminivorous ruminating quadruped with several stomachs. (*Hard Times* 8)

We can get further insight into the consequences of the *fact-without-fancy* policy if we renounce to the established view on the capitalist-bourgeois decay of virtues and follow what McCloskey suggests elsewhere (2010; 2011). It was ideas and a change of rhetoric towards the middle-class, rather than any other factors (social, political, cultural, scientific, etc.) that were responsible for the rise of this class, and it was the indispensable combination of faith, dignity, hope and liberty that secured its lasting success. As the discourse regarding *enterprise* and *invention* broke with suspicion and fear of merchants and trades, the argument continues, the economy exploded (2011, *passim*). In fact, on closer examination, we can see that Moretti himself uses the same idea of novelty of expression and outlook for the foundation of his argument in *The*

Bourgeois (despite speaking from the altogether different position of the liberal arts scholar): "*[R]egularity*, not disequilibrium, was the great *narrative invention* of bourgeois Europe" (15, my emphasis), "fillers" are "a great bourgeois *invention*" (82, my emphasis), and the Victorian adjectives represent "a *major turning-point* in the history of modern prose" (130, my emphasis)—to mention but a few of its formulations in his book.

The opposite of *innovation* is *stasis*, and the utilitarian doctrine is predisposed to creating such a condition. Though he does not explicitly tackle the problem of this dichotomy, Dickens lets us *see* what might happen in the absence of the impetus to think and live "outside the box." "Never wonder" is the mantra prescribed by McChoakumchild and Gradgrind to the unfortunate youth of Coketown, as seen on several occasions in the novel:

> When she was half-a-dozen years younger, Louisa had been overheard to begin a conversation with her brother one day by saying, "Tom, I wonder"—upon which Mr. Gradgrind, who was the person overhearing, stepped forth into the light and said, "Louisa, never wonder!" (*Hard Times* 43)

> Herein lay the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections. Never wonder. By means of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, settle everything somehow, and never wonder. Bring to me, says McChoakumchild, yonder baby just able to walk, and I will engage that it shall never wonder. (43)

> These portentous infants being alarming creatures to stalk about in any human society, the eighteen denominations incessantly scratched one another's faces and pulled one another's hair by way of agreeing on the steps to be taken for their improvement—which they never did; a surprising circumstance, when the happy adaptation of the means to the end is considered. Still, although they differed in every other particular, conceivable and inconceivable (especially inconceivable), they were pretty well united on the point that these unlucky infants were never to wonder. Body number one said they must take everything on trust. Body number two said they must take everything on political economy. Body number three wrote leaden little books for them, showing how the good grown-up baby invariably got to the savings-bank, and the bad grown-up baby invariably got transported. Body number four, under dreary pretences of being droll (when it was very melancholy indeed), made the shallowest pretences of concealing pitfalls of knowledge, into which it was the duty of these babies to be smuggled and inveigled. But all the bodies agreed that they were never to wonder. (44)

The problem with the utilitarian calculus à la Bentham is that it is a theory rooted in the Enlightenment belief in the possibility of a *mathesis*

universalis. However, for the bourgeois (and especially for the bourgeois of the mid 19th century Britain), it turns out to be a most destructive system. As Gurri *et.al.* (2014) explain, a fundamental question that utilitarians need to address is how to compound "utility," as an "aggregate" of happiness. Reducing everything to statistics and placing the equality sign between different forms of happiness results in forced regularisation, as seen in Gradgrind's caricature office, where

> the most complicated social questions were cast up, got into exact totals, and finally settled—if those concerned could only have been brought to know it. As if an astronomical observatory should be made without any windows, and the astronomer within should arrange the starry universe solely by pen, ink, and paper, so Mr. Gradgrind, in his Observatory (and there are many like it), had no need to cast an eye upon the teeming myriads of human beings around him, but could settle all their destinies on a slate, and wipe out all their tears with one dirty little bit of sponge. (*Hard Times* 85)

As eventually demonstrated by the "reformed utilitarian" J. S. Mill,[2] the hierarchy of preferences cannot be neglected, and the aggregate of preferences cannot be used as currency or as moral or ethical standard (Gurri *et.al.,* 2014). "How far am I willing to go?" is a question any *prudent* utilitarian should ask at some point. The maximisation of preferences is indeed a bourgeois concept (intimately linked with "welfare" and "comfort"—in their turn middle-class, rather than aristocratic or proletarian ideals, as the former don't *need*, whereas the latter can hardly *afford* them), but an awareness of *excess* should also be on the bourgeoisie's agenda. The situation is further complicated by the fact that utilitarianism inherently tends to exclude from its scheme the attitudes and motives behind the drive to maximise pleasure and minimise pain (*i.e.* Bentham's definition of "utility"), thereby becoming doubly anti-bourgeois by also being an *amoral* doctrine. In other words, as an effect-oriented, teleological ethic, it pays little to no attention to what it actually *means* to be better off (*ibid.*).

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[2] As McCloskey (2011 *passim*) points out, there is a difference between *act utilitarianism* and *rule (indirect) utilitarianism*. The former reflects the Benthamite conception, while the latter, as proposed by Mill, Sidgwick and others, departs from the "win-win-win-win-win-lose" logic of the original formula by transferring political and ethical decisions from acts to the legislation regarding acts, thus avoiding the limitations of the narrower application of utilitarianism. By contrasting Gradgrind to Bounderby, Dickens appears to channel the bulk of his critique on act utilitarianism. More precisely, while Gradgrind proves capable of renouncing to his convictions, with Bounderby there is no intention to give up a status-quo that works solely in his personal interest (the prime mover of act utilitarianism). Consequently, at the end of the novel Gradgrind becomes worthy of our sympathy, whereas Bounderby, as Mrs. Sparsit eloquently sums up, is exposed as a mere "Noodle" whose "proceedings [...] can only inspire contempt" (*Hard Times*, 265).

To sum up: *excess*[3] leads to *surplus* and *surplus* discourages *innovation*. What's more, *amorality* excludes *dignity*, both with the working class and the creative bourgeoisie. It is no wonder therefore that in Dickens's novel, in the absence of dignity, workers become "Hands," individuals are reduced to cogs in some universal mechanism, and life itself regresses to a primeval slime:

> So many hundred Hands in this Mill; so many hundred horses Steam Power. It is known, to the force of a single pound weight, what the engine will do; but not all the calculators of the National Debt can tell me the capacity for good or evil, for love or hatred, for patriotism or discontent, for the decomposition of virtue into vice, or the reverse, at any single moment in the soul of one of these its quiet servants, with the composed faces and the regulated actions. There is no mystery in it; there is an unfathomable mystery in the meanest of them, forever.— Supposing we were to reverse our arithmetic for material objects, and to govern these awful unknown quantities by other means! (*Hard Times* 61-62)

> "Let the laws be." "Yes," he said, with a slow nod or two. "Let 'em be. Let everything be. Let all sorts alone. 'Tis a muddle, and that's aw." "Always a muddle?" said Rachael, with another gentle touch upon his arm, as if to recall him out of the thoughtfulness in which he was biting the long ends of his loose neckerchief as he walked along. (*Hard Times* 59)

3. Through "muddle" to knowledge

> "There is a wisdom of the head, and...
> there is a wisdom of the heart."
> —Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*

Moretti calls the bourgeoisie "the first *realistic* class of human history," since it shoves the mirror of self-examination in front of the entire society,

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[3] In *Hard Times,* "excess" takes on various forms, in addition to what results from the obvious flaw of the Benthamite doctrine. A blatant manifestation would be Slackbridge's demagogic discourse (echoing reactionary, anti-bourgeois communist propaganda). In its more subtle variety, it manifests itself in the form of "pride." With Gradgrind, it is the sheepish fascination with his system and its desolate Frankenstein child, Louisa, who, during the scene of their harshest confrontation, is reduced to nothing more than "an insensible heap," lying at the feet of her master-creator (*Hard Times* 196). Leavis himself considers pride to be Gradgrind's main defect, commensurate with his belief in the merits of utilitarianism (240). Pride, understood as the flaunting of one's (real or imaginary) achievements can itself be regarded a major stumbling block in the face of bourgeois inventiveness. The constant need for validation of the set of parameters which could describe these "achievements" (both by the subject himself and the others) practically precludes any possibility of future development, leading to stagnation. Pride itself becomes thus a form of "reifying" self-worth, self-perception and (expected) public image.

rather than hide its rule behind "a host of symbolic delusions" (102). Following this suggestion, we may read Dickens's novel, primarily through Gradgrind's progress, as an allegory of the bourgeoisie in search of what has once defined it and what has been lost with the advent of utilitarianism. From "muddle" to "illumination," *Hard Times* is also a *search for meaning*, as Sicher (2011) correctly notes. It may even be argued, the author suggests, that the actual focal point of Dickens's criticism is not utilitarianism *per se,* but a system constructed on a void of meaning. It juxtaposes "two competing metasystems of representation, Fact and Fancy" in a satire whose target is "a sign system which conceals a void of meaning and which, ironically, serves no useful purpose, except to impose an inhuman uniformity and enforced conformity [...]" (315).[4] As with McCloskey and Moretti, Dickens's emphasis on Fancy reinforces the idea that without resisting the tyranny of reason through innovative transformation (or "wondering") there can be no progress:

> The plea that fantasy be left inviolate is not just a way of asking for respect for the fairy tales of childhood; it is a plea for imagination in literature and in the workplace. A literature which is neither utilitarian nor instrumental recognizes the true poetry of the "fairy-tales of Science" (to use Tennyson's phrase) by showing that the wonders of Nature can be appreciated only through the imagination and reminding us that if there had been less wondering and wonderment there might have been fewer inventions. (318)

It is not only Fact that should lie at the basis of the *felicific calculus.* Fancy itself is just as worthy of being considered "useful labor." Dickens's novel is, in fact, a defence of this truth, as Sicher claims (326)[5].

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[4] For further discussion of the occurrences of "the void," see Harrison (2000). Among them, the author enumerates the hollowness of Gradgrind's statistical clock, Harthouse's "hollow and worthless" philosophy of anything goes and nothing matters, the "great wilderness" Louisa feels in her bosom while her life is perceived as "sinking into 'the void'," or Stephen Blackpool's death in a "black ragged chasm" (119). In his turn, Harrison claims that the target of Dickens's criticism in *Hard Times* is not the principle of Utilitarianism (in Bentham's original formula), nor of population overgrowth (in Malthusian lines) or the *laissez-faire* economics of Adam Smith, but, rather, the ideas of the Benthamite Philosophical Radicals (124).

[5] In a similar manner, though shifting the focus of the investigation, in her essay written in response to Martha Nussbaum's philosophical reading of *Hard Times* (1995), Kidder (2009) points out that the religious (i.e. Biblical) references in the text cannot be neglected. For Kidder, the search for meaning has an undeniable spiritual grounding, whereby "Christian and Biblical symbols provide powerful resistance to the utilitarian version of human motivation" (420). While Nussbaum correctly observed that for Dickens the missing element has to do with "metaphorical imagination" (Nussbaum, in Kidder 421), Kidder deems it necessary to take the argument further, claiming that "the resistance to utilitarianism is articulated largely in Christian terms" (424).

Another expression of this preoccupation for both "meaning" and "Fancy-as-useful-activity" can be seen in the novels' interest for *narrative*. In its basest form, "narrative" is represented by the "plotters," Bitzer, Mrs. Sparsit and James Harthouse, whose intrigues verify and endorse the principle of hedonistic measurement and pursuit of self-interest. Next to them is Josiah Bounderby, with whom the art of narration reaches an entirely different level, in his forging of a personal history which he trumpets and applauds on every available occasion. "I am Josiah Bounderby of Coketown, and that's enough for me" (*Hard Times* 115) is therefore the pinnacle of a narrative leading to irreversible stagnation, as the self-sufficient individual will see no reason to improve anything about his condition (this might explain why Bounderby's demise is conceived along cynical lines (he dies of a fit in the street of Coketown, we are informed plainly). This perverted form of fictionalising leads to a Machiavellian despotism of meaning that is put in the exclusive service of manipulating and controlling other individuals. When the bourgeois puts a ban on Fancy, Dickens suggests, monsters are born who will refrain from nothing to claim for themselves the privileges earned by the bourgeois, without, however, possessing any of their virtues.

There is, nonetheless, another way in which *Hard Times* connects with the idea of narration. As Starr explains, by emphasising the dangers of an education devoid of even the slightest exposure to stories (on the grounds that they might violate a factual, pragmatic understanding of the world), Dickens indirectly draws attention to the role of authorship and writing. Thus we can speak of an attempt made by the novel itself "to make reading visible" and even a "heightened self-referentiality" of the text (Starr 322; 333).

Finally, while at this point, it is possible to identify an even higher-level implication of the Fact vs. Fancy dichotomy. As Maynard observes, the publication of *Tom Jones* marked the onset of a new, sceptical, attitude regarding the value of educational and philosophical systems, which often found expression in the antithesis between men-made structures and organic development:

> From *Tom Jones* forward, the English bildungsroman especially looks with suspicion on educators and their philosophies. It doesn't like system, as the satirical look at utilitarian education in Dickens's novel about education and society, *Hard Times* (1854), shows. Novelists fear systems will stamp or cut out, often cut down humans; it prefers what it images as natural growth (Maynard, in Brantlinger 289)

Though not technically a bildungsroman, *Hard Times* intersects with the genre in its concern for related topics such as lack of growth or the possibility of the individual to change. As such, it necessarily illustrates another of Maynard's points, the interplay between individual and society in the "alchemical process of

education" (289-290). More importantly though, in this novel the association with the medieval art of transforming matter goes beyond sheer analogy. Thus, we learn of various cabinets in the Gradgrind children's room, in which specimens are "arranged and labelled" and where "the bits of stone and ore looked as though they might have been broken from the parent substances by those tremendously hard instruments their own names" (*Hard Times* 9). A bit later, at the circus, Gradgrind discovers "his own metallurgical Louisa, peeping with all her might through a hole in a deal board, and his own mathematical Thomas abasing himself on the ground to catch but a hoof of the graceful equestrian Tyrolean flower-act" (*Hard Times* 10)[6] The juxtaposition of the natural and the artificial is one of Dickens's favourite choices for his descriptions of Coketown, as we can see in these passages:

> The Fairy Palaces burst into illumination before pale morning showed the monstrous serpents of smoke trailing themselves over Coketown. A clattering of clogs upon the pavement, a rapid ringing of bells, and all the melancholy mad elephants, polished and oiled up for the day's monotony, were at their heavy exercise again. (*Hard Times* 61)

> Time went on in Coketown like its own machinery: so much material wrought up, so much fuel consumed, so many powers worn out, so much money made. But, less inexorable than iron, steel, and brass, it brought its varying seasons even into that wilderness of smoke and brick, and made the only stand that ever was made in the place against its direful uniformity. (*Hard Times* 80)

> Seen from a distance in such weather, Coketown lay shrouded in a haze of its own, which appeared impervious to the sun's rays. You only knew the town was there, because you knew there could have been no such sulky blotch upon the prospect without a town. A blur of soot and smoke, now confusedly tending this way, now that way, now aspiring to the vault of Heaven, now murkily creeping along the earth, as the wind rose and fell, or changed its quarter: a dense formless jumble, with sheets of cross light in it, that showed nothing but masses of darkness—Coketown in the distance was suggestive of itself, though not a brick of it could be seen. (*Hard Times* 98)

Besides their descriptive value, such sequences come to support another important point made by Moretti with regard to bourgeois literature, especially its Victorian incarnations. According to the critic, adjectives acquire during the Victorian Age new connotations but also possibilities for collocation.

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[6] For a thorough discussion of the linguistic and stylistic devices in *Hard Times*, see Harisson (2000). The author argues that such devices contribute to the creation of an "architecture" for the novel, through "complex patterns of thematic imagery" (116).

More exactly, those which were previously indicative of physical traits are at this point used in a new, metaphorical sense, to denote "emotional, ethical, intellectual, or even metaphysical states," gradually breaking away in function from description and moving toward evaluation, or "value judgement" (127). Indeed, a closer look at the above fragments reveals in this sense that the "monstrous" nature of the serpents points to the grotesquery of the utilitarian spectacle performed on a daily basis by the inhabitants of Coketown, while the "melancholy" madness of the elephant-like contraptions exceeds the immediate function of metaphor, targeting the very effects of the forces that keep up the said spectacle.

The organisation along dual/dualistic coordinates characterising the novel at a thematic level (Fact – Fancy, stasis – growth, natural – man-made, etc.) is also visible in the case of the most frequently used adjectives. Sullivan (1970) argues in this sense that despite its apparent "colorless" nature, *Hard Times* is actually polarised along the extremes of black and white (5). The black – white contrast is one of the key elements of the novel (we should not forget that one of the early titles contemplated by its author was, indeed, *Black and White*), but Dickens reverses their traditonal symbolism, associating black with "positive life force" and white with "antilife force":

> For Dickens, human "blackness" goes beyond the physical manifestation of vitality and growth to the realization of this energy in some kind of moral commitment, whereas whiteness indicates in the unhealthy pallor of bloodlessness a retreat from commitment, whether it be induced by temperament, ideology, or deliberate choice. (6)

In Sullivan's interpretation, the black – white dichotomy verifies Leavis's proposal to read the Dickensian text as a "moral fable," at the same time endowing his message with a "universal and allegorical quality […] that ensures against its being read in the narrowest application of anti-Utilitarianism" (10).

When doctrine leads to ethical and intellectual bondage, the right word can liberate and enrich our experience, Dickens seems to say. The story of the Gradgrinds unfolds along a line bounded by two dichotomic pairs: at one end, Gradgrind's unshaken faith in hard-line Benthamism, checked by Sissy Jupe's silence in face of mechanistic definitions; at the other, the reformed Gradgrind's hesitant replies and Louisa's newly-found voice. But, if for the Victorians meaning takes precedence over precision and "disavowal" combined with "sentimentalism" lead to "fear of knowledge," to subordinating knowledge to utility, eventually giving rise to "useful knowledge," or "knowledge without freedom" (Moretti 134-137), *Hard Times* breaks with the norm. Liberation comes through the newly-found wisdom which acknowledges the

complementary contribution of heart and head, Fancy and Fact, for the individual's development. "Do the withe thing and the kind thing, too, and make the betht of uth, not the wurtht!"—Dickens instructs his bourgeois through the words of the circus master (*Hard Times* 263).

From firm convictions, through "muddle," to self-discovery—this is the path at the end of which the *bourgeois* rediscovers *dignity* in *virtue*, not in *doctrine*. Though not a popular novel among Dickens's works, *Hard Times* remains quintessential for understanding the ethical and moral issues faced by the Victorian middle-class.

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THE LATEST MORETTI

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ABSTRACT. *The Latest Moretti.* This article is an informative essay about the latest preoccupations of Franco Moretti, one of today's leading literary theorists. The essay sums up and interprets the ideas from two still unpublished works by Moretti and his Stanford team: *Pamphlet 10* (on paragraphs) and *Pamphlet 11* (on the canon and the archive).

Keywords: *Moretti, digital humanities, novel, paragraph, canon, archive, quantitative research.*

REZUMAT. *Cel mai recent Moretti.* Acest articol este un eseu informativ despre cele mai recente preocupări ale lui Franco Moretti, unul dintre cei mai importanţi teoreticieni literari contemporani. Eseul rezumă şi interpretează ideile din două lucrări încă nepublicate ale lui Moretti şi ale echipei sale de la Stanford: *Broşura 10* (despre paragrafe) şi *Broşura 11* (despre canon şi arhivă).

Cuvinte cheie: *Moretti, umanioare digitalizate, roman, paragraf, canon, arhivă, quantitative research.*

Starting from research upon the Bildungsroman and the classical Victorian novel, Franco Moretti overpassed the traditional position of the literary critic and theorist in a very spectacular way. He enriched the structural analysis of narratives with the notions of points and fillers. The former are alternations between a cardinal moment in the narration (points), the latter are the actual happening that "fills" the space of the story.

The preeminence of the fillings over the points characterizes the bourgeois novel which accumulates in time exactly as the bourgeois accumulates the capital that will become the basis of his social force and

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power. The numerous fillings slow down the narrative speed of the novel and give it the stability that the middle class always longed for. Moretti also analysed free indirect style and came to the sophisticated and witty consideration that "[f]ree indirect style is a sort of stylistic Panopticon" (2006, 399).

Usually considered a polyvocal stylistic tool, free indirect speech is, in the Morettian critical system, an instrument that ensures the strict authorial domination over characters, plot, and voices. Moretti also drew a map of the European novel and gave the reader more than the usual considerations about the role of certain cities in the novel. His *Atlas* "the study of space in literature" is also "of literature in space" (3) where maps are not only visual appendices but important analytical tools.

Geography and literature meet and re-discover, in-form each other in a unique show of intelligence and scholarship. It may be that the analysis of the construction and the place of the bourgeois in European literature from Defoe to Ibsen[2] led Franco Moretti to realizing the immense number of literary works ever written which are not paid any attention in literary research. Hence he concluded that literary research should not resemble a "slaughterhouse" where the overwhelming majority of literary works become innocent victims of time and the often random selection of texts that come to represent the so-called spirit of an age.[3]

Not only the great canonized works are worth studying as canonization is often constrained by times and ideologies. The minors often have interesting things to tell. The literary historian should not be a serial killer but rather the midwife of new truths about old ages. Influenced by the scientific spirit characteristic of our time, Franco Moretti considers that the close reading initiated by the wise and inspired minds of New Haven no longer meets the expectations of the contemporary reader. He recommends instead the "distant reading" which is actually an extremely innovative method to interpret literature. For the first time, the traditional qualitative methods considered, till now, to be inevitable in the study of literature, are replaced by quantitative methods made possible by the digitalization of literature and the computer's ability to count much more quickly and efficiently than any human mind. The results of such research are synthetized in graphs, trees, or maps. The study of literature is no longer the result of great and initiated minds who think in proud seclusion of new meanings and associations of literary works, the study of literature is the result of teams whose members cooperate in order to come to conclusions that prove directly and quantitatively previous intuitions.

Franco Moretti organized such teams at Stanford University under the label of Literary Labs. The results of these researches are made known in Pamphlets. Up to now,[4] 11 such pamphlets were written. We shall analyze the

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[2] See *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature.*
[3] See "The Slaughterhouse of Literature".
[4] March 2016.

latest two in order to in-form our readerships with and about the trends of Moretti's research and suggest the possible application of these methods to other literatures as well.

Pamphlet 10 is co-authored by Mark Algee-Hewitt, Ryan Heuser, and Franco Moretti. After reviewing two other previous projects ("A Network of 3,000 Novels" and Mapping English Poetry"), the authors conclude that digital humanities have the very special capacity to start from very small units and make it towards a large outcome. For instance, in the poetry project, 6,400 poems written from the sixteenth century to the twentieth are analyzed. The meter used in each poem was manually recorded. The conclusion is that the power of word decreases in modern poetry. An analysis of linguistic redundancy in the novel leads to the conclusion that there is less linguistic redundancy (repetitions of combinations of any two consecutive words) in the non-canonical novels. These works display much more linguistic freedom and creativity. The authors consider that digital humanities actually confirm Leo Spitzer's circular method where the critic goes from detail to the whole and back to the detail and tries to find a common denominator.

Such a common denominator is looked for in the study of paragraphs, a very much understudied problem. The authors make clear the distinction between themes (which are large, abstract, and synthetic) and motifs (which are explicit, delimited, and concrete). They research nineteen Victorian bildungsromans and ask the following question: Are the paragraphs thematic units, as we have all been taught in primary school, at least in the European system of schooling? Firstly, paragraphs are divided between narrative paragraphs and dialogues. Each cue in a dialogue is considered to be a dialogic paragraph. The conclusion is that there is a balance between the narrative and the dialogic paragraphs, which shows a balance between the oral and the written in the classical novel. This balance was later challenged by Henry James and his innovative novelistic strategies.

A quantitative morphological analysis of the topics that can be contained in a paragraph follows. The authors conclude: "Paragraphs are the textual *habitat*, and within this *habitat*, the most typical combination is the mix of three topics (or thereabouts)" (16). The analysis of topicality within the paragraphs is followed by the study of the relations between paragraphs. The authors notice that there is often a shift from a narrative paragraph to "a sort of 'unfolding' in which a highly focused paragraph is followed by one which introduces associated notions or places the primary topic in the wider world of the novel" (17). This thematic discontinuity can lead us to a sort of hidden rhythm of the novel which is the typical marker of each novelist.

At the end of the analysis the authors' style reaches the proximities of poetry, proving the rigorous computing does not kill artistry. The paragraph, say Algee-Hewitt, Heuser, and Moretti, is "a pawn that makes its orderly one-way move towards the end of the story" (17).

The most recent pamphlet is Pamphlet 11, written in January 2016 and entitled "Canon/Archive. Large-scale Dynamics in the Literary Field," and authored by Mark Algee-Hewitt, Sarah Allison, Marissa Gemma, Ryan Heuser, Franco Moretti, and Hannah Walser. The pamphlet begins with a very interesting justification of quantitative history going back to 1958 when Fernand Braudel harbingered the advent of this new historical discourse which needs different questions. Results are inevitable if the right questions are asked. The authors then clarify the differences between the canon, the archive, and the corpus. We skip the definition of the canon as this notion has benefited of so much critical and theoretical attention since the change of the canon in American literature in the 1960's. The archive is the literature published and preserved in libraries.[5] The corpus is smaller than the archive; it is the part of the archive that is selected for research. In case of a total history of literature[6], these three layers can merge and their boundaries can coincide or clash.

Moretti & Company notice that with canonization the prestige of the canonized works increases, whereas the popularity of the canonized works decreases. This does not influence automatically the economics of the reception of canonized works. Prestige can make one buy many canonized works. Therefore, one must invest in publishing canonical works, this does necessarily entail financial losses. One may respond that these conclusions can also be inferred apriorically. Of course, but the quantitative methods give one irrefutable proofs, practically impossible to dispute.

Spreadsheets have been used by the authors of Pamphlet 11 in order to measure the linguistic redundancy, i.e. what words are reiterated and in what contexts, in the archive and in the canon. The conclusion is that nouns are more numerous in the archive. Function words (conjunctions, determiners, prepositions) appear more frequently in the canon. The archive is much more linguistically varied than the canon. Hence, in Bakhtinian terms, the canonical texts are characterized, predominantly, by polyphony. In the forgotten novels, heteroglossia is overwhelming, in other words these writers also use language from other fields, such as politics, aesthetics, geography, or architecture, or others. The authors of Pamphlet 11 wonder why and how Bakhtin had come to his conclusion, namely, that heteroglossia creatively transforms the novels.[7] This positive interpretation of the effect of heteroglossia is, in our opinion, because Bakhtin had looked at canonical novels and he did not have the means, or the intention to do a total study of literature. Non-canonical novels did not interest him.

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[5] Most of the archive is digitized at present.

[6] The ideal situation would be when all the works of a literature are part of the research. Digitalization can make this possible.

[7] See "Discourse in the Novel."

The very stimulating conclusion of Pamphlet 11 is that researchers should look at literature on the whole and stop being mesmerized by what history and tradition gave as canonical works. The explanation of this new and challenging attitude is, firstly, that the canon itself is a socio-cultural construct that has its own historicity, namely it changes in time and with times. There may be works which we do not appreciate yet, but this does not mean that in the future they may not be canonized.[8] Secondly, looking at a wider corpus of literary texts, if possible, at the whole body of a literature, when this will be digitized, can lead us to very interesting conclusions about human creativity and the relation between literature and reality. The authors of Pamphlet 11 recommend the following balanced strategy: "Learning to look at the wreck without arrogance – but also without pieties-"(13). Idealization and pre-conceived ideas or hierarchies are Moretti and his team's worst enemies.

For many Romanian literary critics, this is either a scandalous challenge, or at best, more of an ideal than a reality. A terrible example, in this respect, is Alexandru Cistelecan's book *Ardelencele* (*The Transylvanian Women*). The study written in a very original style - Cistelecan's capacity to draw portraits, especially caricatured ones, is remarkable – analyzes the works of the first Romanian female poets. Most of them were from Transylvania and wrote during the nineteenth century or beginning of the twentieth. As they are far from being canonical, these female poets benefit only from compassion from Cistelecan who is not able to see any value in their work. On the very first page of the book, they are called "poor poetesses" (5).[9] The critic refuses them any originality: "all the Transylvanian women writers write in the same way and there is no damage in putting all their poems under a single name" (71).[10] Biographical incidents take precedence over the interpretation of these women's works and the understanding of certain biographical incidents is done in an aggressive macho spirit which proves that some readings in gender studies (at least, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler or Mihaela Miroiu) are necessary to the critic. We want to give only one example, but one that is extremely relevant: Veronica Micle (1850-1889), the muse of Eminescu, the greatest Romanian poet. According to Cistelecan, "[s]he must have been a women with precocious *sex appeal* (a hot woman from Năsăud…),[11] as she gives, at the age of only 13 (…), a

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[8] An interesting such example in Romanian literature is Mircea Cavadia and his excellent novel *Privighetoarea arsă* (*The Burnt Out Nightingale*), published in 2000, which has no review probably because Cavadia lives in Reşiţa, a small provincial town, and he does not belong to the literary networks which operate in the big Romanian cities and are able to give a writer prominence and public recognition.

[9] "bietele poete" (5).

[10] "ardelencele scriu toate la fel si nu-i nicio catastrofa sa treci toate poeziile lor sub un singur nume" (71).

[11] The Transylvanian town where Veronica Micle was born.

real *coup de foudre* to professor Ştefan Micle,[12] a man, so to speak, in full power (he was 43 years old)" (28).[13] The ill-suited marriage, which would be classified as pedophilia nowadays, does not stir the least expression of compassion to Cistelecan who sees everything as the result of Veronica's precocious sex appeal. The poor Micle is the victim of this 13 year-old Dalilah. It does not occur to the critic that Veronica Micle is practically sold to her lascivious and old suitor. Her later interest in philantropy is relevant in this respect. Together with other ladies from Iasi, Micle contributed to funding a vocational school for orphan girls. The aim of this institution was to teach these girls a trade so that they could avoid an unwanted marriage.[14]

The lacrimosity of these women's poetry or the short span of their lives as writers (most of them write only before marriage or after children grew up and often, after becoming widows) are seen as signs of poor aesthetic quality and lack of interest in poetry without any understanding for the context in which these women were socialized, wrote, and lived. The valorization of the minor or the minorized Romanian writers would benefit from Moretti's method. Using it, literary critics and historians would be able to quantify and qualify their literary importance much more accurately. Literary theorists could draw much more nuanced conclusions about the evolution of literature.

In conclusion, the latest work of Franco Moretti and his team shows that science and literature, the arts are getting closer and closer. The scientific, rigorous spirit that controls the work of these lab teams creates a more rational literary history where the taste and the interpretative talent of the critic are supported by very wide data bases. It is beyond doubt that computers will make truth, objectivity, and a rationalistic team spirit enter the field of humanities as well. The critic will no longer supervise the field of literature from his isolated, high hermeneutic tower and then pass on judgments that are the result of his personal intuition, taste or, in the worst cases, idiosyncrasies. The digitalization of humanities will not destroy the study of literature but it will enhance it. The fact that the literary and the scientific spirit meet in Moretti's approach and his team's end results makes it necessary to read the Pamphlets on two levels. On the one hand, we have the text proper, which is spiced with graphs that bring irrefutable quantitative evidence supporting the statements from the text proper. On the other hand, there is a very rich paratext which links this enterprise with other researches that can clarify the theses of the present Lab or give previous attempts to use quantitative methods. The paratext connects the text with the outer world of researchers.

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[12] It was love at first sight, for Micle.

[13] "Va fi fost, cu siguranţă, o femeie cu *sex appeal* precoce (năsăudeancă de foc …) de vreme ce îi provoacă la numai 13 ani (…) un adevărat *coup de foudre* profesorului Ştefan Micle, om, ca să ne exprimăm aşa, în toată puterea (avea 43 de ani)" (28).

[14] See Stefania Mihailescu, Din istoria feminismului romanescu. Antologie de texte (1838-1929).

I am not sure how many critics will adopt Moretti's quantitative method, but I am convinced some will because this new strategy belongs to our digital age and going back to the old way of critical intuitions is like going back to childhood dreams.

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ON THE 'SERIOUSNESS' OF EARLY MODERN ENGLISH FICTION

AMELIA PRECUP[1]

ABSTRACT. *On the 'Seriousness' of Early Modern English Fiction.* In his 2013 book, *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature*, Franco Moretti explores the complex relationship between aesthetic forms and the values of the society that produced them. Moretti focuses on analysing the connection between the nineteenth-century realist novel and the ethos of the bourgeoisie, by examining the ways in which the features of what he calls 'serious' literature developed under the influence of the 'serious' bourgeois society. Using Moretti's analysis, this paper sets out to investigate if and how these features manifest in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century prose fiction, with a view to add an evolutional perspective to Moretti's thesis.

Keywords: Franco Moretti, serious fiction, early modern English fiction, literary strategies.

REZUMAT. *Despre 'seriozitatea' prozei moderne timpurii englezeşti.* În lucrarea sa din 2013, intitulată *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature*, Franco Moretti explorează legătura complexă dintre societate şi formele estetice pe care aceasta le-a produs. Moretti se concentrează pe analizarea conexiunii dintre romanul realist din secolul al nouăsprezecelea şi etosul burghez, examinând modul în care trăsăturile principale ale ceea ce el numeşte literatură „serioasă" se dezvoltă sub acţiunea specificului cultural al societăţii burgheze. Pornind de la analiza lui Moretti, lucrarea de faţă îşi propune să urmărească modul de manifestare al acestor trăsături în proza englezească de la sfârşitul secolului al şaptesprezecelea şi începutul secolului al optsprezecelea, cu scopul de a adauga o perspectivă evolutivă tezei lui Moretti.

Cuvinte cheie: Franco Moretti, proză serioasă, proza timpurie engleză, strategii literare.

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The questions regarding the beginnings and the evolution of the novel form an intricate and intriguing network which invites insightful debates, ranging from the attempt to identify the spatial and temporal coordinates of the genre's 'birth' to the ideology and the epistemological outlook that facilitated its emergence. One of the first major works concerned with the beginnings of the English novel, Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* claims that the emergence of the novel reflects the "individualist and innovating reorientation" (8) facilitated by a series of factors that influenced what Watt calls "the conditions of the time" (4), such as the philosophical ideas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or the social changes and the emergence of the middle class. Continuing and completing Ian Watt's thesis by exploring the novel in relation to the social and cultural transformations of the day, in *The English Novel in History 1700-1780*, John Richetti adds to the scholarship by underlining the importance of amatory fiction in the transition from the heroic ethos of the romance to the "new ethos of ordinary life" (20). Michael McKeon discusses the origins of the English novel in terms of categorial instability and epistemological and ideological transformations. Robert Mayer investigates the relationship between history and fiction in Defoe's work and explores the work of early modern English writers before Defoe to analyze their influence on the history-fiction link in the novelistic discourse. Drawing on Franco Moretti's statistical analysis of the European novel as presented in his *Atlas of the European Novel*, the contributors to *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* edited by Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever look at the emergence of the modern novel as the result of the "literary transmission and exchange between Britain and France" (3). The contributors to *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture* edited by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia explore the "previously ignored dimensions of the novel" (8) and incorporate transnational discourses into the story of the English novel. Within this large and intricate network of theoretical standpoints, this paper intends to add to the inquiries into the origins and the evolution of the English novel by looking back on the short fiction of early modern English writers through the well-polished paradigmatic lenses of the nineteenth-century realist novel, as defined by Franco Moretti in *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature*. Moretti's analysis provides a clear set of narrative strategies and conditions that can be followed in their evolutional manifestation. Such an approach is meant to link the narrative strategies employed and perfected by the nineteenth-century novel to their early antecedents and finds justification in Moretti's very own claim that "if we work backwards ... formal analysis may unlock ... a dimension of the past that would otherwise remain hidden" (14).

Starting from the premise that cultural forms are directly connected to the social realities in which they were produced, and that literary works are

"fossil remains of what had once been a living and problematic present" (14), Franco Moretti's work *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* sets out to retrieve the fundamental ideological features of the bourgeois society and examine the way in which they were translated into the literature of what he calls the 'serious century.' Moretti insists on the function of literary works as a reflection of the intellectual and social experiences of the period in which they were produced. In *The Bourgeois* he argues the existence of a tight relationship between the realist fiction of the nineteenth century and the bourgeoisie, visible in the literary strategies that adjust to accommodate and interrogate bourgeois social values. Thus, the literary features and strategies Moretti identifies as typical of nineteenth-century realist fiction seem to describe a unitary literary condition shaped under the influence of a specific social consciousness. The conceptual pairing of 'fillers' and 'turning points' meant to contribute to the 'rationalization' of the narrative and to keep it under control, the reality principle that forces both pleasant and unpleasant facts into the narrative, descriptions as traces of conservative ideology meant to slow down the narrative pace, and the free indirect speech as a means of balancing the subjective and the objective, these features and techniques are all subsumed under the keyword 'serious' and represent, in Moretti's view, the literary strategies that reflect the bourgeois ethos. These are, however, strategies not unprecedented in fiction. Therefore, the contention of this paper is that they can be traced back to the prose fiction of the late seventeenth century and of the first decade of the eighteenth century, albeit their literary precedents, shaped under different social circumstances and lacking tradition, manifest differently. Moreover, such an approach also provides a set of common denominators to comparatively examine, if not to unite, the various literary experiments in early modern English prose fiction.

Why stop at the intersection of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Of course, the motivation includes both social and literary aspects. The society of the period underwent transformations that would influence the evolution of the bourgeois society of the nineteenth century. The economic opportunities of the day and the growing importance of wealth facilitated the renegotiation of class dynamics. The ascension of a new class began to show the first signs after the Glorious Revolution, when "[p]rofessionals, merchants, manufacturers, financiers and trades-people all became wealthier, and with the 'petit bourgeois' of successful shopkeepers, craftspeople and victuallers, they emerged to form a proto 'middle class'" (Larsen 39). Soon after, wealth entered a competition against aristocratic titles for ruling prerogatives as wealthy merchants "bought their way into Parliament and purchased the estates of bankrupt landowners, and aristocracy developed into plutocracy" (Daiches 592). Moreover, the new economic opportunities intensified the

migration from countryside to the city, mainly to the capital. Therefore, the values of the society of the day were shaped under the influence of a strong sense of urbanity and an intensely urban vision. These changes in class dynamics and demographic distribution triggered an ideological shift visible in the gradual replacement of the old aristocratic idealism with a more progressive outlook,[2] and this new ideological orientation was, of course, mirrored by the literary experiments of the day. Moreover, the above-mentioned social changes also caused changes in patronage and readership which, in turn, contributed to the shaping of prose fiction. Since writers were no longer conditioned by the vanity and literary taste of a patron, they had more freedom in choosing the approach to literary subjects. This freedom came with assorted concerns and challenges since writers had to capture the interest of a larger, more heterogeneous audience, which led to the continuous reinvention and transformation of literary forms.[3] Therefore, from a literary perspective, the period covering the last decades of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth century is essential for the understanding of the subsequent evolution of literary genres. This period witnessed the creation of prose works that foreshadow the accomplishments of later novelists and mark the transition from the idealism of the romance to the verisimilitude of the novel.

In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the term 'novel' was employed by early modern authors who manifested interest in finding innovative means of literary expression and was applied indiscriminately to various forms of prose fiction. For example, in his 1692 preface to *Incognita*, William Congreve attempts a definition of this genre. He elaborates on the distinction between the novel and the romance and insists on the sense of familiarity and plausibility it is meant to convey. In Congreve's words,

> Novels are of a more familiar nature; Come near us, and represent to us Intrigues in practice, delight us with Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or unpresidented, such which not being so distant from our Belief bring also the pleasure nearer us. Romances give more of Wonder, Novels more Delight. And with reverence be it spoken, and the Parallel kept at due distance, there is something of equality in the Proportion which they bear in reference to one another, with that betwen Comedy and Tragedy; but the Drama is the long extracted from Romance and History: 'tis the Midwife to Industry, and brings forth alive the Conceptions of the Brain [sic].

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[2] See Michael McKeon's *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*.

[3] Writers of the period showed constant preoccupation with the reader's reaction to (certain parts of) the text. This can be seen either in their attempt to formulate theories about what would please the readers in the prefaces to their works or in the narrator's intrusion in the text in order to justify turns of the plot or narrative twists by addressing the narratee directly.

Thus, in Congreve's view, novels are about familiar individuals, who have less common, but still plausible experiences, thus differing from the distant and idealised nature of romances, with their narratives of extraordinary heroes and heroic exploits.[4] Congreve's distinction between novels and romances relies on the parallel between comedy and tragedy, but he also intuits the 'in-between-ness' of the novel, its being situated at the intersection between the fantastic excesses of the romance and the truth claims of history. Congreve's understanding of this 'middle' state of the novel bears considerable resemblances to what Moretti, via Diderot, describes as the '*genre serieux*,' a genre situated in an intermediate position "between two extreme genres" (Diderot in Moretti 74). Indeed, Diderot places the serious genre between comedy and tragedy, but closer to tragedy, and Congreve only uses the distance between tragedy and comedy for his comparison. However, Congreve acknowledges the influence of both the aristocratic ideology of tragedy and the plebeian spirit of comedy on the novel. His claim that drama is of romance extraction and that he "resolved in another beauty to imitate Dramatick Writing, namely, in the Design, Contexture and Result of the Plot" brings the new genre closer to aristocratic ideals, while the association between "the Unity of Action" in a comedy with the "Unity of Contrivance" in a novel points to the novel's affinity with comedy.[5]

Besides content, Congreve's preface also tackles form or what he calls "the design of the Novel." He expresses admiration for balanced stories: he blames flat and tedious narratives and advocates the use of twists and episodes meant to make the story more interesting, as long as they observe the "Unity of Contrivance." Congreve writes:

> How many probable Casualties intervene in opposition to the main Design, viz. of marrying two Couple so oddly engaged in an intricate Amour, I leave the Reader at his leisure to consider: As also whether every Obstacle does not in the progress of the Story act as subservient to that purpose, which at first it seems to oppose.

The plot of Congreve's *Incognita* is reminiscent of that typical of the Restoration comedies because of its intricacy and its fairly artificial nature. It revolves around the formation and eventual marriage of two couples, and relies on a series of twists and misunderstandings. However, the 'obstacles' in the progress of the story are not only the twists in the plot, but also the small insignificant incidents that make the story more vivid. They closely resemble

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[4] The same ideas were also explored (almost a century after Congreve's preface to *Incognita*) by Clara Reeve in her *The Progress of Romance*. Reeve also dwells on the familiarity of the novel as opposed to the implausibility of the events in a romance.

[5] This idea would be developed later by Henry Fielding.

the kind of 'parasitic' episodes that Moretti calls 'fillers' and defines, via Barthes, as episodes that do not influence the progress, the unfolding of the plot, the 'turning points'[6] of the narrative. In Moretti's words:

> ... Barthes is right, they [fillers] don't really do much; they enrich and give nuance to the progress of the story, but without modifying what the turning points have established. They are indeed too 'weak and parasitic' to do so; all they have to offer are people who talk, play cards, visit, take walks, read a letter, listen to music, drink a cup of tea.
> Narration: but of the everyday. This is the secret of fillers. (71)

In Moretti's view, these structural features are part of a historically specific narrative strategy, directly linked to the nineteenth-century bourgeois culture. Fillers are meant to control the "'narrativity' of life" and imprint upon the narrative the kind of regular pace that he associates with the rationality of the bourgeois outlook (72).

Although the bourgeois ethos has no bearing on the world of *Incognita*, Congreve employs such episodes to create and maintain a kind of monolithic coherence between the form of his prose fiction and the claims made in the preface about the familiarity of the events in a novel the purpose of which, he claims, is to bring pleasure 'nearer us.' One of the liveliest such episodes is that in which Aurelian enters the room where Hippolito is half asleep. Congreve writes:

> ...he [Aurelian] found [Hippolito] with a Table before him, leaning upon both his Elbows, his Face covered with his Hands, and so motionless, that Aurelian concluded he was asleep; seeing several Papers lie before him, half written and blotted out again, he thought to steal softly to the Table, and discover what he had been employed about. Just as he reach'd forth his Hand to take up one of the Papers, Hippolito started up so on the suddain, as surpriz'd Aurelian and made him leap back; Hippolito, on the other hand, not supposing that any Body had been near him, was so disordered with the Appearance of a Man at his Elbow, (whom his Amazement did not permit him to distinguish) that he leap'd hastily to his Sword, and in turning him about, overthrew the Stand and Candles. Here were they both left in the Dark, Hippolito groping about with his Sword, and thrusting at every Chair that he felt oppose him. Aurelian was scarce come to himself, when thinking to step back toward the Door that he might inform his Friend of his Mistake, without exposing himself to his blind Fury; Hippolito heard him stir, and made a full thrust with such

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[6] Fillers and turning points make the conceptual pairing that Moretti uses for his approach to the narrative form of the nineteenth-century novel. He defines them by using Barthes' terminology, namely 'cardinal functions' and 'catalyzers'. Moretti explains: "A cardinal function is a turning point in the plot; fillers are what happens *between* one turning point and the next" (71).

Violence, that the Hilt of the Sword meeting with Aurelian's Breast beat him down, and Hippolito a top of him, as a Servant alarm'd with the noise, came into the Chamber with a Light.

The scene is skilfully rendered in the rapid transition from the static initial atmosphere to the accelerated pace of the fight. It captures the reactions of a man who was scared out of sleep by an unexpected presence and of his friend who was scared out of the ability to react by the sudden and unforeseen attack. This episode gains mock-heroic inflections when depicting the brave and confused Hippolito fighting chairs and driven by what may literally be "blind Fury." Luckily, the servant prevented him from "committing the most Execrable Act of Amicide." In its energetic development, the scene betrays Congreve's talent for creating vivid scenes and reflects the author's reputed wit. Regardless of its dynamic and zest, this scene does not influence the development of the plot. It only entertains the reader and subsequently flows into another filler, a less elaborated but just as amusing an episode, in which Aurelian and Hippolito do nothing but sigh upon hearing "the name of love" until "they were both out of Breath."

Of course, not all the fillers in *Incognita* are as pleasantly zestful and brisk, but Congreve's characters do talk, have chocolate, or listen to music (amorous Hippolito is ravished by Leonora's love song), episodes which closely resemble the categories of fillers enumerated by Moretti and quoted above. Moreover, Congreve draws attention to such fillers by announcing them and then purposely leaves them out because of some pretended care for the reader's patience:

> I could find in my Heart to beg the Reader's pardon for this Digression, if I thought he would be sensible of the Civility; for I promise him, I do not intend to do it again throughout the Story, though I make never so many, and though he take them never so ill. But because I began this upon a bare Supposition of his Impertinence, which might be somewhat impertinent in me to suppose, I do, and hope to make him amends by telling him, that by the time Leonora was dress'd, several Ladies of her acquaintance came to accompany her to the place designed for the Tilting, where we will leave them drinking Chocholate till 'tis time for them to go.

Congreve's fillers are not commentaries on everydayness. They still belong to "the culture of adventures," to the aristocratic mythology that Moretti opposes to the "rational work ethic" of the bourgeois (34). Even so, Congreve's episodes do infuse vigour and a sense of the familiar into the narrative.

Delarivière Manley, the author who focused on representing scandalous Court intrigues and conduct and who paved "the way for the English novel of manners," shares Congreve's treatment of those scenes that do not directly influence the development of the plot (Mudure 94). For example, the

agglomeration in Clelia's bedroom in Manley's "The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians: Being a Looking-Glass for __ in the Kingdom of Albigion" when, after Hippolito had seduced Zarah, all the characters introduced thus far seem to be drawn to that space by some magnetic force of the farcical and the carnivalesque is, in many ways, reminiscent of Congreve's satirical approach to the world of gallantry. The amorous encounter between Hippolito and Zarah is, indeed, a turning point in the development of the story, but the continuation of the scene with everybody rushing into the room, Clelia, Jenisa, and... the priest (why the priest?) borders on the farcical; it betrays Manley's interest in scandalous events and contributes to her endeavour to expose and comment on an immoral and frivolous society.

Manley is not preoccupied with developing these episodes for the sake of rendering the atmosphere of the ordinary and the habitual; they are only meant to entertain the reader by accumulating intriguing incidents that lead to the unfolding of the plot. This is more important for Manley than reinforcing the sense of verisimilitude through the careful consideration and insertion of ordinary activities into the narrative. Although she does advocate representation and plausibility in the preface[7] to "Queen Zarah," the literary strategies she promotes recommend that writers "observe the probability of truth" and create characters that reflect the weaknesses of human nature (95). The preface insists that writers should "take for the foundation of their history no more than one principal event and [not] overcharge it with episodes" (95). Thus, in Manley's opinion, fillers seem to fall in the category of tedious narrative techniques.

Although she belongs to the same literary culture as William Congreve and Delarivière Manley, Aphra Behn's careful attention to episodes in which her characters dine, talk, dress, come down with a fever or perform other activities pertaining to the habitual and the ordinary shows a different attitude towards the narrative strategies that capture the regular pulse of life.

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[7] In the preface to "The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians: Being a Looking-Glass for __ in the Kingdom of Albigion", Delarivière Manley elaborates on the distinction between novels and romance. "These little histories which have banished romances" is how Delarivière Manley calls the new forms of prose fiction that challenge the tradition of the romance and discusses them in terms of the literary techniques that should be employed so as to avoid boring stories. However, as John L. Sutton demonstrated, the ideas in the preface are not hers. Apparently, Delarivière Manley translated a French essay authored by Morvan de Bellegarde who, in turn, had paraphrased "the second part of sieur du Plaisir's *Sentiments sur les letters et sur l'histoire*, published in 1683" (Sutton 167). Nevertheless, I subscribe to Joseph F. Bartolomeo's claim that "despite the significantly altered context of the plagiarized remarks, they remain surprisingly resonant in the theoretical discourse of Manley's successors" (23). Regardless of their initial author, the circulation of these ideas in the European space of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries reflect an important change in the attitude towards prose fiction and are therefore relevant for a discussion on the literary precedents of the 'serious genre'.

This attitude seems to support the suggestion that Behn attempted "to cater to a middle-class audience that had begun to be interested in new forms of narration and 'useful information'" (Maddock Dillon 240). Indeed, fillers and 'useful' (detailed) information often seem to guide the narrative of Behn's prose fiction. Such is the case of "The Unfortunate Happy Lady: A true History,"[8] a story in which fillers serve the purpose of capturing and rendering the atmosphere of everyday life. Take, for example, the dinner episode at Lady Beldam's:

> Not long after they went to Dinner; and in the Afternoon, three or four young Ladies came to visit the Right Reverend the Lady Beldam; who told her new Guest, that these were all her Relations, and no less than her own Sister's Children. The Discourse among 'em was general and very modest, which lasted for some Hours: For, our Sex seldom wants matter of Tattle. But, whether their Tongues were then miraculously wearied, or that they were tir'd with one continued Scene of Place, I won't pretend to determine: But they left the Parlour for the Garden, where after about half an Hour's Walk, there was a very fine Desert of Sweetmeats and Fruits brought into one of the Arbours. Cherbetts, Ros Solis, rich and small Wines, with Tea, Chocolate completed the old Lady's Treat; the Pleasure of which was much heighten'd by the Voices of two of her Ladyship's Sham-Nieces, who sung very charmingly. (25)

The scene continues with a short conversation about decent urban entertainment. The episode is relevant for the economy of the story in that it reinforces the idea of deceit (the women who dined and conducted themselves like married ladies were actually prostitutes), and because it comments on the gender stereotypes of female talkativeness, but, most important, it details a banal, everyday, ordinary activity. Indeed, nothing in this episode influences the development of the plot, and its focus on the commonplace, habitual activities of having dinner, walking, and making polite conversation qualifies it as a filler, as defined by Moretti. Moreover, Behn's "The Unfortunate Happy Lady" shows much more concern for this kind of episodes than for crucial events. Characters die (Mrs Fairlaw and, later, Mr. Fairlaw), the main female character marries and is left a widow, the main male character disappears in a shipwreck, is taken captive by the Turks, and suddenly reappears after six years, and still the conversation between Gracelove and the steward, in which the former tries to find his benefactor's identity, but fails to do so, takes much more of the reader's attention than all the other incidents, arguably more significant for the plot. Indeed, the strategy of focalisation employed in the story favours fillers and details of everydayness

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[8] The title implies the truthfulness of the account, thus participating in the discussion about the difference between romances and novels, or true histories, that increasingly preoccupied the writers of the period.

over crucial events. The account of Gracelove's unfortunate adventure in Turkey is shorter than the account of how he got dressed and mistook his coat for his waistcoat. At the beginning of the story, Gracelove captures the reader's interest as the saviour of the lady in distress, but then he disappears from the story and the lady is saved by fate. Then, he returns after six years of captivity, a period during which he had also lost his fortune, and simply resumes his routines. The only inconvenience that this series of life-changing events seems to have caused is that he could not be with his beloved Philadelphia, but the end of the story opens the possibility for him to make up for the time he had lost. While the circumstances of his escape from slavery are still unclear, the reader knows exactly how much money he lost because of this entire affair: above 12000l. The financial conversion of actions and people seems to be one of the main concerns of the story: Sir William Wilding inherited an estate of nearly 4000l a year, Philadelphia's portion was of 6000l, Gracelove offered to pay 200 guineas for her maidenhead, Wilding spent 8000 pounds in France, and so on. To this preoccupation for the financial worth of everyone and everything the story adds a series of exact details. Take, for instance, the visits to the tailor: Philadelphia sends the steward to the tailor on three occasions, once for her brother and twice for her beloved Gracelove, and the reader knows exactly what he ordered each time.

The plot of Behn's story is still considered akin to that of the romance,[9] and the names of the characters, descriptive of their behaviour and disposition "in a pretty crude way," damage the sense of familiarity (Mudure 44). However, the concern for episodes reflecting everyday activities removes the story from the realm of idealised and fantastic romances. Indeed, the fillers and the minute details in Behn's "The Unfortunate Happy Lady" contribute to the verisimilitude of the account. However, they do not do much for the control of the narrative pace. On the contrary, the case can be made that they actually disturb the narrative since they seem to have taken over other, arguably more important incidents that would have required more attention. However, the preoccupation with detailing the characters' finances and assets anticipates a common practice among eighteenth-century English novelists, from Daniel Defoe to Jane Austen, who insist on meticulously reporting the economic aspects of the society they describe. It also looks forward to the principles of accuracy and preciseness discussed by Moretti as part of the seriousness of the nineteenth-century novel (84-85).

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[9] Jacqueline Pearson, via Helen Hacket, considers "The Unfortunate Happy Lady" to be of romance extraction. Pearson writes: "'The Unfortunate Happy Lady', as Helen Hackett points out, 'is a romance in its plot', but 'differs from romance not only in its terse brevity and its contemporary London setting, but also in its obsessive interest in its characters' bank balances'"(Pearson 195).

Fillers as the reflection of everydayness represent only one of the strategies of 'serious' fiction. As Moretti argues, "[e]scaping from vagueness and inaccuracy; it's a second semantic layer of 'serious'" (84). Stylistic precision and accuracy, an almost scientific measurement and weighing of words, the employment of the *mot juste*, these are the characteristics of the 'seriousness' Moretti attributes to the nineteenth-century novel (83-85). However, he concludes, too much precision becomes detrimental to meaning. The metaphorical epitome of accuracy and precision as part of the reality principle that guides 'serious' fiction is, Moretti argues, the double-entry bookkeeping, which forces the acknowledgement of both pleasant and unpleasant realities of the world. However, exactness, clarity, order, the 'honest' representation of life as "the third face of seriousness" result in "the paradox of bourgeois 'realism': the more radical and clear-sighted its aesthetic achievement—the more unlivable the world it depicts" (89).

The kind of precision, clarity, and honesty attributed by Moretti to the nineteenth-century novel is not definitive of early modern English prose fiction, which employed different methods in its attempt to observe the reality principle or, rather, in its attempt to convince the reader of the truthfulness of the account. In the case of early modern English writers, the premises of accuracy and honesty rely more on the authority of scientific empiricism, which dominated the age.[10] Early modern English writers often subtitle or refer to their prose works as 'true histories,' 'historical novels,' 'secret history,' 'true relation' and use first-person narrators that set themselves up as observers and/or historians, thus engrafting the claim of truth into their account. In doing so, they refuse the miraculous contingencies of the romance and propose fictional modes that rely on reflecting actual circumstances and events. Thereby, their prose fiction exhibits the kind of "naive empiricism of 'true history'" that challenges and disenchants the world of romance (McKeon 273).

The truth claim in the account of the narrator-observer is not difficult to support in the works of Delarivière Manley, whose "chronique scandaleuse"[11] relied on "gossip stories, oral he-stories which she wove into complex societal

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[10] Rooted in Baconian philosophy, the principles of scientific empiricism were adopted and promoted by the Royal Society. As Ian Watt argues, the English empiricists played an essential role in the epistemic change that influenced the evolution of society and culture. The philosophical ideas of Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke were crucial for the emergence and development of the "realist epistemology of the modern period" and of "individualism and its social structures," which are directly linked to the rise of the English novel (Watt 62).

[11] According to John L. Sutton, "Queen Zarah" is the first English example of the genre. The scandal chronicle is a literary genre that combines political allegory and social satire to expose real life affairs (Sutton 171). However, an earlier example that includes a "thinly veiled depiction of [courtly] scandalous incidents" in a work of prose fiction is Mary Wroth's 1621 *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (Salzman 304).

delineations" (Mudure 94). A similar tactic is employed by Aphra Behn, whose narrators begin their stories by insisting on the truthfulness of their account. Behn's narrators set themselves up as either the direct witnesses, or as the confidantes of people who partook in or have first-hand knowledge of the events. For example, the narrator of "The Unfortunate Happy Lady" claims to have written the story with the purpose of shaming a real person – whose name she had changed into William Wilding – by telling the entire world about his villainy and misdoings. In "The Fair Jilt," the narrator insists on authenticating the facts in the story by stressing out the reliability and the integrity of her sources:

> I do not pretend here to entertain you with a feign'd Story, or any Thing piec'd together with romantick Accidents; but every Circumstance, to a Tittle, is Truth. To a great Part of the Main I myself was an Eye-witness; and what I did not see, I was confirm'd of by Actors in the Intrigue, Holy Men, of the Order of St. Francis: But for the Sake of some of her Relations, I   shall give my Fair Jilt a feign'd Name, that of Miranda; but my Hero must retain his own, it being too illustrious to be conceal'd.

Thus, the story implicitly shares the honesty of the narrator (an eye-witness to the events) and of her sources, whose honourableness is guaranteed by their being men of the Church. In the case of "The Fair Jilt," the efforts of Behn's narrator to convince the readers of the truthfulness of her account were, in all likelihood, motivated by its having been inspired by real life events. As several sources have already confirmed, Behn's "The Fair Jilt" is, indeed, based on historical facts.[12] However, "the possibility that Behn had been an eye-witness … must be ruled out altogether" (Vander Motten and Vermein 299). What Behn did was to use the printed record of historical events to create a story which would ultimately show her "belief in the continuous moral supremacy of the Stuart lineage" (299).

In addition to such introductory truth claims,[13] Behn's stories are also interrupted by the narrative intrusions of her overt narrators, meant to reinforce the premise of truthfulness. Moreover, her stories sometimes borrow the discourse of more 'reliable' and more 'sincere' genres, like the travelogue.[14] For

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[12] See "'Reality, and Matter of Fact': Text and Context in Aphra Behn's *The Fair Jilt*" by J. P. Vander Motten and René Vermeir.

[13] Some of her truth claims strongly resemble one another in phraseology, as if in an attempt to create some conventional formula to announce the truth in the eye and in the account of the observer. Compare, for example, "The Fair Jilt" and *Oroonoko*.

[14] When discussing how travel narratives were shaped under the influence of scientific empiricism, McKeon explains that "Thomas Sprat requires of his 'plain, diligent, and laborious observers' the private virtues of 'sincere' and objective observation, virtues that are likely to be found among 'Artizans, Countrymen, and Merchants,' who bring their 'eyes uncorrupted' to the recording of reality." (249)

example, *Oroonoko* mixes elements of romance with the discourse of the travel narrative. The descriptions of the flora and fauna, or of the local customs and lifestyle of Surinam are meant not only to create an exotic setting for a romance plot, but to give an account of the 'new world.' These descriptions made by a direct observer partially remove the story from the world of romance and reinforce the reality principle; they imbue the story with the inflections of the travel narrative, "a complex intermediary between the categories of romance and realism" (Bohls 101).

The strategies employed by early modern English writers to reinforce the authority of their narrative voices and the truth claims of their stories are fairly intrusive and sometimes blunt. Of course, the tradition of narrative intrusion subsequently developed to experiment with different authorship frames or to expose the fictionality of the text, but in the case of these early modern texts it still served as a strategy of persuading the reader. It is true that, at times, the narrator exposes his or her unreliability, as the narrator of Congreve's *Incognita* does, when implicitly admitting that the course of action is inferred by reasoning, rather than predetermined by first-hand knowledge of historical facts. Congreve writes: *"... which Aurelian understanding, groped for the Knots, and either untied them or cut them asunder; but 'tis more probable the latter, because more expeditious."* However, in most cases, the chief purpose of these strategies was to convince the reader of the narrator's direct knowledge of the facts presented in the story.

Because of the conspicuous authorial presence, these texts are a far cry from the 'objective impersonality' discussed by Moretti in conjunction with the analytical style of the nineteenth-century novel. The 'serious' genre, Moretti argues, developed its objective and impersonal style "because the subjectivity of the writer has been relegated towards the background" (89). However, the early modern English writers are still too resolved to affix their presence to their stories (a strategy of persuasion, a guarantee of the truthfulness of the account) and not as preoccupied with 'impersonal objectivity'.

Although the principles of 'accuracy' and 'honesty' work differently and even if the objective and impersonal style of the nineteenth-century novel is not characteristic of early modern English fiction, the interest in descriptions is, indeed, a common feature. Moretti discusses descriptions in the nineteenth-century novel as traces of conservative ideology by claiming that "capitalist rationalization reorganized novelistic plot with the regular tempo of fillers — while political conservatism dictated its descriptive pauses" (94). He argues that "nineteenth-century descriptions became analytical, impersonal, perhaps even 'impartial'" (93).

Still shaped under the influence of conservative ideology, early modern English texts are replete with descriptions. However, the focus of

descriptions is, in most cases, the character. The lack of interest in describing the environment is indicative of the lack of significance of specific places and their minimal relevance for the plot. Although the travelogue passages of *Oroonoko* succeed in conveying a vivid picture of the world of the story, they do not focus on the immediate environment of the action, but are meant to report on the experiences of the narrator-traveller.

The descriptions in early modern English prose fiction, generally meant to introduce the characters, slow down and frequently disturb the narrative pace, far more than fillers do. Although often very lengthy, these descriptions manage to avoid exactness and physical details. They are still a far cry from the analytical precision of those in the nineteenth-century novel. The description model usually employed by early modern English writers relies on vagueness and abstractness and is, at the same time, very subjective in its enthusiastic tone. Consider, for example, the expressively poised manner in which Congreve describes Incognita, by balancing contraries and extremes:

> … an Air so graceful, so sweet, so easie and so great, he had never seen. She had something of Majesty in her, which appear'd to be born with her; and though it struck an awe into the Beholders, yet was it sweetned with a familiarity of Behaviour, which rendred it agreeable to every Body. The grandeur of her Mien was not stiff, but unstudied and unforced, mixed with a simplicity; free, yet not loose nor affected. If the former seem'd to condescend, the latter seem'd to aspire; and both to unite in the centre of Perfection.

Congreve's enthusiastic description of the perfect creature is based on balanced antithesis: awe is sweetened by familiarity, grandeur is balanced by simplicity, and the desire for high achievements counterbalances the conduct beneath one's social status. Congreve's description is balanced and symmetrical, indeed, but it is not the kind of temperate balance Moretti reads in nineteenth-century novels. Congreve's description does not share the realist novel's respect for specific details and for the reality principle. On the contrary, it follows the romance pattern of idealised versions of individuals.

Similar models are employed for most characters of early modern English prose fiction. Oroonoko, a character sharing the grandeur of tragic heroes, is introduced to the reader using the same kind of abstract, lofty and elevated language. Behn writes:

> … he became, at the Age of seventeen, one of the most expert Captains, and bravest Soldiers that ever saw the Field of Mars: so that he was ador'd as the Wonder of all that World, and the Darling of the Soldiers. Besides, he was adorn'd with a native Beauty, so transcending all those of his gloomy Race, that he struck

an Awe and Reverence, even into those that knew not his Quality; as he did into me, who beheld him with Surprize and Wonder, when afterwards he arrived in our World.

I have often seen and conversed with this Great Man, and been a Witness to many of his mighty Actions; and do assure my Reader, the most illustrious Courts could not have produced a braver Man, both for Greatness of Courage and Mind, a Judgment more solid, a Wit more quick, and a Conversation more sweet and diverting.

The ambitious emanation of an exalted narrator, Oroonoko's description is much longer than Incognita's, and still the reader never finds out exactly how he looks like. Like Incognita, he is flawless; they are both abstractions, cast in the mould of romance perfection, and not representations of ordinary people. Aristocratic virtues and abilities rather than physical traits are the focus of character descriptions, and convincing the reader of the character's compliance with a set of prescribed values is more important than portraying an individual or mediating the reader's understanding of the character's virtues through external, physical description. Persuading the reader of the character's greatness rather than actually showing the character is the stake of descriptions.

Even when Aphra Behn attempts a physical description, she ends up praising the perfection of her character. In "The Unfortunate Happy Lady," when Lady Beldam assesses Philadelphia's body just like merchants evaluate the products they have for sale, she observes "the Delicacy of her Skin, the fine turn of her Limbs, and the richness of her Night-dress, part of the Furniture of her Trunk" (27). However, the focus of narration quickly leaves the physical world and moves on less tangible qualities and traits, such as her "dear Soul, as Innocent and White as her Linen" (27).

Of course, not all of the characters are as virtuous as the examples above, nor do they all share the perfection of these imitations of romance models. The main character of Delarivière Manley's "Queen Zarah," "whom fortune had cut out purely for the service of her own interest, without any regard to strict rules of honour and virtue" is a breed apart (111). Zarah has flaws and weaknesses, thus becoming representative of what Manley describes in the preface to the story as "the heroes of the modern romances," characterised by their "passions, virtues or vices, which resemble humanity" (97). More flawed and far from virtuous, Zarah does not belong to the panoply of model heroes imitating the heroes of romance. Manley's character is, indeed, more believable as it was moulded in the shape of a historical person. On the other hand, the story itself fails to convey her portrait with precision and accuracy and still uses abstractions and immaterial descriptions.

Early modern English writers dwell on descriptions, but they prefer abstract, general, and elevated expressions to concrete, precise, and colourful characterization. Personal features are replaced by the abstractness of the lexicon of virtues and emotions. The immediate environment is, in most cases, neglected, as if to avoid the connection between characters and the material world. Fillers and descriptions: these mechanisms of decelerating and moderating the narrative pace are, indeed, employed by early modern English writers, but their works of prose fiction are still far from the regular tempo and the moderate poise that Moretti appreciates in his exploration of the nineteenth-century novel.

In Moretti's analysis, the careful balance between the objective and the subjective is definitive of the seriousness of the nineteenth-century novel. Reflective of the bourgeois ethos while still preserving conservative beliefs: this is, in Moretti's view, "the foundation of the realist novel" to which "free indirect style contributed the final touch" (94). Free indirect style increases, according to Moretti, the aesthetic objectivity of the nineteenth-century novel. It helps disengage the novel from its moralistic and didactic functions and assists in the removing of the "all-wise narrator" (98). On the other hand, in early modern works of fiction, this "all-wise narrator" is still very present. The subjective perspective guides the story and allows the free interchange between the character's consciousness and the narrator. As discussed above, the premise of accuracy and honesty in storytelling derives from the principles of the scientific empiricism that dominated the age and relies precisely on the perspective of the narrator-observer, whose voice has to be heard and who has to assume responsibility for the story be credible.

While the early modern English prose fiction is still under the influence of the aristocratic ideology of the romance, the efforts to negotiate a new episteme are already visible in the (sometimes timid) experimentation with everydayness. Early modern English writers still rely on reinterpretations of the romance model and, even when they declare authenticity, the characters and the plots of their stories are marked by artifice. However, even if their literary strategies of verisimilitude are still vulnerable and although they sometimes seem to lack control over the narrative pace, they begin to experiment with fillers and details of everyday life. Their declared interest in the ordinary and the commonplace and their efforts to persuade the reader of the truthfulness of their account oppose the miraculous contingencies of the romance, thus paving the way for the emergence of the 'serious genre' in a gradual movement away from the aristocratic ideology and towards a new, bourgeois ethos. Thus, looking back on the efforts of early modern English writers through the perspective of the subsequent evolution of the novel helps identify some of the literary and

ideological 'conditions of the time' (to paraphrase Watt) that facilitated the 'birth' and the advancement of the genre, namely the literary strategies and the ideological shift that can be read into their employment, and understand their direct influence on the development of the novel. This approach adds to the scholarship by preventing reductive readings of the evolution of the genre as exclusively the result of social change and views it instead as the result of the dynamic interaction among a plurality of factors.

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THE PLANET OF LITERATURE:
FRANCO MORETTI'S NEO-PERSPECTIVIST METHOD

CĂLIN TEUTIŞAN[1]

ABSTRACT. *The Planet of Literature: Franco Moretti's Neo-perspectivist Method.* This study focuses on the revolutionary method of quantitative analysis, as it is employed within the field of literary studies by the literary historian and theorist Franco Moretti. His approach to the evolution of literary genres is pervaded by both a rational view upon literature and a certain postmodern perspectivism. Through such an integrative analysis of the different systems and networks of literature, literary history can become a scholarly discipline that is finally freed from its internal complexes.

Keywords: distant reading, world literature, perspectivism, literary systems, graphs, rationality, Franco Moretti

REZUMAT. *Planeta literaturii: Metoda neoperspectivistă a lui Franco Moretti.* Studiul se focalizează asupra metodei revoluţionare a analizei cantitative, aşa cum este ea exploatată în interiorul câmpului studiilor literare de către istoricul şi teoreticianul literar Franco Moretti. Abordarea pe care el o are asupra evoluţiei genurilor literare este impregnată atât de o viziune raţionalistă asupra literaturii, cât şi de un perspectivism postmodern. Printr-o astfel de analiză integratoare a diferitelor sisteme şi reţele ale literaturii, istoria literară poate deveni o disciplină academică eliberată, în fine, de complexele ei intrinseci.

Cuvinte-cheie: lectura distanţată, literatura lumii, perspectivism, sisteme literare, grafice, raţionalitate, Franco Moretti

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World literature and distant reading

For the practitioners of modern literary hermeneutics or for the champions of poststructuralist perspectives in the humanities sphere, an encounter with Franco Moretti's quantitative approach to literature may trigger a necessary exercise in humility and tame their exegetic pride. The researches undertaken by Franco Moretti,[2] one of the most influential figures in the field of literary studies today, pertain to the broad spectrum of the contemporary concept of *world literature*, understood in an intercultural, trans-national/regional sense. Paradoxically, however, the theorist aligns his perspective ("Conjectures" 54, republished in *Distant Reading*, 43-62) with the classical meaning of the concept, as defined by Goethe and his followers (*Weltliteratur*) and, subsequently, by scholars in the lineage of Marx and Engels. Moretti adopts a polemical stance on what comparative literature is today, seeing it as a "modest undertaking" compared with the systemic openings that Goethe's *Weltliteratur* entailed. According to the Professor from Stanford University, comparative literature could (should!...) change its disciplinary profile, approaching *world literature* from the vantage point of comparative morphology (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 90). Researchers like Pascale Casanova (in *The World Republic of Letters*) or David Damrosch (in *What Is World Literature?*) have argued along the same lines in the field of literary studies, over the past decade and a half. Moreover, for Moretti, the concept exceeds the framework a single discipline – such as, for instance, comparative literature – and opens towards literary history, literary theory and criticism and, ultimately, towards cultural history, the latter being understood as the morphology of culture. The ambition of this project is vast, but rests on solid argumentative terrain that is already influential in contemporary thinking. Moretti reveals that besides Goethe and Marx, the sources from which he has borrowed his concept comprise the history of economy, more precisely, the school of thought centered on the notion of "world-system." What is this school and what are its guiding principles? The main name that should be invoked here is the American sociologist and historian Immanuel Wallerstein. In the cycle of

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[2] The theorist worked as Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University (New York), taught courses at the *University of Chicago, Princeton University (*New Jersey) *and* the *University of* California-Berkeley, and in 2000 he was appointed Professor at *the English Department of Stanford University (California). The essential map of* Moretti's theoretical and applied thought is charted in seven works he has authored: *Signs Taken for Wonders* (1983), *The Way of the World* (1987), *Modern Epic* (1995), *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (1998), *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary Theory* (2005), *The Bourgeois: Between History and Literature* (2013), and *Distant Reading* (2013, National Book Critics Circle Award). He has coordinated the five-volume encyclopedia *Il Romanzo* (2001-2003). He is editor-in-chief of the publication *The Novel* (2006) and has founded the Center for the Study of the Novel and the Literary Lab at Stanford *University*.

works *The Modern World-System* (published in four volumes, in 1974, 1980, 1989 and 2011) and, above all, in *World-Systems Analysis: Theory and Methodology* (1982), Wallerstein develops, under the influence of Marx, Fernand Braudel and Ilya Prigogine, a theory of the capitalist world economy, which is seen as a non-homogeneous, evolving system, and engages in an implicit critique of the socio-historical differences imposed by economic liberalism. Wallerstein has been reproached, among other things, for rejecting the notion of cultural autonomy (discussed by Braudel himself, in a comparative context) and the idea that culture operates, systemically, once again, outside the unpredictable variables of the capital market and their socio-historical effects – obviously, this is an aestheticist reproach. Without stating this explicitly, Franco Moretti's approach is a direct response to this critique. He refers to the way in which culture – literature, in particular – works under the same laws as the capital market, developing and fluctuating within similar parameters. Equally, the theorist highlights the contextual dependence of literature, because the context encapsulates the socio-historical and the mentality changes engendered by the global evolution of economic systems.

Further on, Franco Moretti builds his specific system of approach to literature along the lines of the humanistic research that has given rise to the *digital humanities* or to *computational criticism*, as he calls them in one of his texts, entitled *"Operationalizing": or, the Function of Measurement in Modern Literary Theory* (*"Operationalizing"*, 1). Moretti adopts here a definition set forth by the American physicist Percy Williams Bridgman, who sees *concepts* as synonymous with (hence, definable through) the operations that correspond to their determination (*"Operationalizing"*, 1). "Operationalization" stands, therefore, for the connection of "the concepts of literary theory, through some form of quantification, to literary texts," that is, for the transformation of a concept into "a series of operations" that are applicable not just to a particular text, but to texts in general (*"Operationalizing"*, 1-2). Here, Moretti's position does not seem to differ greatly from that of traditional criticism and theory. However, we may soon discover the difference if we consider the very concepts he operationalizes: the *space of words, the system of characters* and others, outlining a methodology that is, by and large, analytical, rather than interpretive. We shall return to this methodology later on. For now, it has been necessary to invoke it in order to pave the way for understanding the historical-literary formula adopted by Franco Moretti: the famous, by now, *distant reading*.

Specifically, the author defines the *distant reading* of literary texts (or rather, of literary objects) by contradistinction with the classical formula of *close reading*, proposed by the representatives of New Criticism in the 1920s-30s, which remains, to this day, one of the major approaches in literary criticism. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that Franco Moretti's method has

produced a fundamental mutation in the realm of the humanities, with major implications for their development as disciplines at a global level. As an instrument that can synthesize literary facts at continental and transcontinental level, *distant reading* – which borrows instruments from the domains of statistics, computation, quantitative history, geography and evolutionary theory – has generated acute and, sometimes, polemical reactions in the scholarly circles. Notwithstanding all this, it is now beyond any doubt and unanimously accepted that Franco Moretti's *distant reading* justly belongs to the era of globalization, to which literary studies are still reluctant to adhere, either because of their conservatism or on account of their contamination with the "poeticity" (in the most general sense) of their own object of study: literature.

According to Moretti, distant reading is a "condition of knowledge" for the study of literature ("Conjectures", 57). It transfers the analytical gaze from the individual event (the text) onto the global system of literary history. Alternatively, the focus of analysis is shifted from intratextual mechanisms, as aesthetic means of constructing a fictional universe, onto the dynamics of intertextual relations, not in the postmodern sense of the term, but in that of developing evolutionary models of literature, based on the succession of historical cycles. These, in turn, are determined by the relationship of literary objects with the market for which they are intended. All in all, this is a "system of variations," which designates "forms as abstracts of social relationships" ("Conjectures", 64)*.*

In his *Atlas du roman européen* (1998), Moretti inserted the materialist nuances that are characteristic of his analytical method: "Narrative markets: sociology of literature, as it used to be called; history of the book, history of reading, as we call it nowadays. It is a new field, growing, full of surprises: that however hasn't yet really bitten into literary history, and even less into morphological study" (*Atlas of the European Novel*, 143). Hence, a difference should be made, as the theorist contends, between the history of the book, on the one hand, and the history of forms, on the other hand. He takes the concept of "serial history" from Pierre Chaunu (*Métodologie de l'histoire et des sciences humaines*, 1973) and acknowledges the fact that this kind of history inevitably has a somewhat artificially constructed object, based on repetitions that create homogeneous series of distinct objects, the uniqueness of the texts being devoid, in itself, of epistemological value. This very statement contains an epistemological thesis: the same quantitative methods of establishing series may be applied to the study of nature. Consequently, Novel = Nature, even an *ecosystem,*[3] as the expression of a proximate genus. Compared to the classical studies on the

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[3] In "Graphs, Maps, Trees. Abstract Models for Literary History"– 1, *New Left Review*, no. 24, November-December 2003, p. 82. See also the real "reality" from another fragment by the author (*Atlas du roman européen* 159).

history of the book, the specific difference derives, as Moretti shows, from the type of volumetric vision on which the research is based: three-dimensional, in the traditional cultural history (geography), where the "literary market is 'vertically' divided, among different social groups") and two-dimensional, as in Moretti's case, between horizontal spaces of literary history – "provinces, nation, continent, planet" (*Atlas of the European Novel*, 143-144). On the whole, this is a rationalist assumption, which seems to confirm what Thomas Nagel, the anti-relativist philosopher, calls "a fundamental feature of the natural order" (*The Last Word*, 138). Nagel, however, advocates the existence of a supra-individual order, which can explain, in fact, rationality itself.

The *atlas of the novel* also raises the issue of "cultural hegemony" or "power" (*Atlas of the European Novel*, 147). The studies included in the book provide researchers with intriguing data. For instance: the smaller the size of a book collection (of the private or public library type), the more statistically significant the presence of canonical authors/titles in it. This leads to a question of ethics – a post-poststructuralist ethics, which problematizes a cultural concept from a political standpoint. The hypothesis serves Moretti from another point of view as well: that of procedural relevance. A quantitative issue "is not just a matter of quantity" (*Atlas of the European Novel*, 68), Moretti suggesting here the opening of the quantitative method beyond its repugnant reductionism, via the concept of *difference*, derived from the comparative study of the public central and provincial libraries from nineteenth-century Western Europe. This approach pertains, after all, to the sociology of literature. Anti-hegemonic, anti-canonical conclusions are duly formulated: literature is not the [unbroken] transition from one masterpiece to another, but follows a "more oblique and discontinuous path" (*Atlas of the European Novel*, 148). The canonical *cabinet de lecture* and the canon itself, after all, prevent the readership from perceiving the evolutionary path of literature, from acknowledging the living, natural vibrancy of this cultural phenomenon. In the same sphere of insights into "cultural hegemony," the literary theorist states that the novel becomes, at least in Britain in the nineteenth century, a totalitarian "form of reading" (relative to the space it leaves in the public consciousness for the reading of other genres, whether literary or not).

This thesis is not singular in Moretti's texts. In "Planet Hollywood" (2001), for instance, which focuses on the differentiated diffusion, depending on the box-office success, of some film genres, the idea is spectacularly expressed: "We see here the Darwinian side of cultural geography: forms that *fight for space*. They fight for the limited resources of the market," and the strength (or weakness) of a form "can only be explained by looking at the whole system of variables at play" ("Planet Hollywood", 99-100, republished in *Distant Reading*, 91-105). For the historian of culture, the following question arises: "a national

literature – or an archipelago of local [literary, reading] circuits? One system, or many?" (*Atlas of the European Novel*, 162). The answer (and the premise) endorsed by this study concerns the *"conflicting" plurality* of systems, which cancels out the concept of national literature and removes it from the conceptual field in which literary history operates. This deals a harsh, almost unprecedented blow to the classical codes and jargons of the discipline.

Rationality and procedure in literary history

In *Atlas du roman européen*, Franco Moretti concisely outlines the functions of quantitative research. If we attempted to systematize the purposes of this *serial history*, as Moretti calls it, it would be seen to ensure:

1. A more extensive, "richer" extra-literary context;

2. An "excellent" analytical "model *for the study of literature itself,*" predicated on:

2.a. "the dramatic enlargement of the 'historian's domain' [...] towards what is everyday, un-monumental or even invisible," and by

2.b. the "discovery of how *slowly* this territory changes: the discovery of 'histoire immobile'" (Fernand Braudel, *Les Temps du monde*, 1979);

3. The "reversal of the hierarchy between the exception and the series," or, in other words:

4. "A history of literature as history *of norms" (Atlas of the European Novel*, 149-150).

What is, according to Moretti, that "excellent model" for literary analysis? It draws its substance from three disciplinary domains – quantitative history, geography and, last but not least, the theory of evolution: "graphs, maps and trees" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 67). In other words, this would be a "more rational" literary history" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 68). What does this rationality entail? Firstly, that quantitative research provides data, not interpretations, and, as Moretti himself admits, this is a limitation of the method. However, is this recognition candid, ingenuous?

Certainly, the gesture of assuming the limits of his method is meant to deter potentially acute criticism. The theorist anticipates these limitations as (mandatory?) forms of resistance exhibited by the methodological canon of literary history. On the other hand, stylistically speaking, they induce a tension in critical discourse, intending to transform this discourse into an open, democratic dialogue with the hypothetical reader. It remains to be seen whether this dialogical transparency facilitates an explanatory debate not only on the methodological stakes, but also the outcome of the theorization process. The result is immediately apparent and is explicitly related to what

we defined above as the author's leftist, anti-hegemonic stance. An examination of the novel's diffusion into the colonial spaces in the nineteenth century reveals, as Moretti shows, an "antipathy between politics and the novel" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 75). This is the field of cultural studies and the afore-cited excerpt adds a further argument relevant for the *ethical relationship* (more exactly, the ethics of the *method*), so to say, that may be forged through a quantitative study of literature, as regards the conflict with centralized power. Again, a rationalist assumption. What kind of conclusions does it lead to?

In *Graphs, Maps, Trees*, Moretti explains his option for digital schemes, analyzing them through a psycho-sociological filter. Graphs record, in fact, a sum of constraints and inertias of the literary field: the "limits of the imaginable" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 82). What do, after all, these digital schemes represent? Let us take them in turn. Graphs are quantitative diagrams, expressing "the system of novelistic genres as a whole." Maps are spatial diagrams, representing "'the road from birth to death' of a specific chronotope." Finally, trees are morphological diagrams for the systematic correlation of history and form, configuring "the microlevel of stylistic mutations" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 69, 91). We should insist on the latter concept. Inspired by Darwin's trees, these evolutionary schemas show the divergence of forms, some varieties or entire species being positioned at odds with the others. From a different perspective (aesthetic rather than scientific and rationalist), the position adopted, for instance, by Eugen Lovinescu on the dialectics of literary forms and ideas also evinced such analytical energies. The specific difference comes from the fact that a modernist critic like Lovinescu worked towards the concentration of the canon, while for Moretti, the theorist, the aim is to disperse the canon, in keeping with the centrifugal model of diversity. Both, however, have a systemic outlook on the literary phenomenon, whose intrinsic (Lovinescu) and extrinsic (Moretti) functionality they explore.

Finally, Moretti's form of perspectivism relies on the conjunction of three types of diagrams, based on rationalist-scientific premises/assumptions and outlining a functional model for the explication (albeit not the interpretation) of the literary system, in particular, or of the cultural system, in general. Ultimately, this form relativizes postmodern relativism and forges an analytical pattern that may be functional at a global level. Moretti's post-Nietzschean neo-perspectivism legitimizes, at variance with classical Nietzscheanism, the very possibility of objective facts and their epistemological legibility. Undoubtedly, the Truth of a system is not absolute, but even metaphysics is no longer the canonical lens through which contemporary culture is interpreted... Given Franco Moretti's own definitions of the procedures he applies, he appears to be aligned with constructivist epistemology (as a form of knowledge that operates with models

of nature deduced – abstracted – from nature) and with certain elements of systems theory, as discussed by Edgar Morin, for example, in *La Méthode*.

As regards the method, let us briefly return, as we promised above, to Franco Moretti's view on the procedural components and the technology of reading. What are the characteristics of these analytical procedures and to what extent do they compensate for the old *interpretation* that Moretti banishes from the city? The first element comes from *Network Theory, Plot Analysis*, where the theorist operationalizes concepts such as the *character-network* or the *system of character-networks* (*Network Theory, Plot Analysis,* republished in *Distant Reading*, 211-240). Statistically and graphically, it attempts to determine through data analysis the *centrality* of a text as the nucleus of *power* irradiation. Power should be understood here in the sense of the textual power or leverage that supports the relational networks between the entities of the text.

Then, in *"Operationalizing": or, the Function of Measurement in Modern Literary Theory,* the following working tools are presented. Moretti takes over here two concepts from recent literary theory and turns them into quantitative measurement tools. One is the concept of *character-space*, proposed by Alex Woloch in *The One vs. the Many. Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel* (2003), while the other is the concept of *name frequency,* introduced by Graham Alexander Sack in *Simulating Plot: Towards a Generative Model of Narrative Structure* (2011). In Moretti's view, *character-space* becomes textual space, namely *word-space*, while *name frequency* becomes a *character's link to the character-system* (*"Operationalizing"*, 2). Both are physically measurable.

The conjunction of the two, that is, the correlation of the "criteria for protagonism," as the theorist calls them (*"Operationalizing"*, 5) and, respectively, the number of words uttered by a character and the number of his interactions with other characters makes visible his central or peripheral position. We encounter a battle of concepts here: the *protagonist* (the older concept) is replaced with *centrality* (the new concept proposed by Moretti, expressing the "idea" of conflict that arises around the center of the network of relationships between the characters). Thus, it is the centrality and not the protagonist that vertebrates / stabilizes / determines / signifies the system of a literary work. The real protagonist is the one who assumes this centrality, by correlating the volume of words (*word-space*) with the *network of links* within the *character-system*. The result is an operational construct composed of the triad of categories *conflict-mediation-obedience* (*"Operationalizing"*, 8), which replaces the former dyad *protagonist-secondary character*. The advantage is that these new categories relate to specific aspects of the conflict and of the social world represented in the literary work. The added value of the new theory, based on the quantitative study of the work and on word-space, suddenly becomes clear: it is a study of *relations*, not of individualities.

Time, space, morphology

Let us remember, however, that with Franco Moretti, we are in the field of literary *history* or of cultural *history*. The concept of history can by no means be separated from that of temporality. Through interdisciplinary crossovers, Moretti reaches, via an oblique route, the discussion on the category of temporality. His commentaries focus on operational concepts that are seemingly unconnected to this category, such as "morphological spectrum" or "genre." In *Atlas du roman européen*, as well as in many other texts, Moretti makes recourse to the specific terms of "genre," which he applies, in fact, to narrative *subgenres* (Gothic, nautical, fantasy, sensation, etc.). The discussion, however, is more nuanced. Moretti refers critically to the time categories privileged by various exegetes. Critics, we are told, prefer the notion of *event,* theorists prefer long duration/long time span, *long durée* (*Graphs, Maps, Trees* 76). What is then the Morettian cartographer's take on historicity? The literary historian resorts here to the notion of *cycle*. Cycles represent "temporary structures within the historical flow," just like genres, which are "morphological arrangements that last in time, but always only for some time" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 14). Hence, genres, as the morphological instantiation of cycles, are objects of the transition between flux and structure, between absolute motion and staticness, between the Humboldtian *energéia* and *ergon.* However, genres do not lend themselves to a speculative philosophy of forms or to a metaphysics of meaning. The definition Moretti provides is, no doubt, dialectical, but also "political." The Morettian cartographer envisages himself not only as the link between criticism and theory, in their traditional sense, but also as the means whereby they are finally rendered obsolete. This entails his position of power in relation to both. The critic of cultural and political hegemonism may be falling prey, unawares, to the temptation of hegemony here. Even though Moretti ostensibly rejected interpretation and upheld the scientific realism of data, theory betrays the pride he takes as an *interpretive* subject.

How can a quantitative study sidetrack or even cancel apodictic verdicts, as well as the rhetoric of traditional literary history? How can such a mutation be implemented in the disciplinary field? Through a cultural anthropology not of the subject, but of the object, perhaps. As seen above, Moretti considers that the novel is a being that struggles for survival. He grants it the status of self-determination. He grants it supremacy in relation to authors and to the historical, social and political contexts. He even credits it with a psychological (self)determinism and, derived from this, with strategic or downright manipulative qualities. He describes it in its "live" constitutive and evolving dynamics, in (equal!) relation with just one other element in its functional equation, namely the *reader*. We may

therefore ask the following question: applied to another literary genre (poetry, for instance), would the grid not yield the same results? How about other artistic genres (painting, music, etc.)? Can an objective scientific discipline, based on statistics, afford to ignore the differences (of form or substance) between the classes of objects that enter its field of attention? In other words, can culture be considered an undifferentiated magma of objects if the results of its analysis are to remain relevant? Then, in the absence of interpretation, to what extent can the anthropology of the object reveal the morphology of the subject? Finally, to whom exactly is art addressed? Speaking about the internal rhythms detectible in the evolution of the novel and in the evolution of genres, Moretti discloses his polemical stance: "all the great theories of the novel," he states, "have precisely reduced the novel to one basic form only (realism, the dialogic, romance, meta-novels ...); and if the reduction has given them their elegance and power, it has also erased nine tenths of literary history. Too much" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 30). There is a grain of false rhetoric here, through which Moretti knocks on open doors. Literary critics and historians have long democratized their options, as strongly attested by the debates of the last decade and a half on the canon and its deconstruction. Moreover, regardless of whether they represent genres or subgenres, the terms in brackets – realism, the dialogic, romance, meta-novels – are, more than anything else, *models for the construction of the imaginary*, based on types of *perspectives* on the object or on the subject. These models are equally functional for both masterpieces and novels of lesser merit (whose importance Moretti defends, in fact, directly or indirectly, in all his texts).[4] In the absence of these models, we could not even ascertain the *novelistic* nature of a given text. This might be an even bigger problem because Moretti postulates the disappearance of the text as an object of literary history and its replacement with genre, as a tree (or spectrum) of diversity, which reintegrates the literary archive "into the fabric of literary history" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 76-77), recovering it thus. This, we ought to admit, is no small thing.

The explanation of literary genres actually starts from their connection with reality. Hence, as Moretti always insists, this is a sociology of literature. Literary form is alive as long as it answers a historically variable social reality. When literature loses this connection and its form persists just for the sake of form, epigonism emerges (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 63). When reality changes its historical socio-economic coordinates, literature also changes. This is a noticeably Marxist thesis. To this are added explicit formulations, pointing to the same philosophical reference. For instance, diagrams are defined in

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[4] See, for instance, also his demonstration in the essays "The Slaughterhouse of Literature" and "Style, Inc.: Reflections on 7000 Titles (British Novels. 1740-1850)" in *Distant Reading* (63-90 and, respectively, 179-210).

keeping with a "materialist conception of form" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 92). Moretti's maps (diagrams, in fact) are the "Cartesian space" (*Graphs, Maps, Trees*, 57) that reveals the forces at work in the systemic movement. In other words, the energies linking geographical places from the literary "reality" within dynamic relational structures are designed to explain/represent the world's operation models. We can notice that when Moretti discusses the intrinsic categories of literature, his "rhetoric" is not very different from the "rhetoric" of classical criticism, and the results may be relevant for what is referred to above as the morphology of the subject.

I was mentioning the controversies generated by the concept of *distant reading* over the last decade and a half (incidentally, Moretti's method also bore the brunt, in fact, of several attacks that had targeted the *digital humanities* in general). All in all, in 2011-2013, critical comments on *distant reading* seem to have revolved around four major approaches to Moretti's theories: ontological, political, ethical and methodological. Let us take a quick look at them, as they are charted in several micro-studies focusing on the theorist.

In the issue of the prestigious online *Los Angeles Review of Books* from 27 June 2013, three authors signed a group of texts (under the generic title *Franco Moretti's "Distant Reading": A Symposium by Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Alexander R. Galloway* & *James F. English*), occasioned by the recently published volume *Distant Reading*. The first is James F. English's text, entitled "Morettian Picaresque." Attention derailment tactics are put here at work by a seemingly genial commentator. The objects of critical examination English chooses are solely the sections where Moretti submits his own methods to acute self-interrogation. The reviewer insists on the "naïve ontology" that underlies Moretti's confidence in the practice of data analysis. This naïvism is seen as obsolete "strategic innocence," which fails in its attempt to legitimize the value of the results of such procedures ("Morettian Picaresque"). The word "picaresque" from the title turns out to be a form of irony. English deliberately ignores at least two important things. First, the epistemological value inherent in the endeavor to conduct literary studies on the basis of rationalist principles. Then, the... philological thoroughness of *text* analysis based on data analysis.

In "*Everything Is Computational,*" Alexander R. Galloway performs a critical demonstration in two steps. Starting from two hypotheses of the 1980s, issued by the media theorist Friedrich Kittler, according to whom "*all of literary theory is media theory,*" and by the French philosopher François Laruelle, who claimed that "*all of philosophy is media theory,*" Galloway concludes that recent years have exhibited a dictatorial interest in "techniques of mediation" ("*Everything Is Computational*"). Moretti abides by this interest, Galloway believes, out of compliance with a fad. With the second step, the chronicler

assumes that media-centrism is tantamount to its technical infrastructure, to computational algorithms, software, computers, in general, all of which belong to late, contemporary capitalism. For Galloway, the fact that Moretti uses them stands as evidence of his "blindness" to the values of capitalism and lays bare his anti-Marxism. Suffice it to say that Alexander Galloway is more seduced here by his own critical voice than by the object of his research, forgetting that even in communist China computers are a large-scale reality by now.

What we have so far encountered in the aforecited critical texts are tactics of derailment, reductionism, meaning transfer and speculative assumption. Let us go further. In *"The Ends of Big Data,"* Kathleen Fitzpatrick outlines several of Moretti's aims and methods, as they are revealed in the essays included in *Distant Reading*, not before, however, making insistent reference to the huge scandal that broke out on 6 June 2013, around allegations that the US National Security Agency had been involved in practices of secretly collecting the citizens' individual data. Why should this ethically injured expression of "citizenhood" appear at the beginning of a text on contemporary literary history? The answer may be inferred as we read the text of this article, in which comments on the media scandal and comments on *Distant Reading* are juxtaposed – coincidentally, as it were. The conclusion is unsettling: "Moretti is engaged in data-mining the public products of our shared culture" (*"The Ends of Big Data"*). Could this be an ethical alarm signal? I would say it is more complicated than that, given that the author of this review deploys insinuation techniques here and brings conjectural charges against Moretti's intentions.

Finally, in an article published in *The New York Times* in June 2011, Kathryn Shultz undertakes an analysis of Moretti's methodology, raising a problem that concerns the object of the discipline itself: data analysis is generally applied to the objects of science, not to fiction, not to an "artificial universe [that] can't be counted on to obey a set of laws" ("What Is Distant Reading?"). In addition, reproaching Moretti for dismissing qualitative analysis, which has functioned like a "religion" for such a long time, Shultz cautions him about the mirage of completeness, which is a form of theology. It should be noted that Shultz's first reproach ignores the laws of literariness (of narratology, poetics, etc.). Besides fictionality, there are implicit and explicit imperatives of the genre (in the classical sense of the term) which mold authorial inspiration and steer the creative effort into peculiar, specific forms. In addition to this, the history of literary forms and ideas has often featured new models/epistemes which, by eliminating their predecessors, violently proclaimed their historical exclusiveness at one particular time or another.

Researchers like David Damrosch, Emily Apter and, above all, Pascale Casanova engage, from within the sphere of this discipline, in a much more

substantial dialogue with the theory and methodology of world literature. Damrosch focuses on the problem of translation as a form of opening artistic creation to internationalization and of ensuring its recalibration to the new cultural contexts. In Damrosch's terminology, "transculturation" entails that *world literature* can be seen as a movement that involves "shifting relations both of literary history and of cultural power" (*What Is World Literature?*, 24), fostered by the contact between different worlds. Damrosch puts forth a theory of reception, of reading, which produces effects on the flexible axiology of values of the importing culture, a culture that may impart different values to foreign literary works compared to the values they are associated with in their culture of origin. The result pertains to an area of *possibility*, in the sense that it is *possible* for the non-canonical cultural/literary forms of a culture to benefit from a much more generous reception in the culture of contact. The researcher's findings are conceptual: *world literature* is not the equivalent of *global literature,* because the former involves "the shaping force of local contexts" (the formative forces of local contexts), while the latter involves a *topos* "unaffected by any specific context whatever" (*What Is World Literature?*, 25). Damrosch adheres thus to the translation hypothesis in interpreting world literature, as Emily Apter also does in *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, 2013, where the researcher suggests that the concept of *world literature* should be re-envisioned as *world literatures*. The translation hypothesis relativizes the idea of a *world system* because of the problems raised by untranslatability, which affects many literary objects, rendering them little (or not in the least) pliable to being tabulated within systematic, statistically validated models of global evolution. These theoretical positions "translate" a massive nostalgia for *close reading* and "enchanted" critical thinking, representing forms of flexible, negotiable resistance against the harsh siege of *distant reading*.

On the other hand, in *The World Republic of Letters,* Pascale Casanova embarks on a very ambitious premise: "inaugurating an international literary criticism," (in her "Preface to the English Edition," in *The World Republic of Letters*, p. xiii), as an instrument of a different kind of perspective on world literature. The book proposes the concept of a "domain of letters," seen as general cultural geography, or as the totality of "world literary space," which imparts "meaning and coherence" to individual texts (*The World Republic of Letters*, 3). So far, a predictable generative-comparative thesis. However, the difference and innovative value of Casanova's vision reside in the emphasis being laid on "world" literature and not on any individual text, this world being seen through the mirror of power relations (political, economic, geographical, etc.) that are specific to actual reality. Thus, we should see "world literary space as a history and a geography" (*The World Republic of*

Letters, 5). Hence, the need for a set of principles underlying a "world history of literature." This is a history of world literature that is bound to denounce the "unequal trade" (a term Casanova takes from the same Braudel) of literary *goods* at an aggressive and bellicose "stock exchange" (*The World Republic of Letters*, 12). We discover here a form of disenchanted thought (if we are to adopt a term from psycho-historical approaches to the imaginary), operating as a preliminary stage to Moretti's concept of "a more rational literary history" already discussed above. For now, let us note Casanova's polemical drive, reflected further in a virulent attack against the concept of universality, as it is used in classical approaches to literary history and comparativist tradition: "… The notion of universality is one of the most diabolical inventions of the center, for in denying the antagonistic and hierarchical structure of the world, and proclaiming the equality of all the citizens of the republic of letters, the monopolists of universality command others to submit to their law. Universality is what they – and they alone – declare to be acceptable and accessible to all" (*The World Republic of Letters*, 154). Still, Franco Moretti's work not only provides a systematic perspective on the rational core of the discipline, but it also forges a methodological neo-perspectivism, that goes beyond the possibly presumptuous claims of a monopolist of "the center". Moretti's texts genuinely reflect both the author's academic personality or intellectual profile and the essential mutation he has brought about in the contemporary field of humanities. The evolution of literature and meta-literature in the global cultural space, the crises, deadlocks, solutions and breakthroughs are, for Franco Moretti, the objects of statistical, systematized procedures of worldwide cultural consequence. The theorist imagines a universe of the *systems* of literature, based on character-networks, on the fabric of relations and on forms of reading that are seeking their space ("Planet Hollywood", 99) on a common market of literature, which the author analyzes, evincing his affinity to Marxist influences. The overall purpose is to configure a "more rational literary history," which will approach literature in its trans-canonical entirety, but also reap the potentialities of a scientific discipline that has finally been freed from its complexes.

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JULIE'S JULIA - A CASE OF CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

RALUCA LUCIA CÎMPEAN[1]

ABSTRACT. *Julie's Julia - A Case of Cultural Appropriation.* This study focuses on 'new domesticity' and on a related feature film, *Julie and Julia* (2009). 'New domesticity' defines the resurgent and fast growing interest in homemaking on the part of a considerable number of educated, middle-class American women. Nora Ephron's film documents the inner transformation of one such woman, Julie Powell, who cooks her way through Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. The Julie/Julia parallelism represents an example of cultural appropriation, which the film adopts in an oblique manner.

Keywords: *new domesticity, cultural appropriation, Julia Child, dramatic persuasiveness, audience response, feminism, myth.*

REZUMAT. *Julia lui Julie - Un exemplu de apropriere culturală.* Acest studiu analizează fenomenul numit 'new domesticity' şi filmul *Julie and Julia* (2009). 'New domesticity' denumeste interesul în continuă creştere pentru economia domestica, manifestat de un număr considerabil de femei din clasa de mijloc americană. Filmul Norăi Ephron urmăreşte experienţa unei asemenea femei, Julie Powell, care îşi propune să gătească toate reţetele din cartea de bucate a Juliei Child, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*. Paralelismul Julie/Julia reprezintă un exemplu de apropriere culturală, pe care filmul îl adoptă, dar într-o manieră critică.

Cuvinte cheie: *economie domestică, apropriere culturală, Julia Child, percepţia publicului, feminism, mit.*

> "The great enemy of truth is very often not the lie - deliberate, contrived and dishonest - - but the myth - persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Too often we hold fast to the clichés of our forebears. We subject all facts to a prefabricated set of interpretations. We enjoy the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought."
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> *(John F. Kennedy).*

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A highly ironic statement coming from someone whose whole career was built on image making and myth recycling and an apt foreword to the following discussion about and around a social and cultural phenomenon and a popular feature film associated with it: the new domesticity and *Julia and Julia* (2009) directed by Nora Ephron and starring Meryl Streep and Amy Adams. Critics have praised it for various reasons, but mostly for Streep's brilliant performance as the larger than life Julia Child and for documenting a resurgent and fast growing interest in home cooking. Very little has been written, though, on the judiciousness of pairing these two culinary phenomena: the iconic Julia Child and a newly found celebration of domesticity through cooking. In what follows I will address this literature gap from the point of view of its cinematic credibility. In closely reading this movie I will not be making an art's for art's sake statement. Rather, I will argue that an analysis of the movie's narrative relevance and dramatic persuasiveness bears on the movie's real life impact on the audience.

The main question I am asking is the following: why has *Julie and Julia* been successful? And the answer I advance is: not because of the Julie/Julia parallelism, which represents its weak point _ but, rather, in spite of it. In fact, the comparative framework is something the movie has inherited—always the convenient argument for any major failure, political, cultural or random _ from Julie Powell's book and related blog which it has undertaken to dramatize. Nora Ephron's story salvages the Julie/Julia tandem precisely by calling it into question in a very subtle way. The idea to bring together an American icon and a popular form of online publishing proved to be a gold mine, which Julie Powell undoubtedly recognized and tapped into. And so did Amy Robinson and Eric Steel, producers of *Julia and Julia*. All they had to do was to mention the project to Amy Pascal, co-chairman of Sony Pictures, and she instantly agreed to buy it without any further explanations. However, she insisted that Nora Ephron would write the script and direct the movie, which she did. Without a doubt, she noticed the amateurish seams and stitches, which in and of themselves, had an undeniably high market value, and by owning to them, saved the day (*Julie & Julia, Making Of*).

Julia Child's profile has undergone a long process of appropriation for the last couple of decades, which has been accelerated in recent years by the power of online media. Ever since her first appearance on WGBH *People Are Reading* program, in February 1962, Julia Child has captured the attention, interest and admiration of millions of viewers who ended up being smitten by the unscripted *joie de vivre* which she invariably exuded, whether she was methodically making a basic omelet or histrionically boning a duck. She continues to appeal to a large and diverse audience more than fifty years after her debut because she dared to be herself in an era when the image had already taken over the real thing and when the media started to feed people simulacra,

capitalizing on their artificially created and maintained fascination with better, bigger and brighter experiences that would compensate for the perceived dullness of their daily lives.[2] Some of Julia's followers may not even have watched her shows because they planned to reenact her demonstrations in their own kitchens, but simply because she was doing what she liked to do most. She was sharing her passion for cooking and appealing to home cooks at a time when cooking was synonymous with feeding one's family and was the housewife's responsibility, of which she dutifully availed herself by opening cans and defrosting pre-packaged foods.

Paradoxically enough, Julia Child did win the hearts of a great number of housewives not by trying to pass as one of them—in fact she could not stand the very idea of a "housewife" _ but by showing them that cooking can be fun, smart and liberating. She articulated a feminist recipe for women's freedom within the kitchen more eloquently than a professed feminist, which is no mean feat if one considers the fact that the first volume of her book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, came out in 1961. She succeeded where contemporary feminists failed because they had no or little knowledge of the 19th-century domestic culture and because they had no means to match the general resentment of housewives (Matthews 225). In other words, she did win her audience not by empathizing with them _after all, she belonged to another social league _ or by sympathizing with their plight: she was not the type to lament. Rather, she took charge and walked them through intricate recipes and in the process taught them how to eat and, eventually, how to be themselves, in the kitchen and in the world. Her debut as a TV chef coincided with the publication of Betty Friedan's book *The Feminine Mystique*, which illustrates that both women were exponents of the same social and cultural ferment and that what one diagnosed the other one attempted and managed to fix. In Laura Shapiro's words, "homemakers read *The Feminine Mystique* for the same reason they watched *The French Chef*. They had been waiting for a long time and they were hungry" (qtd. in Spitz 16). Seeing Julia search for something *to do* other than *be* the wife of an American diplomat in Paris, Marseille and Bonn or back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, once Paul Child retired from the Foreign Service, inevitably brings to mind Betty Friedan's ominous lines from her groundbreaking study:

> The problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States.

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[2] For a discussion of the American society's fascination with images as "pseudo-events", see Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*, (Introduction and Chapter I) Vintage Books, New York, 1992.

[...] If I am right, the problem that has no name in the minds of some many American women today is not a matter of loss of femininity or too much education, or the demands of domesticity. It is far more important than anyone recognizes. It is the key to these other new and old problems which have been torturing women and their husbands and children, and puzzling their doctors and educators for years. It may well be the key to our future as a nation and a culture. We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home' (15, 32).

Perhaps the reason for Julia Child's success was the fact that she openly dissociated herself from both labels—housewife and feminist—and insisted on being a chef. And yet, she came to be adopted by both sides and, recently, by the do-it-yourself culture, and particularly by the new food movement. An increasing number of blogs and online publications document the booming phenomenon of the do-it-yourself culture, which has brought together both liberals and conservatives animated by a shared dissatisfaction with the corporate culture and deficient public education, healthcare and food regulations. They found in domesticity the antidote to the current "culture of anxiety" (Matchar 12).

Previously taught that they can have it all, women are beginning, in growing numbers, to reconsider their priorities and orient their energies more toward raising a family and keeping house than toward building a career. Furthermore, they shape this choice as a "new wave of feminism" marked by the drive to reclaim their homes (Matchar 22, 44).Some of these women manage to turn their alternative way of life into a lucrative enterprise, which allows them not only to focus on their families but also to support them financially. For them, as well as for their fans, the new form of domesticity becomes a matter of both business and pleasure.

Recent studies show that, broadly speaking, there are two categories of women who participate in the new domesticity movement: those who can afford to give up their high-paying, but otherwise unfulfilling jobs, and those who have to, for various reasons, chief among them a dead-end career. While the former group rely on the financial support of a partner, the latter are more motivated to find the pecuniary side of their domestic impulse. And what better and more convenient way to do this than to share their lifestyle on the world wide web? Both bread maker and bread winner; a small step for a woman which might turn out to be a huge step for today's society. Anyone can attest to an explosion of blogs and online magazines that chronicle the do-it-yourself culture with an enthusiasm and conviction that have once again placed the housewife on an epic pedestal and ignited a new "cult of domesticity." Whether one sees this social phenomenon through right wing political lenses as a return to traditional values or adopts the left wing political

view and considers the new domesticity as a natural development of feminism, the reality is that no one can deny its grasp on an important segment of American society (Matchar 48).

What is even more striking than the pairing of a traditional activity with a modern mass medium is that the community of bloggers has its fringes of would-be homemakers who follow posts and articles without having the time or the inclination to cook their way through a particular recipe or, for example, to take up knitting as a hobby. That blogging about your own cooking or other domestic activities can be a form of self-validation is understandable. You cannot possibly be enjoying homeschooling one hundred percent all the time or making breakfast, lunch and dinner from scratch, day in day out, but you can make it *appear* enjoyable to you and your fellow cheering housewives. Visiting blogs and experiencing them vicariously, as a way to escape into a reassuring, simple and friendly world, is also a documented fact and speaks for a strong tendency to go back to home and hearth, if only in spirit if not in practice (Matchar 65).

Enter Julie Powell, whose blog "The Julie/Julia Project" has been greatly popular, and for all the good reasons, both structural and rhetorical; Julie Powell cooked and chronicled the challenging task to pull herself from her job-induced depression in a way that was funny and engaging. Not so much the book that followed and marked her literary debut and which seems to have sacrificed culinary writ to chick lit and transformed Julia Child into a mere pretext.

Julie and Julia, Nora Ephron's film, has paired Julie Powell's blog and book with Alex Prudhomme and Julia Child's memoir *My Life in France*, mirrors the *new foodie* movement, and dramatizes the different ways we have come to experience cooking and eating. The key characters in this culinary melodrama are two married women who whip up a whole new life for themselves and their spouses almost from scratch. If we consider the movie, like any other cultural product, to be an epistemological metaphor and as such to reflect and comment on the context which has made its appearance possible, *Julie and Julia* represents a valuable document. Judging by the generally positive critics and viewers reviews, the story found a receptive audience, which can only attest to its cultural relevance (A.O. Scott, Sandhu Sukhdey, Philip French).

Should we take the movie trailer to be a window into the story and to contain interpretive allusions to the kind of model viewer embedded in its texture, we might conclude the following: *Julie and Julia* is about Julie Powell's Julia Child and all expectations of even a romanticized biopic about Julia Child should safely be cancelled.[3] Strictly speaking, we are supposed to follow Julie's

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[3] I am using the term "model viewer" as a cinematic counterpart for Umberto Eco's concept of "model reader". See Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1993, 8-9.

lead and take her word for granted, as that of any reliable narrator's, unless we stumble upon some incongruities in the story and are therefore forced to reconsider our allegiance to the sympathetic character-narrator and assume some critical distance. However, for the time being we are willing to give her the benefit of the doubt and trust that this movie revolves around Julia Child's transformation from "just and American living in Paris" into a celebrated author, chef and culinary icon.

But before she could stare into the camera and assert her personality, Julia knew that whatever it was, her core identity would have to be active, evolving, processual. Once she established she absolutely needed to *DO* something, she engaged her husband's inquiry as to what exactly she liked to do and came up with a dead serious answer, worthy of a true epicurean: the woman loved to eat, which is quite understandable, given the fact that they were living in Paris at the time. What adds flavor to her prompt confession is the proud elaboration: "and I am so good at it, I'm growing in front of you," an early indication that, at some subconscious level, she felt compelled to add a high degree of expertise to even her most innocent and basic of pleasures(*Julie and Julia*). In other words, she attached a fairly good amount of know-how to enjoying life.

And just when we were reasonably about to assume that the story would proceed chronologically, the camera cuts abruptly to Julie Powell-the character and we find ourselves articulating Julie's thought: "but what does Julia Child have to do with me, lowly cubicle worker?" (*Julie and Julia*). And the question gains considerable weight, as the members of the audience able to empathize with the situation join in the inquiry. We see Julie cornered by a caller's ironic challenge: "do you have any power?" and understand her mounting frustration as we witness her lunch meeting with a couple of friends who hold successful corporate jobs and who commiserate with her on her professional plight (*Julie and Julia*). And, more importantly, we cannot help but going back to the earlier diegetic question on the relevance of Julia's story for Julie's and venture a dismissive answer: not much, unless you, Julie Powell, want to stretch your imagination and step into Julia's shoes, as a way of escaping your real life work situation and seeking a form of empowerment by association. With that the seeds of doubt have been planted and the viewer's work has been cut out.

The trailer furthers the comparative logic of the movie when we see Julie's own existential crisis mitigated by her husband, who is the first to encourage her to write a blog as a way to...if not find herself, then stop being "strangely repetitive"(*Julie and Julia*). It is worth mentioning that Julie's attempted solution to her angst is competitive and in tune with her times, yet steeped in the past for its substance. Simply put, Julie's recipe for self-validation is future oriented and past recuperative. Whether it is "deranged" or not, to quote Julia's ever supporting husband, remains to be determined

(*Julie and Julia*). The underlying suggestion is that even if it were, it ought to be validated and redeemed by the role model who has inspired it: Julia was crazy enough to undertake the task of professional cooking at age 37 and she confronted and overcame each and every obstacle fearlessly and built a career and legacy beyond her and anyone's wildest dreams and expectations.

The reason why I looked into the paratextual value of the movie trailer is because I believe it contains a major interpretive wink which allows us a glimpse backstage, long enough to understand that there is a subliminal, more subtle message behind the bubbly happy ending we see taking shape from the beginning. The very idea of modeling one's own life alternative after Julia Child's guarantees the viewer a comfortable experience, with the necessary and expected swerves and turns that make for the salt and pepper of this otherwise dramatically bland mix. Were it not for the occasional laying bare of the plot and of the ingredients that go into it, the result would be a perfectly self-sufficient romantic comedy.

Only that the film begs for a second layer of interpretation which empowers the critical, skeptical viewers to probe the validity of the Julie/Julia parallelism and decide for themselves whether the mayonnaise holds or thins out and curdles. And you don't need to be a Julia Child buff to recognize certain incongruities. All you need is to be alert and bear in mind that the movie itself has encouraged you to adopt this what-you-see-is-NOT-what-you-get interpretive stance from the very beginning. When the narrator/character asks herself and the audience the pivotal question "but what has Julia Child have to do with me, Julie Powell, lonely cubicle worker?" she sets a hermeneutical precedent for you. Not only are you entitled to, but you are trusted to decide when the movie suddenly and creatively goes against its own narrative grain and also to determine the aesthetic and argumentative merits of these departures.

There are a couple of such key points or narrative nodes that make you stop and wonder or at least prompt you to take the story with a grain of salt. Perhaps the major argumentative disjunction occurs with the opening scenes which set the stage for the Julie/Julia comparison. It is significant that we first get to see Julia's world, we travel back in time, to 1949, and we make our way through Brittany's bucolic countryside and into the oldest restaurant in Rouen, where Julia had her first culinary epiphany. We witness her utter, wordless admiration and unconditional surrender to *la sole meuniere*, followed by her equally enthusiastic enchantment with their Parisian apartment on Rue De l'Université.

Fast forward to Julie and Eric Powell's relocation to Queens, New York, in a dingy apartment above a Pizzeria, whose only merit seems to be its close proximity to his office. Other reasons for discontent take shape, as we are let into Julie's workday routine, which comes down to taking phone calls from

unhappy people frustrated with the bureaucratic mismanagement of the 9/11 aftermath and which is regularly punctuated by the weekly cobb salad lunch with her college friends, a constant reminder of her poor professional performance. It is no wonder she feels left behind by comparison with her patronizing high executive friends. But the competition takes a personal and bitter touch when it comes to her friend the journalist, Annabelle, who asks her for an interview about a touchy issue, their generation turning thirty, and then complains that her schedule is too busy to accommodate their meeting. No wonder Julie feels lost, but to her credit, she finds refuge in eating through cooking. Ironically, it is Annabelle who indirectly sparks the Julie/Julia project. Whether it is envy or objective doubt that makes Julie deride the very idea of Annabelle writing a blog is of no great importance; what matters is that she felt her professional identity as an aspiring, unpublished writer endangered and seized the challenge. It was soon established, over dinner, of course, that what she truly enjoyed doing was cooking, cooking in order to escape.

The motto for her blog "nobody here but us servantless American cooks" is taken from the preface to the first edition of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* and represents the first of Julie's public bows to Julia Child. It is meant to explain the intended Julie/Julia connection and is in vein with Eric's supportive comment that "Julia Child wasn't always Julia Child," yet both fail to acknowledge a deeper truth (*Julie and Julia*). Julia Child could afford a cook and she did not need a profession the way Julie Powell did. She could perfectly live without one. She did not wish to escape her life, she loved it, she only wanted to absorb more of it and enjoy it more like a connoisseur than like a happy amateur. She learned how to cook for pleasure, but it was her energetic nature and her near obsession with a thing well done that drove her first to enroll in *Le Cordon Bleu* and then to help her friends Simca and Louisette rewrite their cook book and become a co-author in the process. That she was not materially motivated is substantiated by the fact that she made small concessions to the various American publishing houses that read the manuscript and would not hear of simplifying things and tailoring her work to serve the needs of that "awful breed," as she referred to the American housewife (*Julie and Julia*). Why? Because their needs did not coincide. In the famous onion cutting scene, Julia complains to Paul how humiliated she felt when everyone in class took her for "some frivolous housewife looking for a way to kill time" (*Julie and Julia*). But she was going to prove them wrong and demonstrate her commitment to high cuisine, even if that meant that she would chop her way through a hundred pounds of onions. When Julia, Simca and Louisette opened their cooking school for Americans in Paris, they only had three students who paid $2 a class, which barely covered the cost of food,

but "who cares" Julia burst out in a letter to her pen friend Avis Devoto. When their book manuscript was rejected and they were encouraged to shift their target audience to housewives, who want "something quick with a mix," they looked for another publishing house, which also turned them down, but eventually they found an editor, Judith Jones, who saw the value of their project and accepted the challenge it involved (*Julie and Julia*).

When the same Judith Jones, by now famous and venerable, fails to show up for dinner, Julie has a major melt down, in a series of hysterical bouts, which makes Eric storm out of the apartment and take a break from Julie and her project. This gives Julie an opportunity to think things over and to conclude, in her blog entry for the day, that her overall behavior is not worthy of her role model and that, after all…she was not Julia Child. Yet she does not identify the significant differences. Instead, she praises Julia for not having lost her temper over a failing recipe or any other cooking disaster and for always being nice to her supportive husband and castigates herself for the opposite attitude. The rest of the movie or at least the rest of Julie's half of it portrays Julie making amends and enjoying public recognition for her efforts.

Unlike Julie, Julia Child was not so much selling a book, but promoting an attitude. Julie, on the other hand, did not afford to write about what she liked or disliked. Joking aside, a blog about Queens or her current job would have meant, in her own words, clear suicide. So, she found a convenient topic, which does not necessarily mean that she trampled with her integrity in her choice of subject-matter. It only means that, more consciously than not, she tapped into a rich source of inspiration and catered to an audience who was willing to be swept away.

The reason for pointing out these discrepancies between Julie's life situation and Julia's is not to say that Julie was suffering from an illusion of grandeur and refashioned her existence around a role model disproportionately remote and removed from herself _ after all, anyone is free to choose who to emulate _ but rather to show that Julia Child is little, if at all representative of the demographic segment to which Julie belongs: the young professional on the road to nowhere who turns to the new form of domesticity. She is the granddaughter of the desperate housewife of the 1950s and 1960s and the daughter of the liberated career-driven woman of the 1970s and 1980s. This new housewife of the information age, who either writes or follows the online (and not only) literature celebrating the current form of domesticity may have embraced this tendency as a reaction to the corporate environment, which her parents' generation has helped create, and by which she has been absorbed, but she is most certainly not emulating the 1960s suburban domesticity. Nor is she echoing Julia Child's example. If there is one source of inspiration for the return to home and hearth, then it must be the nineteenth century cult of domesticity.

While *Julie and Julia* does embark upon a profitable journey of flawed cultural appropriation, it cuts its losses by making it part of its intention to have the audience question the relevance of its comparative framework and to expose its own structural and rhetorical vulnerabilities. Seen in this context, the presidential statement I chose to preface this discussion loses its chivalrous aura and gains a sophistic edge: the greatest ally of cultural appropriation is a myth of iconic proportions. We measure our performance against the procrustean beds of personal or societal choice and the result is always circumstantial, debatable and ambiguously generous.

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A PSYCHOANALYTICAL APPROACH TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE SELF WITH CAROL SHIELDS AND ALICE MUNRO

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ABSTRACT. *A Psychoanalytical Approach to the Construction of Female Self with Carol Shields and Alice Munro.* While analyzing the processes of constructing the female selves, I will address the feminist theories and psychoanalysis that can be associated with the vision of Carol Shields and Alice Munro, supported by the theoretical works of Lacan, Chodorow and Butler. Gender identity cannot be seen entirely culturally, linguistically and politically constructed, but also inevitably personal. Indeed, people avail themselves of cultural meanings, but they experience them emotionally and through fantasy, as well as in particular interpersonal contexts.

Keywords: psychoanalytical, female self, gender, intersection, agency

REZUMAT. *O abordare psihanalitică a construcţiei sinelui feminin la Carol Shields şi Alice Munro.* În analizarea proceselor de construire a sinelui femeii, mă voi referi la teoriile feministe şi la psihanaliză, care pot fi asociate cu viziunea lui Carol Shields şi Alice Munro, bazate pe lucrările teoretice ale lui Lacan, Chodorow şi Butler. Identitatea de gen nu poate fi considerată ca fiind construită doar cultural, lingvistic şi cultural, ci şi inevitabil personal. Intr-adevăr, oamenii folosesc sensurile culturale, dar le experimentează emoţional şi prin fantezie, precum şi în contexte particulare interpersonale.

Cuvinte cheie: psihanalitic, sinele femeii, gen, intersecţie, acţiune

I. Is there a true self?

The concept of the self as defined in social psychology (Adler, Jung, Maslow, Rogers), cognitive psychology (Snodgrass and Thompson) or philosophy

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and personality theory appear to be a very complex one so that multiple approaches are possible in both diachronic and synchronic study. Basically it is agreed that the self is an important individual construct in the process of developing an identity. It is entwined with the cultural and material world provided by the present social, economic and political context. Given its complexity, I propose to use this concept in a double meaning: as a set of perspectives or several possible selves and as an object or result of interactions between different parts of the self. Selfhood - just like personhood – is a combination of structural elements that create identity. Some characteristics are similar to other people's selves, which make them become members of a group; others are different and distinguish the individuals. In the definition given by Boethius to the person in the 6th century, self is only understood as a subject.

> For Lacan, the constitution of the subject is the result of entry into the Symbolic order, the realm of language that exists prior to the subject and fashions him/her according to its requirements, that is, according to the Law of the Father. Both sexed identity and subjectivity accrue through entry to the Symbolic. The subject can thus only assume its subjectivity as it takes on a sexed identity. (Lloyd 2005: 17)

The self in relation to others, as a person/subject becomes the agent that makes decisions and solves problems. In this position the self is executive and addresses a person's activities. At the same time, self can be regarded as a referent, since it is the product of what a person gathers and retains, working as a repository of memories, beliefs, and attitudes internalized in the neural system. These can be encoded and decoded at particular times and manifested in a specific behaviour or state of mind. Psychoanalysis has been trying to decipher how the conscious and unconscious of people's work and what they reveal or why. Subjectivity has as many conceptualizations as self, but basically, we cannot speak about a subject or an agent outside a framework of interpersonal relationships or outside societal practices. Unquestionably, an individual has a place in the society where he/she is in communication with other people. Without this relational framework it is impossible to assess one's self, and self-construction is abnormal. Personality needs to manifest itself in respect to a context and others. The sovereignty of the self is illusionary in the sense that neither can it escape the ties with outside factors, nor can it be developed.

Many aspects of the society have been changed or redefined in the transition from modernism to postmodernism, with a tough impact on the nature of the self. Today's postmodern society – characterized by consumerism – has generated a self based on consumption. Self-construction is a sinuous, intricate process. The self becomes polytonal or polyphonic since it does not

have a support anymore or a central core. In a life that is not coherent but discontinuous, the self is de-centred, split into several momentary selves and life is constructed instead of being lived. If the self becomes enslaved in the consumer culture, we can only speak of freedom when choosing the symbols we get wherefrom, in a materialistic lifestyle. The self is not stable any longer, but many faceted and transient in nature. People change jobs, homes, lovers etc., they show different identities in ever shorter periods of time. The "saturated" self – as Kenneth Gergen calls it – is the product of postmodern incoherence and inconsistency that cause slippage in contemporary identity, which has become chameleonic. A saturated self without a coherent centre is more like destruction than construction. Can we still identify a true self in this description? Does one still have a true self or is it better to say selves?

Self construction in the oeuvre of Munro and Shields can be more easily explained from a psychoanalytical perspective, as the female characters' development is shown at various stages, so that we take cognizance of all causes responsible for their present manifestation as attitudes, behaviour, or choices they make.

II. A psychoanalytical perspective

Psychoanalysis examines how the development of males and females leads to and inevitably perpetuates the oppression and devaluation of women, though there are no absolute personality differences recognized between men and women. "But until masculine identity does not depend on men's proving themselves, their *doing* will be a reaction to insecurity rather than a creative exercise of their humanity, and woman's *being*, far from being an easy and positive acceptance of self, will be a resignation to inferiority" (Chodorow 1989:44). The evidence comes not only from the universality of anatomical differences but also the cultural and socio-psychological insights. Women are considered less individuated than men, as they have more flexible ego boundaries, as it is known that the ego strength depends on the degree of individuation. Dependency is experienced differently by men and women in the construction of identity. In the Freudian theory behaviours are given meaning through interpersonal relationships, personality being regarded as a result of boys' or girls' experience to relate from early childhood, through the appropriation, internalization and organization of the experienced social relationships, their nature and quality. The personality features are responsible for a person's behaviour, even if this happens unconsciously. The combined determinants of a certain behaviour, compared to the cultural and social expectations from the gender perspective individualize a particular typology. The development of a

relational personality in girls contrasts with the denial of relations in boys. Although men claim socio-cultural superiority over women they remain insecure psychologically, whereas women, irrespective of society, under good circumstances, may gain a sense of security and value, despite their secondary cultural and social status. I've described the gender identity construction process in psychoanalytical terms to point out the aspect of inequality, since social and psychological oppression is perpetuated in the structure of personality. In order to be healthily developed, both sexes' representatives should have a strong sense of self, a secure and gender identity with clear boundaries, a normal relatedness to others and control of dependence on them). The Pre-Oedipal development differs for boys and girls. The pattern becomes explicit at the next developmental level. At the beginning of the Oedipal period, which focuses on the attainment of a stable gender identity, male and female development becomes radically different. It is difficult to generalize about the attainment of gender identity and sex-role assumption since there is a wide variety in the sexual sociology of different societies. However, to the extent that in all societies women's life tends to be more private and domestic, and men's more public and social, general statements about this kind of development are possible. The development of gender personality and gender identity in the tradition of psychoanalytic theory shows what these identities require in behavioural and emotional terms. Freud's description of the boy's oedipal crisis speaks to the issues of rejection of the feminine and identification with the father.

Four components of the attainment of masculine gender identity are important. First, masculinity becomes and remains a problematic issue for a boy. Second, it involves denial of attachment or relationship, particularly of what the boy takes to be dependence or need for another, and differentiation of himself from another. Third, it involves the repression and devaluation of femininity on both psychological and cultural levels. Finally, identification with his father does not usually develop in the context of a satisfactory affective relationship, but consists of the attempt to internalize and learn components of a not immediately apprehensive role.

The development of a girls' gender identity contrasts with that of a boy. Most important, femininity and female role activities are immediately apprehensible in the world of her daily life. Munro uses the old meaning of life as a journey, using as metaphors terms related to travel: arrival, destination, progress. In *The Progress of Love* Munro incorporates many of the same themes found in her earlier work as she continues exploring the lives of girls and, increasingly as the author herself ages, the lives of women. In *Dance of the Sexes: Art and Gender in the Fiction of Alice Munro, Beverly* Rasporich considers the two collections of stories: *Lives* and *The Progress* to be reflective of a writing form defined by French feminist critics as *l'écriture féminine*.

> Munro's art is informed by being female. Her folk art and her irony are natural expressions of her gender, her use of landscapes and place are bound up with the female psyche, and fictional form and content develop in a variety of ways from writing the body. (Rasporich 1990:167)

In *Jesse and Meribeth*, for example, Munro reworks material from *Lives of Girls and Women* at a different level. Munro's stories persistently explore the ways in which contemporary society confers adult status on women and men as they accomplish certain tasks like finding jobs, getting married, having children, and accumulating property. She uses the old meaning of life as a journey, using as metaphors terms related to travel: arrival, destination, progress. In *The Progress of Love* Munro incorporates many of the same themes found in her earlier work as she continues exploring the lives of girls and, increasingly as the author herself ages, the lives of women. Within the 1986 collection, Munro's form has altered significantly, particularly in terms of her use of narrative technique. Whereas in *Lives of Girls and Women* Munro relied upon a retrospective first-person narrator throughout, the latter collection includes three distinct types of narration depending in broad terms on the thematic material the stories contain. In the majority of the stories in *The Progress of Love*, Munro has abandoned the first person voice in favour of two variations of narrations in the third-person. In the main plot, Jessie, who like Del transforms a male acquaintance into an imaginary lover, involves herself in a similar process:

> What about the real Mr. Cryderman? Did all this make me tremble when I heard him at the door, lie in wait for him, hope for a sign? Not in the least. When he began to play his role in my imagination, he faded in reality. (Munro 1986: 273)

The protagonist of *The Progress of Love* story must grapple with the contradiction she discovers between stories from her mother's and her aunt's point of view. The mother recounts a painful memory in which she discovers her own mother attempting suicide as a result of her unhappy marriage, while Aunt Beryl's version describes the event as nothing more than a childish hoax to get attention. Instead of a chronological pattern, the author uses associative links to move among the various flashes from the past and the present, exploring her interest in 'the way people relate, or don't relate, to the people they were earlier' (Munro 1986:179). In *The Moon in the Orange Street Skating Rink*, as central event, the adolescent Sam and his cousin Edgar establish an odd relationship with the maid called Callie in their boarding house. In *Circle of Prayer*, the narrator describes two intense moments which Trudy, the protagonist, experiences at pivotal times in her life: her honeymoon and her separation from her husband:

It seems she stood outside her own body … She stood outside her happiness in a tide of sadness, and the opposite thing happened the morning Dan left. Then she stood outside her own unhappiness in a tide of what seemed unreasonably like ove. But it was the same thing, really, when you got outside. What are those times that stand out, clear patches in your life - - what do they have to do with it? They aren't exactly promises. Breathing spaces. Is that all? (Munro 1986: 461-462)

Moons of the Jupiter is an artistic achievement by the use of flashbacks in approaching the acts of loving and letting go, between connection and separation. It is Munro's first work structured by a coherent psychological argument that unifies it around the metaphor of Jupiter's moons. Repeatedly, these stories relate women's behaviour to the irresistible force of their attraction towards the men they love. Ada's generation has grown old, represented now by a woman like Mrs. Kidd, confined to a nursing home. The subject of these stories is what is generally called romantic love, either love that the characters are doing their best to make work, or love they are recovering from. But there is little romance in the love Munro's women find, and certainly none of the grand passions and infatuations with which fiction so often concerns itself. Instead, Munro's women find comfort in the best love available to them, or are unhappy over the loss of a love that was not all that good to start with.

In *Bardon Bus*, the narrator is still getting over an affair from the previous summer while on a field trip to Australia. She still thinks obsessively about the man. She envies her friend Kay for moving from one affair to another, going to the extremes in falling in love and out of it.

In *Accident*, the protagonist Frances, actually got the love she wanted, as a result of an accident causing the death of her lover's son. Now, thirty years later, she and Ted are still married and have had two daughters, in addition to the two daughters from Ted's previous marriage. 'She's had her love, her scandal, her man, her children. But inside she's ticking away, all by herself, the same Frances who was there before any of it'. (Munro 1982:109) And Dennis has opinions on various matters, but the most intriguing one is about gender differences: 'I have a new theory about the life of woman. […] Think of the way your life would be, if you were a man. The choices you would have' (Munro 1982: 121).

In the title story, the narrator waits for her father to decide to undergo heart surgery while at the same time try to solve the riddle of her two grown daughters' lives, especially Nichola, who at the moment is incommunicado.

In *Labor Day Dinner*, for instance, as George and Roberta and Roberta's teen-age daughters Angela and Eva visit their friends, it is interesting to follow the dynamics of the relationship between George and Roberta, who got married two years ago, and about his relationship with his two step-daughters, and about

how they are all attempting to make this new relationship work. At the end of the story, nothing really happens, until on the last page they are saved from a fatal traffic accident.

Hard Luck Stories shows a conversation between the narrator and her friend Julie, a woman who, despite being married, had once believed that she had totally missed out on love. The narrator had once told Julie that there are several kinds of love. Although Julie is now having a very satisfying affair with a man named Douglas, the focus in not on him, but on the conversation that mostly consisted of Julie's telling of two previous interactions with men, and the narrator telling of a rather strange experience she once had with a lover.

All collections of short-stories are connected thematically around the male-female relationship, with a clear distinction between sex and gender.

Projective constructions of the self

As contemporary feminism has argued, gender meanings are indeterminate and constructed not only culturally and politically, but also they are shaped and reshaped by an emotional self.

There is a restriction of case examples to women who share certain attributes of socio-cultural factors in the individual construction of gender identity:

- o they see father as dominant, follow the Lacanian path developmentally from the imaginary mother-child symbolic semiotic realm to the phallic-symbolic world of the father;
- o they come from the same background (Canadian contemporary society);
- o emphasize the content of emotions, fantasy and self-construction.

Even if the male-female difference is essential for the meaning of gender, I will not focus on commonalities of this polarity, but I retain the desire of some women to give themselves masculine attributes, in a particular emotional configuration. Others organize gender with reference to the body or admit they are weak and dependent. All these gender identifications are both cultural and personal. In these accounts the following social and cultural patters can be recognized: a divorce, an elusive father, a rejected little girl.

Daisy considers herself a victim of family circumstances and gender inequality. Other characters like Del Jordan in *Lives of Girls and Women* develop a gender identity imbued with emotion and fantasy, marking at the same time the differences in value and power. Cultural meanings are constructed and reconstructed in personal gender. They become entangled with the specifics of individual emotion and fantasy, with aspects of self and with conscious and unconscious images of gender, fostered by particular families. These personal overtones explain why taking just a cultural stance is not enough either, why

an explanation on the basis of cultural values/meanings alone is incomplete; for this reason one should combine cultural and personal understandings. The existence of gender inequality in both cultural and social spheres does not explain the range of fantasy interpretations and varieties of emotional shadings with which women confront inequality. One can see this in the autobiographical accounts by daughters. From here comes the adequate explanation for a particular woman's sense of powerlessness and neediness. Some feel miserable, anxious, conflicted about their thoughts concerning gender and inequality. They have hidden fantasies and are coveting what they see as male powers. They consider maternal nurturance and can experience sadness over their mother. The cultural, discursive construction of gender cannot be complete without intense individual feelings, fantasies and defensive patterns created by any person's sense of gender. The theories developed by feminists of discursively constructed gender (though sensitive to the specifics of history, class, rank, race and ethnicity) cannot alone reveal to us how gender is constructed. One should also understand the capacities and processes for the creation of personal meaning (described by the psychoanalysts) that contribute to a gendered subjectivity, just as the cultural and social roles do. All the elements of existence: anatomy, cultural meanings, individual family, economic and political conditions, class, race, socialization practices and the impact of parents' personality are refracted through the projections and introjections, fantasy creation that give them psychological meaning. Postmodern feminists, is not to return to identity as the basis of politics, working to displace all certainty and especially the norms of identity, but to show that no unitary self exists. Gender performativity, in Butler's ideology, suggests that since one can ascribe to gender «no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute reality» (Butler 1999: 185), it is possible to subvert gender by acting out gender's manifestations. And it is through social practice that gender relations are reproduced and/or transformed. This sort of approach addresses the way in which gender identities, as well as having cultural meaning, are dependent on the continued existence of particular material social relations, and shows how gendered social actors reinforce or challenge gender relations through the social practices of their daily lives. *Lives of Girls and Women* is a coming-of-age story, a kind of *buildungsroman*. The story-teller demonstrates what happens when the gulf between the sexes is such that each is isolated in its own discrimination both personally and socially. To discuss Del's development into a woman and a writer, one should take a look of men in her life. Her short relationship with Mr. Chamberlain starts from the fantasy of being the object of his desires. She let him manipulate her. Later on she was not certain whether the masquerade was worth it. In *Lives of Girls and Women,* Munro demonstrates what happens when the gulf between the sexes is such that each is isolated into its own discrimination both personally and socially.

Action and human agency

At the most elemental level, action refers simply to the practices of human beings: to what they do. At a more complex level it can refer not just to individuals but also to the practices of collective actors, those sharing characteristics, such as being members of a particular class, age group, gender, or other social categories. Action takes place in the midst of social relations, practices and structures. Agency is the dynamic element within an actor that translates potential capacity into actual practice. Action and agency are typically contrasted with *social structures* that are seen as the constraining and/or enabling social conditions in which action takes place.

In both authors' volumes, the society is patriarchal and women have to behave and live according to stereotypes and to their fixed roles. Characters' domestic and working life is regarded as a process, a chain of decisions, choices and options they take within the established relations.

Family structure

The family has always been considered one of the most important institutions in many cultures, providing for its members the fundamental needs. In fact, conflict is inevitable in families and violence is all too often pervasive. The basic mode of operation of an adult victim is a feeling of helplessness and self-pity, no sense of accountability and the tendency to blame others. Such characteristics can be found in some female characters of Munro and Shields, yet others choose to fight in their attempt of pursuing personal or professional goals.

It is likely that positive gender stereotypes are easily integrated with the self-concept and promote positive personal and collective self-esteem. However, negative gender stereotypes present a problem. Outright denial of the negative stereotypes is probably unrealistic for many individuals, given the prevalence of the stereotypes. Yet, internalization of negative group stereotypes could threaten one's social identity and result in lower personal and collective self-esteem (Katz, Joiner, & Kwon 2002: 419). Thus, self-stereotyping in regard to gender poses an interesting situation for maintaining a positive self-concept. There is a small body of recent research on how self-endorsement of specific gender stereotypes is associated with relevant behavioural outcomes. The analysis is consistent with the gender-related self-concept model suggested by Athenstaedt. This suggests that the traditional measures are only getting at a small part of the gendered self-image. The qualitative comments provide us with some insights into the content of gender self-stereotypes. First, by far the most salient traits are personality, followed by physical and cognitive

stereotypes. The increasing focus amongst social scientists on capturing and analyzing the complexity of social life has been obvious in the past years. Within feminism, this is present in debates about intersectionality and the need to recognize the implications of multiple social positions/divisions and associated power structures. The intersectional analysis is an emerging important theoretical contribution of feminism to sociology. Intersectional analysis involves the concurrent analyses of multiple, intersecting and interacting sources of subordination and oppression.

Wendy Roy, in her insightful article «Autobiography as Critical Practice in *The Stone Diaries*» analyzes Shields's novel from the perspective of women's autobiography, arguing that Shields "turns autobiography into critical practice by engaging with feminist theories of life writing" (Roy 2003:114) and on the matter of narrative voice, Roy states:

> Whether Daisy's is the controlling consciousness of the narrative remains ambiguous, although the repeated references to her autobiographical project strongly suggest that she is imagining others' responses, as well as events in her life and others' lives, as she writes her autobiography with invisible ink (Roy 2003: 121).

In Munro's short story entitled *The Love of a Good Woman* the heroine named Enid repudiates the women condition. With great courage she resists and defeats the misogynist representatives of patriarchy in a striking reversal of power relations between the sexes. She assumes the heroic role as a woman of action who confronts first her father's authority, then the bossy, foul-mouthed Mrs. Quinn, her patient, and Rupert, the presumed murderer of Mr. Willens. This seems an attempt towards the rehabilitation of feminine values, as Enid seeks to combine her sturdily outspoken independence with the desire to get along with people around her and to get romantically involved with Rupert. Daisy Stone Goodwill in *The Stone Diaries*, I have in view the protagonist's status of a victim, typical for a woman's condition in a patriarchal society. «Daisy still manages to emerge as a kind of Everywoman» (Review of The Stone Diaries, Books in Canada, October 1993, vol. 22, no. 7 pp 32-33). She is an ordinary yet remarkable woman born in 1905 in rural Tyndall, Manitoba, to a mother who died in childbirth, never having known she was pregnant. She moves in the world as a child, daughter, young wife, widow, mother, friend, grandmother, and old woman. This character is unique in many ways. Daisy speaks in the first person from time to time, but «mostly, she is baffled, seeking, third-person character, ever wandering through the construct that she calls her life story» (Hollenberg 1998: 6). Daisy is not an independent type as Enid is, the only time she fights occurs when she loses her work:

> Daisy knows with a disturbing finality that survival will require an effort of will and all the imagination she can muster. As if to emphasize this realization, her first and third person perspectives conflate permanently into the single seeking soul that Daisy will remain into old age (Werlock 2001:22).

In the novel *The Republic of Love* the narrative is dialogic in the sense that the two life stories of the protagonists – Tom Avery a disc-jockey and Fay McLeod a folklorist who write about mermaids – are revealed in successive chapters up to a point when they are intertwined, in the bond of love. Both of them have a past of broken relationships and think that it is foolish to fall in love, but gradually they reach the same conclusion that this concept should be defended against what is generally said about it in the attempt to take it seriously:

> Fay's noticed something she's never noticed before. That love is not, anywhere, taken seriously. It's not respected. It's the one thing in the world everyone wants – she's convinced of that – but for some reason people are obliged to pretend that love is trifling and foolish (Shields 1992: 248)

The Republic of Love (1992), one of Shields's novels, has, in fact, the same plot as Austen's, the recurrent courtship. The book is oriented towards the popular romance and its message is comparable to Austen's reaction to the sentimental fiction of her day. Shortly after this novel was published Shields said in an interview: 'I feel a particular affinity with early 19th-century writers such as Jane Austen,' adding that 'they did understand the love story. They understood the importance of finding the other and weren't ashamed of it' (Anderson 1995:145-146).

In *Happenstance* (1980), *The Stone Diaries* (1993), and *Unless* (2002) Shields' female protagonists' work is more an artistic and a creative one and allows them the "expansion of existence," a transcendence that de Beauvoir considers as only possible for men. De Beauvoir's theories enlighten Shields's fiction and her feminist philosophy and place her in a larger feminist community as she really considers that women's work is a potential source of transcendence.

Conclusions

While it is true that Munro's and Shields's perspective on life and destiny is quite different in what regards the interplay between free will and restrictions circumscribed to a private or public space, it is also worth noting how close they come in terms in their construction of female self. They have a feminist approach to women's condition, bringing very deep and interesting insights of the female psyche throughout their characters' lives. The

postmodernist and the feminist social critique on women's often marginal position is often a concomitant feminist and postmodernist unsettling of that conventional social order through a rereading of the ironic and sometime parodical focus on a social crime, which is the silencing of women through various degrees of violence. Parody and irony are often used by Munro and Shields, to various degrees and in some cases the plot is built up around a mystery.

Taking into account the society's characteristics, with its fixed rules regarding the behaviour pattern, the issues are similar in the works of Shield and Munro, except that we can distinguish various types of victims and different reactions to control by authority. Many of Munro's stories involve issues of love and sexual relationships that construct, deconstruct or reconstruct women's private lives, at a deeply psychological level. Specific of it is the intricate interplay between desires and external forces the characters cannot really control. As Judith Butler asserts, gender does not express a self, a way of being or a bodily difference, but rather is a performance of power. Gender, sexuality and identity are all elements of the discourse of heterosexuality and it is within discourses that power is constituted. The familial environment of childhood is influential in preparing individuals to embrace social and cultural roles. That is why Munro and Shields portray their characters as depositories of family inherited traits; the background is presented with more or fewer details but enough to give support to the kind of people they become at their adult age. Characters in the analyzed fiction sometimes have the desire to change the life that is dissatisfying, but other times they seem powerless and helpless, unable to overcome their misfortunes. Unlike Munro, Shields creates female characters with the role of silenced victims, unable to fight masculine domination and societal pattern. They express their distrust of language and family members who use it against it in a duplicitous manner. The protagonist Daisy Goodwill is powerless in a community that remains indifferent to her misfortunes. She is a victim both of the societal rules she chooses to obey and of the men in her life. The novel is strongly critical of the abuse of masculine authority and domestic dissatisfactions. The narrative gradually reconstructs scenes of family life from her perspective as well as from others' by gathering fragmented memories of her family, expressing bewilderment about identity that characterizes the postcolonial inheritance, as an alternative possibility for subjectivity in response to the elaborate psychological and material consequences of imperialism. The works of these two authors involve issues of love and sexual relationships that construct, deconstruct or reconstruct women's private lives, at a deeply psychological level. They portray women who make choices even in broken relationships, contribute to their misfortune, and they are neither the only victims nor totally innocent and helpless. The constants shifts of planes does

not affect the text coherence, on the contrary, this is a narrative technique that enables the readers to gather the significant details of the storyline and see events and characters' acts from several angles, masterfully made possible by this beguiling storyteller. Love is always viewed from a woman's perspective, and manifested through various experiences, when reality and dream-like states combine harmoniously yet ambiguously. Specific of it is the intricate interplay between desires and external forces the characters cannot really control. Being more influential, men exert their power on women's agency through the roles they typically fill in a certain context of interaction.

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CALIBAN: IDEOLOGY MEETS IRONY

ADRIAN PAPAHAGI[1]

ABSTRACT. *Caliban: Ideology Meets Irony*. The essay argues that Caliban works as an ironic counterpart of every character in *The Tempest*. Through his ambiguous and complex nature, the monster frustrates the fashionable ideological readings, which invariably reduce him to an illustration of the plight of natives at the dawn of colonialism.

Keywords: *Shakespeare;* The Tempest*; Caliban; Prospero; irony; ambiguity; against postcolonialism*.

REZUMAT. *Caliban: Ideologie versus ironie.* Studiul de față argumentează că, în *Furtuna* lui Shakespeare, Caliban funcționează ca dublu ironic al fiecărui personaj din piesă. Prin natura sa ambiguă și complexă, monstrul eludează lectura ideologică la modă astăzi, care îl reduce la o simplă ilustrare literară a exploatării coloniale.

Cuvinte cheie: Shakespeare; Furtuna; Caliban; Prospero; ironie; ambiguitate; anti-postcolonialism.

It has become monotonously fashionable to reduce *The Tempest* to "the first English example of fictional colonialist discourse"[2]. As Harold Bloom

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[2] Meredith Ann Skura, "Discourse and the Individual: The Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40 (1989), 69. The fashion started soon after the Second World War, with Octave Mannoni's book *Psychologie de la colonisation*, Paris: Seuil, 1950, published in English as *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, tr. Pamela Powesland, new foreword Maurice Bloch, Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1990. One of the best known studies of this kind is Francis Barker and Peter Hulme, "Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: the Discursive Con-Texts of *The Tempest*", in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis, London and New York: Routledge, 1985, 191-205. For a recent survey of criticism, see *The Tempest: A Critical Reader*, ed. Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, London etc.: Bloomsbury, 2014, and especially the chapter by Brinda Charry, "Recent Perspectives on *The Tempest*", 61-92. See also *'The Tempest' and Its Travels*, ed. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman, London: Reaktion Books, 2000; Andrei Zlătescu, *Prospero's Planet: Critical Quandaries around Shakespeare's Last Play*, Bucharest: Publica, 2014.

writes, "our archetypal, politically correct article on Shakespeare these days is likely to be called 'Caliban and the Discourse of Colonialism', or else 'Ariel and the Economy of Exploitation', or even 'Prospero and Mercantilism'."[3] From such an ideological perspective, Prospero invariably becomes the hateful European colonist, whose autocracy is "established by the free use of fear, mystification, and torture"[4], while Caliban is cast in the role of the enslaved native, be he African, American, Asian... or even Irish, depending on the critic's political agenda[5]. Shakespeare's text is thus turned into a mere pretext for whatever resentment, repentance or remonstrance the politically correct reader wants to bring to the fore[6]. The island's many voices are silenced, and the vulgate of contemporary cultural studies is recited in a perfunctory way, because ideological thinking is never really interested in diversity and difference, but aims to replace one orthodoxy by another, and for all its claims of rationality, is often impermeable to arguments[7]. It is not a disinterested quest for truth, but carries out an inflexible and often totalitarian agenda; it wants to affirm and conclude, rather than to listen and question[8].

As already said, the various materialist and historicist critics vilify Prospero and sentimentalise Caliban. As Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan note in their book about "Caliban's odyssey", the last decades of criticism have focused overwhelmingly on the monster's last attribute in the cast of characters ("savage and deformed slave"). Whereas earlier criticism was often interested in the concept of natural (savage) man, or in the link between physical and moral deformity, recent interpreters have discussed obsessively the final word, seeing "Caliban as American or African or some

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[3] Harold Bloom, "'Introduction', from *Caliban*", in *The Tempest* (Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages), ed., intro. Harold Bloom, volume ed. Neil Heims, New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism / Infobase, 2008, 242.

[4] Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare*, Oxford UP, 1986, 34.

[5] Barbara Fuchs, "Conquering Islands: Contextualizing *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 48 (1997), 45-62; Dympna Callaghan, "Irish Memories in *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare without Women: Representing Gender and Race on the Renaissance Stage*, London and New York: Routledge, 2000, 97-138.

[6] Against this fallacy, see Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*, London: Papermac, 1995, 23 ff. Bloom famously called new historicist, cultural materialist, post-colonialist and other neo-Marxist critics "the School of Resentment".

[7] In Russ McDonald's words, "the colonialist reading in the past decade has demonized Prospero, sentimentalized Caliban, and tyrannized conferences and journals with a new orthodoxy as one-sided as that which it had sought to replace." ("Reading *The Tempest*", *Shakespeare Survey* 43 (1991), 17).

[8] As Graham Bradshaw notes, "the failure to engage with Shakespeare's complex design [...] produces partisan or authoritarian readings, in which the conflicts these plays explore are treated as problems with a solution" (*Misrepresentations: Shakespeare and the Materialists*, Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1993, 144).

other 'slave', either literally in bondage or bound by cultural chains of language and custom."[9]

Of course, this brave new orthodoxy does not go unchallenged. Critics have argued time and again that Caliban is not "Shakespeare's portrait of the proletariat" or his "satirical comment on the rise of imperialism, the noble savage dispossessed by the ignoble white men".[10] Many scholars point out that "Prospero is neither a colonizer nor an imperialist. He does not choose to land on the island but, rather, saves his and his young daughter's lives, after they have been abandoned to die at sea, by coming ashore anywhere he can"[11]. Indeed, Prospero's status on the island is the same as Sycorax's: the former duke of Milan and Caliban's dam both ended up there as exiles. Despite Caliban's pretence that "this island's mine, by Sycorax my mother" (I.ii.333), the little expanse of land placed "ten leagues beyond man's life" (II.i.242) does not belong to anyone in particular[12].

As Brian Vickers put it,

> Whether Sycorax as an exiled aggressor has more right to the island than Prospero as an injured victim is a moot point, but it is in any case not raised by the play. [...] Prospero's stay on the island, then, is enforced, not voluntary, and while he can use its natural resources to stay alive, all the normal features of the hated colonist – murdering the natives, stealing their land, exporting their goods, produce, and wealth for profit back to one's home country – are conspicuously lacking. If modern critics want to denounce colonialism they should do so by all means, but this is the wrong play.[13]

No one can deny that Prospero enslaves Caliban and treats him cruelly, but this only happens after the monster he adopted and nurtured attempts to rape Miranda. This is no trivial crime, and cannot be explained away in the

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[9] Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History*, Cambridge UP, 1991.

[10] Kenneth Muir, *Shakespeare's Comic Sequence*, Liverpool UP, 1979, 182. Similarly, Philip Edwards believed that "Caliban is not in the play to 'stand for' colonized Indians. [...] He is natural man, instinctively poetic and instinctively brutal, longing for freedom and seeking it in the wrong quarter." (*Shakespeare. A Writer's Progress*, Oxford UP, 1986, 175).

[11] Burton Raffel, 'Introduction", *The Tempest* (The Annotated Shakespeare), notes and intro. Burton Raffel, essay by Harold Bloom, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2006, xxi. The same position is held by David Scott Kastan, "'The Duke of Milan/ And His Brave Son: Old Histories and New in *The Tempest*", in *The Tempest: A Case Study in Critical Controversy*, ed. Gerald Graff and James Phelan, Boston: Bedford, 2000, 268-86.

[12] Quotations from *The Tempest*, ed. Frank Kermode (Arden 2), London and New York: Routledge, 1994 ([6]1958).

[13] Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels*, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1993, 246.

ideological terms of Prospero's concern with the racial purity of his bloodline, as some critics do.[14]

Fortunately, myriad-minded Shakespeare is elastic enough to resist these stretches of over-interpretation. His great artistic force frustrates such reductive readings through ambiguity and irony, which stimulate interpretation, resist deconstruction, escape simplifications, and mock all attempts of ideological enlistment. Shakespeare is never simple or simplistic, and his characters are never one-sided. The tyrant Titus unflinchingly slays his own kin, yet cares for a fly, the ruthless Shylock utters the most heartbreaking soliloquy about human suffering. Similarly, the "savage and deformed slave" Caliban speaks some of the most poetic passages in Shakespeare's complete works, and proves able to seek for grace. Learning to curse goes hand in hand with learning to sing, and crime is never too far removed from grace. As Northrop Frye noted, ill treated and despised Caliban is never denied his dignity, even when everybody in the play calls him "a thing most foul", "filth", "fish", "tortoise", "monster" or "slave"[15]. And yet, the "born slave" defies Prospero's authority only to voluntarily get "a new master" in the unlikely person of the drunkard Stephano.

Caliban is fascinating because of his ambiguous character – vicious yet "honest", lusty yet childish, unruly yet slavish, daring yet cowardly, foul-minded yet poetical, "a born devil", "a fish", and yet a man. In all respects, he is the most complex character of the play, and the focal point of the entire dramatic and philosophical construction. Like the island, which seems barren to the "men of sin" (III.iii.53), but fertile to idealists like Gonzalo, Caliban is what you will. He cannot be reduced to only one meaning, but takes meaning from each character in the play, and gives a new meaning to each living soul on the island.

To begin with, Caliban is the opposite of Ariel, the delicate spirit of freedom and poetry, whose only desire is to ascend unrestrained to the higher elements[16]. Ariel, as his vetero-testamentary angelic name suggests, is flight and flame, floating about like the Holy Ghost in the early days of creation, animating the island and "flaming amazement" (I.ii.198) when required. While Ariel stands for the nobler elements, Caliban represents the lower ones; indeed, he is called "thou earth" (I.ii.316) by Prospero, and often compared to

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[14] In Kim F. Hall's twisted understanding, Prospero's concern about his young daughter's integrity becomes "his obsessive attempts to control his environment and his daughter's sexuality", and Caliban's attempt of sexual violence is read as "the miscegenative threat" or "the threat against an aristocratic body" (*Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002, 143, 151).

[15] *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*, ed. Robert Sandler, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1986, 180; "Introduction" to *The Tempest* (Penguin edn.), reprinted in *The Tempest* (Bloom's Shakespeare Through the Ages), 188.

[16] See the rather sentimental reading of Petre Creția, *Ariel sau Despre forma pură a libertății* [*Ariel or About the Absolute Form of Liberty*], pref. Gabriel Liiceanu, Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009 (1997).

aquatic animals ("fish", "tortoise") by other people. "Earth" signifies the perishable, animal aspect of human nature, since both Adam in Hebrew and *homo* (*humanus < humus*) are etymologically related to "earth"[17]. Along the known Platonic lines, Ariel naturally symbolises spirit, and Caliban body, the two steeds led by the charioteer from *Phaidros*. In the same allegorical type of reading, Ariel represents poetic genius, and Caliban stands for raw poetic matter. The agent of Prospero's potent magic, and the resilient "earth" also symbolise art and nature. Caliban also embodies animal nature, while Ariel suggests the angelic potential of man, the two extremes described by Pico della Mirandola in his celebrated *Oration on the Dignity of Man*[18]. In a Freudian or Jungian reading, Caliban and Ariel may be projections of man's psyche, *id* or *umbra* versus *ego* or *superego*. But even such a large array of meanings is too reductive for Shakespeare, who often employs what William Empson called the "seventh type of ambiguity", by which something and its contrary are meant at the same time[19].

Caliban may be water and earth, raw matter, a body fully body, "a born devil, on whose nature nurture can never stick" (IV.i.188-89), but at the same time his spirit is as eager for liberty as Ariel's. The problem is not, as some critics believe, that Caliban was enslaved by Prospero; it consists in Caliban's fundamental inability to distinguish between true freedom and different degrees of servitude. "'Ban, 'Ban, Cacaliban/ Has a new master, get a new man" (II.ii.184-85), the drunk monster sings before shouting "freedom, high-day!" (II.ii.186). And yet, at the end of the terrible day of reckoning when "no man was his own" (V.i.213), he realises his foolishness, and is thus ready to abandon his slavish inclination.

Ariel and Caliban desire freedom from Prospero's control to the point of becoming ungrateful "malignant things" (I.ii.257), but Ariel has every reason to be indebted to Prospero, who freed him from the cloven pine into which he had been confined by Sycorax, whereas Caliban does not owe his initial freedom and happiness to Prospero. In his revolt against the magician's tyranny, Caliban has more grounds than Ariel.

Critics have also noted that Caliban is often as full of poetry as the delicate spirit filling the isle with noises. Shakespeare wanted the audience to understand this, and therefore gave the monster exceedingly beautiful poetry:

> Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
> Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.

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[17] Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Creature Caliban", *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51 (2000), 8, n. 17.

[18] Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man*, tr. Elizabeth Livermore Forbes, in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Ernst Cassirer, Paul Oskar Kristeller, John Herman Randall, Jr., Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1956, 224-25, §3.

[19] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, 2nd edn, London: Chatto and Windus, 1947, 192-233.

> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
> That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
> The clouds methought would open and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,
> I cried to dream again. (III.ii.133-41)

From this perspective, Ariel and Caliban may embody different types of poetic inspiration and expression, different styles of sense and sensibility.

Caliban is not only the opposite of Ariel. He also works as a male, and monstrous double of Miranda. When Prospero arrived on the island, he found there Sycorax's cub, "gabbling like a thing most brutish", not knowing its "own meaning" (I.ii.357-59). He did not kill the little monster, did not ship him to Tunis, and certainly did not begin by enslaving or emprisoning him, as is too easily forgotten. Instead, Prospero adopted Caliban, sheltered him in his cave, and brought him up alongside with his only daughter. "Abhorred" Caliban and "admir'd Miranda", the repulsive monster and the paragon of purity and beauty were educated together. Caliban was taught language by Prospero and his daughter. In the famous words attributed to Miranda in the First Folio, but more adequate for Prospero, as Dryden believed, Caliban is scolded for his ingratitude:

> Abhorred slave,
> Which any print of goodness wilt not take,
> Being capable of all ill! I pitied thee,
> Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
> One thing or other: when thou didst not, savage,
> Know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endow'd thy purposes
> With words that made them known. But thy vile race,
> Though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures
> Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
> Deservedly confined into this rock,
> Who hadst deserved more than a prison. (I.ii.353-64)

Caliban's answer is horridly ungrateful:

> You taught me language; and my profit on't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language! (I.ii.365-67)

Ideologists like to stress that Prospero and Miranda taught Caliban *their* language, as if they could teach him articulate speech without using the

one particular language they knew. This is, of course, tendentious over-interpretation; Caliban is not taught the "colonist's" language instead of his native one, for the simple reason that he did not have one. He is taught *language*, and thus gains access to reason and can know "his own meaning". At the Ciceronian junction between *ratio* and *oratio*, Caliban becomes human[20]. In this light, Stephen Greenblatt's idea that *The Tempest* heightens "the startling encounter between a lettered and an unlettered culture" is wrong, for Caliban is a speechless "whelp" rather than the representative of an oral culture when Prospero finds him on the island[21].

Through the gift of language, the monster is turned into a man, able to name "the bigger light" and "the less". One may wish to think of Renaissance texts in which articulate man is opposed to dumb animals, as in Gelli's *Circe*[22]. Like the witch Circe, Sycorax (whose name suggests the cross-breed of swine and crow) turns humanity into animal stupidity, virtue into appetite. Sycorax's Caliban is a mere animal; Prospero's Caliban becomes a man.

If one is anxious to conclude, one may say that the failed rapist Caliban is the exact opposite of the chaste maiden Miranda, just as "earth" and "tortoise" Caliban is the radical antithesis of fiery and airy Ariel. But, here again, Shakespeare is more ambitious than ordinary writers, and allows Caliban to become an ironical commentary on Miranda. To Miranda, the crowd of usurpers, conjurers, doting fools, and drunken servants assembled before Prospero's cell are a "brave new world" (V.i.183). "'Tis new to thee", Prospero comments in the driest, most monosyllabically anticlimactic Shakespearian hemistych (V.i.184). And he is right, of course. The world Miranda admires is neither new, nor brave: it is the wicked old world that banished her and Prospero, conspired against royalty yet again, and will forever be just as vile and treacherous. It cannot be known if, in her rapture with the "beauteous mankind" of "the brave new world", Miranda heard her father's bitter comment. In all likelihood, her naïvety remains intact. Caliban, on the other hand, is quicker to realise how foolish he was to take the drunkard Stephano for a god, and his brandy for "celestial liquor" (II.ii.117). Miranda is denied the moment of *anagnorisis*, and Caliban is allowed to outsmart her. Next to Prospero, he is the only character to reach this disenchanted understanding of human nature, and implicitly of the tragic essence of history.

Caliban also stands in ironic contrast to Ferdinand. When Miranda meets the young prince ("the third man that e'er I saw", I.ii.448), she takes him for a

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[20] Vickers, 243-44.

[21] Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse: Essays in Early Modern Culture*, New York and London: Routledge, 2007 (1990), 32.

[22] Giovan Batista Gelli, "La Circe", *Dialoghi*, ed. Roberto Tissoni (Scrittori d'Italia 240), Bari: Laterza, 1967 (1549).

divine spirit. Prospero's disillusioned comment does not tarry: "to th' most of men this is a Caliban, and they to him are angels", the old magician warns the "foolish wench" (I.ii.482-84). Prospero may just want to temper Miranda's enthusiasm, but he may also be right. We know too well that there is only a thin line between imagination and reality where love is involved. One may remember the tricks of love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when frantic lovers saw "Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt" (V.i.10-11), and the Fairy Queen was "enamour'd of an ass" (IV.i.76). "Such tricks has strong imagination" (V.i.18)[23].

Caliban is an underdog, and materialist critics have no difficulty placing him in the same rank as the "working-class" servants, Stephano and Trinculo. But Caliban is not a clown, and certainly not a fool. His dignity far exceeds that of the two men animated only by their "divine liquor". By insulting Caliban, the two fools think they can assert their superior humanity, but their jokes fire back. It is not Caliban they mock, but themselves; only, unlike Caliban, they do not realise what fools they are.

> I'll be wise hereafter
> And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
> Was I, to take this drunkard for a god
> And worship this dull fool! (V.i.294-97)

True to the function suggested by etymology, the monster demonstrates that being a normally shaped human being, like Stephano, does not guarantee the nobility that Renaissance philosophers commonly associate with human nature. Whereas Stephano and Trinculo remain caricatures, the monster Caliban becomes a representative of "common humanity", as Yves Bonnefoy remarked[24]. "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (V.i.275-76), Prospero says almost fondly, but irony can also be heard: grace improved brute nature, but failed to convert human nature. "Like Prospero we have to acknowledge that Caliban is somehow ours", Harold Bloom adds[25].

The wisdom and humility Caliban derives from his *anagnorisis* in the last act of *The Tempest* also humble the treacherous brothers, Antonio and Sebastian. Whereas the monster is able to "be wise hereafter" and "seek for grace", the men of sin are impenitent like Iago[26]. The "born devil" transforms his explosive mixture of slavishness and murderous resentment into genuine

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[23] *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. Harold F. Brooks (Arden 2), Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1997 (1979).

[24] Yves Bonnefoy, *Shakespeare: théâtre et poésie*, Paris: Gallimard, 2013, 250.

[25] Harold Bloom, "Essay", in *The Tempest* (The Annotated Shakespeare), notes and intro. Burton Raffel, essay by Harold Bloom, New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2006, 139.

[26] I disagree with Ion Omesco, who thinks that Caliban has nothing to do with grace (*Shakespeare: son Art et sa* Tempête, Paris: PUF, 1993, 123).

humility, and as a result receives the dominion of the island. His understanding, rather than his revolt have restored freedom to him; through wisdom and humility, Caliban has attained human dignity. The monster, the fish, the born devil is more humane, more prone to grace, less wolvish than the Hobbesian aristocrats, and therefore becomes Shakespeare's disenchanted and ironic comment on society and politics in general.

And yet, Prospero returns to "civilisation" with the conjurors, instead of turning the isle into a paradise of justice and prosperity, where a perfect society can arise. Caliban remains on the island, Ariel joins the elements, the spirits dissolve into thin air. Even on an island controlled by a mighty magician, fairyland can last no more than Utopia, and they certainly cannot be shipped to Milan and Naples. In this respect, Caliban is Shakespeare's conservative, unsentimental and ironic comment on utopian dreams, and on the myth of the noble savage[27]. There is no such thing as a noble savage, just as there is no such thing as a perfect society. Montaigne's essay *On Cannibals*, quoted almost verbatim by dear old Gonzalo, is deconstructed word by word by Caliban, who thus becomes Shakespeare's answer to the French philosopher. Whether Montaigne really believed in the innate goodness of human nature unspoiled by civilisation, as Rousseau and his followers later did, is a matter of dispute[28]. Shakespeare certainly did not. As elsewhere, he exposes and ridicules the generous utopian dreams fostered by wholly honourable men.

Gonzalo is the only decent courtier on the island, and yet the vision he derives from Montaigne is ridiculous, as the two villainous brothers instantly realise. "The latter end of his commonwealth forgets the beginning" (II.i.154), the men of sin correctly note when Gonzalo says that he would admit "no sovereignty" (II.i.152) on the island he intends to rule as a king. The communist dream of forbidding property, marriage and social hierarchies is ridiculous, as Caliban shows. The natural man craves for the rulership of the island, and his drives are conducive to rape rather than to love. Honourable, doting Gonzalo fails to understand the lesson of *Realpolitik* that Caliban illustrates, but the two men of sin know it all too well: men's natural instincts are to kill and harm, to serve or to enslave others, not to live freely and happily together, "innocent and pure" (II.i.151). And yet, in this universal slaughterhouse, even "born devils" can experience beauty, harmony and grace.

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[27] See also Frye, "Introduction" to *The Tempest*, 188.

[28] Robert Ellrodt, "Constance des valeurs humanistes chez Montaigne et chez Shakespeare" and Frank Lestringant, "Gonzalo's books: la république des cannibales de Montaigne à Shakespeare", in *Shakespeare et Montaigne: vers un nouvel humanisme* (Actes du Congrès organisé par la Société Française Shakespeare en collaboration avec la Société Internationale des Amis de Montaigne les 13, 14 et 15 mars 2003), ed. Pierre Kapitaniak and Jean-Marie Maguin, Paris: Société Française Shakespeare, 2003, 95-116 and 175-93. Lestringant, in particular, believes that Montaigne is as ironical of Plato's utopianism as Shakespeare is of his source.

Finally, Caliban is also an ironic answer to Prospero, the magus who hopes to improve nature by enforcing art. The nature Renaissance magicians wanted to improve was not limited to the elements, but included human nature. "A sound magician is a mighty god", Faustus believed[29]. Although he is able to control delicate spirits like Ariel and vile natures like Caliban, to rend trees and to stir tempests, Prospero fails miserably to improve human nature. Caliban is a constant reminder of Prospero's failure to civilise the brute beast. And yet, the beast is civilised through the ineffable action of grace and understanding. Caliban had it in himself to become wise, just as he had music – which means harmony – in himself. Nurture and nature, art and reality, spirit and matter collide in Caliban, but the beauty of his final conversion to goodness is not Prospero's merit. The old man is unable to improve Caliban through education or through magic, just as he fails to convert the treacherous courtiers through his magnanimous forgiveness. If we want to read between the lines an autobiographical reflection on the power of drama, we are free to do so, and Prospero's farewell to his art becomes Shakespeare's farewell to theatre – the adieu uttered by a disenchanted artist who realises that fiction cannot improve reality, and art cannot improve human nature. Caliban shames nature and art at the same time, but proves the miracle of grace, which is beyond human nature or human art.

Left alone on the island at the end of the play, Caliban silently expresses the same ironical comment on man that Puck utters at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Puck's "goodnight unto you all" alludes to the darkness enveloping reason and passion alike when art cannot effect the necessary understanding. And yet, at the end of the play, the repentant thing of darkness sends a beacon of light to the happy few who can perceive it.

Finally, I would suggest that Shakespeare also holds an ironic mirror up to his posthumous critics. In the same way as he pointed out the faults of the men on the island, Caliban reveals the piteous deficiencies of ideological criticism, obsessed with preaching, labelling and concluding. In his ambiguous and ironic way, Caliban shows that nothing can be shown, that human nature cannot be reduced to a social formula. Shakespeare's supreme irony is perpetually at work: the way Caliban is interpreted tells us more about the interpreter than about the monster. Critics who reduce Caliban to the lame ideological cliché of the native oppressed in a colonial world fail to understand the concomitant dignity and abjection of the monster's character, his irreducible complexity, and his ambiguity.

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[29] Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (A-Text), in *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Oxford UP, 1995, 1.1.64.

In the encounter between the monster and those critics "eager to vent their righteous indignation", the monster shames the critics[30]. In the confrontation between ideology and irony, irony invariably carries the day.

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[30] Vickers, 248.

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THE FICTIONAL, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL AND THE AESTHETIC SELF: PERFORMING FIRST-PERSON DISCOURSE

LAURA PAVEL[1]

ABSTRACT. *The Fictional, the Autobiographical and the Aesthetic Self: Performing First-Person Discourse.* The paper focuses on the particular self-narrative of first-person dramatic texts, as well as on the ethico-aesthetic reception brought along by the performance of monodrama. Dwelling on the idiosyncratic and often hypertrophic expression of the self in front of a collective or a unique witness, a real or an imaginary beholder, the study points to the enactment of aesthetic singularity and its specific type of discursivity. Over the last decades, the *performance of the self* has been interpreted mostly through the ideological lens of cultural studies, highly indebted to the micro-politics of identity. Still, the "politics of the self" can reinforce, in its turn, the aesthetic thinking, by recovering a certain anthropological approach on the liminality of artistic condition.

Keywords: *performance of the self, monodrama, half-fictionalized self, the bodymind unity, liminality, aesthetic self-awareness, Alina Nelega, Spalding Gray*

REZUMAT. *Sinele ficţional, sinele autobiografic şi sinele estetic. Performând discursul la persoana întâi.* Lucrarea se centrează asupra autonaraţiunii specifice textelor dramatice scrise la persoana întâi, precum şi asupra receptării etico-estetice a unui *performance* de tip monodramatic. Oprindu-se asupra exprimării idiosincratice şi adeseori hipertrofice a sinelui în faţa unui martor colectiv sau unic, a unui spectator/cititor real sau imaginar, studiul relevă punerea în act a singularităţii estetice şi a tipului de discursivitate specific acesteia. În ultimele decenii, aşa-numitul *performance of the self* (performarea sinelui/de sine) a fost interpretat mai ales prin prisma ideologică a studiilor culturale, adânc ancorate în micropolitica identităţii. Totuşi, „politica sinelui"

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poate recalibra, la rândul ei, gândirea estetică, reactivând o anume abordare antropologică a liminalității condiției artistice.

Cuvinte-cheie: *performare a sinelui/de sine, monodramă, sinele semificționalizat, unitatea psihotrup (minte-trup), liminalitate, conștiință estetică de sine, Alina Nelega, Spalding Gray*

The monodramatic performer and his "double," the mono-character

In view of the aims of this study, I propose to consider corporeality (and, more specifically, the performer's body in front of an audience) less as an "empirical" object of analysis, and more as a type of discourse. An embodied discourse, that is, whose analysis can provide us with a few interpretative concepts, or with several conceptual metaphors. Beyond a mere physical appearance, the performer's body becomes a vehicle of the imaginary and a *locus of duality* between *acting*, incarnating a previous fictional part, and *performance* – a way of performing himself/herself and his/her identity, both personal and community-based. An old paradox, which still generates debates and divergent theories today, states that, while acting on stage or beyond stage, he or she is both *an incorporation of a fiction* – that is, an *alterity,* altogether – , and *a coming-into-being of the self*, the continuous performance of this dynamic and even disseminated self. Thus, it is as if the performer's bodily presence comprised the famous logical paradox of "the liar," i.e. a logical loop, a vicious circular set of lies (fictions) and "truths". As if by stating "I lie," the body undermines itself, it rather becomes anything other than what it seems to be. Or it becomes whatever artists, performance theorists and anthropologists want it to become. It has more of a performative reality, the same way *gender*, for theorist Judith Butler, has a performative nature (Butler 1988, 527), since "it is real only to the extent that it is performed."

Understood as a paradoxical interpretative concept, corporeality is often linked with other aesthetic and anthropological concepts, which will be invoked throughout the study, in a comparative and analytic manner, such as *presence*, *identity*, *politics of the self*, *performance* and *performativity*, *liminality*, *the Other* (the alterity), the embodied mind, the dichotomy mind/body, and, last but not least, the unity *bodymind* (testified by actor's training theories and methods, and also by contemporary developments in neurosciences). Actually, the "body-mind union" is a central preoccupation for the pragmatist philosopher Richard Schusterman, who has invented "somaesthetics" in order to elaborate

theoretical and practical solutions to reconstruct the field of the aesthetic, by interconnecting the "somatic self-study with the central philosophical quest for self-knowledge through critical self-scrutiny" (Schusterman 2010, 206). On the other hand, according to a phenomenological view on artistic embodiment, performance theorist and practitioner Phillip B. Zarrilli argues that *the bodymind* is "a deeply felt, resonant inhabitation of the subtle psychophysical dimensions of the body and mind at work together as one in the moment. Engaging the whole body means working with a fully awakened energy coursing through one's entire bodymind." (Zarrilli 2009, 4).

In all these complementarities or disjunctions in relation to other aesthetic and anthropologically based concepts, corporeality is revealing, in monodramatic performances, for the dynamics between the fictional and the biographical content. The twofold theatricality, fictio-biographical, is to be found, in different degrees, within the status of the performer (and also in his/her temporary Other, the character), as well as in the psycho-sociological position of the reader and/or spectator. In view of approaching the different degrees of theatricalization within monodramas, I have chosen, as objects of my research, two pieces written for a solo-performer, in which the physical traumatic actions or injuries suffered by the protagonists are metonymic enactments of mental transformations: the monodrama *Amalia respiră adânc/ Amelia Breathes Deeply* (2007), by Alina Nelega, one of the most important contemporary Romanian playwrights and theatre essayists, and Spalding Gray's monodramatic performance *Gray's Anatomy* (which is the canvas of an 80-minute film directed by Steven Soderbergh in 1996, after the text of what Gray called a "monolog"). Both of these dramatic self-narratives reveal interrelated or divergent layers of aesthetic, ethical and even political modes of creativity, their first-person discourse being relevant not only for what has been called "the Performative Turn", but nonetheless for "the Narrative Turn" in drama and in performance.

Over more than a decade, the plays of Alina Nelega have been translated and staged both in Romania and abroad, and received several awards, such as: The UNITER (The Romanian Theatrical Union) Prize "The Play of the Year", for the dramatic text *www.nonstop.ro* (2000), the Prize for European authors at the most important New Drama festival in Europe, held in Heidelberg, *Heidelberger Stückemarkt*, in 2007, for *Amelia Breathes Deeply,* and recently, in 2014, The UNITER Prize "The Play of the Year" for *In traffic*. The stylistic sharpness of her playwriting points to highly-contemporary themes, relevant both globally and locally. Thus, Nelega addresses topics such as the traumas related to gender identity, the fluctuations of the communist totalitarian politicized identity, and the postcommunist tribulations as well, or the emotional and behavioral confusion of the cybernetic generation of the years 2000, as in *www.nonstop.ro*.

Alina Nelega's *Amelia Breathes Deeply*, a quasi-*biographical fiction* of the protagonist Amelia, comprises the somehow poetical and parodical narrative of apparently biographical events, personal and communitarian traumas during and after Ceaușescu's time, as told by a woman. The protagonist, a first-person narrator and dramatist of the discourse, addresses herself to an imaginary "You," who takes on different roles – her dead mother, the political leader, or God himself. All these monological parts bear a strong dialogical component and they are mentally performed, first of all, by the reader, on his/hers imaginary stage. The protagonist Amelia (or Amalia, in the original version in Romanian) seems a rather immature and easily manipulable character. She *knows less* about herself than the supposed listener, reader or spectator, who is given the vantage point of a bitter parodical complicity with her.

In the case of Spalding Gray's monologue *Gray's Anatomy*, there is the same strong autobiographical relevance that is to be found in his other well-known works, such as *Swimming to Cambodia* and *Monster in a Box*. Acclaimed, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, for his vivacious and ironical storytelling, Gray dies in 2004 of an apparent suicide. In most of his monologues, the writer, the performer and the character seem to be one and the same, belonging to the same eccentric and hypertrophic selfhood. The actual body of the performer becomes the source of a rich flux of textuality, as if the textuality were the main character, the protagonist. In *Gray's Anatomy*, the narrative "body" made out of textuality seems to compete with the effect delivered by the mere presence of the body. The performed text and its overwhelming narrative almost engulfs the body, since it is this corpus of the text – constituting an auto-fiction, *a fictional autobiography* of Grays' – that mainly triggers the spectator's imagination, much more than the performing artist's corporeal presence before us. Plus, the storytelling process goes on in parallel with Gray's own ironical detachment, as he enacts a metarole and becomes the critical spectator of his own performance.

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Thus, the dramatic roles of a monologue comprise different stages or degrees of fictionality and entail various degrees of aesthetic empathy and distanciation. The hero of a monodrama sometimes becomes the mere actor, whereas sometimes he or she is the mere character, or an intermediate being, a presence in-between. Alina Nelega's protagonist Amelia reveals a rather problematic condition, a strange duality: she is on the one hand *the candid character*, apparently manipulable, and on the other hand she is *the performer-spectator within the text* (or within the staged text). She therefore takes upon her the rather sad laughter of the audience, since the spectators' irony, mixed with sympathy, is constantly directed towards her postcommunist delusions and her capacity to overcome the traumas of the communist times. As such, she suggests a

non-fictional or trans-fictional connection with the "emancipated spectator", who is in the position to gain a sense of agency (an ethic, aesthetic, existential one). In Jacques Rancière's view, such spectators are actually performing a sort of political awareness of the aesthetical, as they become "active interpreters, who render their own translation, who appropriate the story for themselves, and who ultimately make their own story out of it" (Rancière 2007, 280).

Let's dwell on a relevant paradox which characterizes monodrama: quite often, the character himself/herself of a monodramatic discourse *becomes an actor*. The somehow classical situation when the actor takes on the fictional character, and therefore sees and feels through the lens of the fictional-as-real being within the script, is somehow reversed: this time it is the fictional character who, by addressing himself directly to a witness or to an involved spectator, becomes the very actor delivering the role of his life before an audience (an imagined or a real one). Apparently, a sort of defictionalization takes place, since the character gives way to the actor, to the man behind the role. Alina Nelega argues that a fundamental condition of the monodramatic hero is the "non-character", the man-as-performance himself, the performer as the man behind the character, one that stands up before us, alive, in an *almost-reality*. (Nelega 2010, 83). Actually, the hyper-personalized hero is also being fictionalized, to a certain extent. This is done through his very posture of performing in front of an audience that, in its turn, confers fictional nature to the human figure who utters the monologue text. The phenomenal body, whose presence was otherwise overwhelmed by the "semiotic" body of the fictional character, undergoes a secondary semiosis and also a second stage of fictionalization. This time, it is the phenomenal body of the *performer-as-performer* that is being half-fictionalized – an opposite situation as compared to the traditional histrionic embodiment. In the latter, it was the pre-existing fiction of the character that was being "realized" by the actor on stage.

Monodrama could therefore stir up, on one hand, the crisis of representation, and on the other it could solve it[2], since it is situated on the margins of dramatic convention. As such, it proves to be an encompassing self-critical and metatheatrical species.

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Cultural studies and performance studies are both infused by a whole philosophical and anthropological discourse which reinforces the paradoxical nature of the body, situated between essentialist approaches and contextual

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[2] See, in this respect, Alina Nelega's intuition that monodrama "could apparently be a solution to escape from the crisis of representation, especially because it refuses representation in itself" (Nelega, *Structures..*, 2010, 87).

ones. From an *essentialist perspective*, corporeality has been viewed as sign of an eternal "essence," an ontological and an artistic essence as well (within the fields of both performing arts and visual arts). From a contextual and even militant perspective, the body is also looked upon as physical presence and semiotic incorporation, which conveys a "message" (either an ideological, social, political or ethical one) and performs an identity (a community-based identity, or the identity and *politics of the self*).

In monodrama and in autobiographical performance, both conditions of the performing body are present: the body as human essence, as enactment of a sort of metaphysical and eternal self, and the body as the source of identity construction and of social and political enactment of a perishable self. In an article published in the review *Modern Drama*, in 1996, Marvin Carlson claims that the field of performance art was not always hospitable for autobiographical texts: "If traditional theatre was inhospitable to such work on the grounds that it seemed to deny the imaginative, mimetic basis of the art, performance was inhospitable on the quite different grounds that autobiography introduced textuality and narrativity into the abstract, non-matrixed actions that characterized the body art of such performers as Chris Burden, Bruce Naumann, or Vito Acconci" (Carlson 1996).

Either a timeless representation of the human essence, or a construct of identity, determined by a context (historical, ideological), the body of the performer has for a long time in theatre history been interpreted as the sign of alterity or hybridity – the embodiment of the Other, of the dramatic role or character, distinct from the identity of the actual actor. There are well-known canonical theories on the duality actor–dramatic role, among which one of the first, published at the end of the eighteenth century, is Johann Jakob Engel's famous *Ideas on the Actor/Idées sur le geste et l'action théâtrales*.

In the case of the monodramatic performer, another type of theatricality arises, a fragile and ambiguous process, a fluid negotiation, on the margins of actor's anthropological condition and of character's and spectator's identity. A sort of ancestor of the mono-performer could be considered actress Gertrude Eyesoldt, who played Electra in Max Reinhardt's production from 1903. Due to her excessively hysterical performance of the title role, she is taken as an example by theatre critic Erika Fischer-Lichte for having "permanently transgressed the boundary between the semiotic and the phenomenal body" (Fischer-Lichte 2005, 5). Situated beyond such a boundary, *the corporeal self* in monodrama is constructed through the performance of confession, delivered by *the hypertrophic I* of the monologue in front of a presumably empathized, hypnotized or terrified audience (consisting of at least one viewer, or listener). One important lever that structures the theatricality of monodrama is the relationship between singular corporeality, i.e. the singularity of the "bodymind" (a unity confirmed by the

recent developments in neurosciences), and that particular monolithic, singled-out textuality issued by and through the "bodymind." Much more so, this is because the status of the protagonist is, in such cases, often concentrated in an excessive attitude, an existential "scream," in the line of an Expressionist aesthetic.

The duality of *the fictionalized* (or half-fictionalized self) and *the biographical self* is to be understood in relationship with yet another significant duality, somehow paradoxically contained in monodrama: namely, with the dynamic equilibrium between the *private sphere* and *public sphere*, which is a twofold relation, of central interest in the corpus of performance theory and in the feminist theory on lifewriting.[3] The position of the private self's exposure, of disclosing of intimate secrets before a distanced or hypnotized audience, is a basic condition for the protagonist of monodramatic discourse and performance. Through such a theatricalized posture, the intimate sphere is being turned inside-out, like a glove, and becomes an inner, projected, or even a real stage, whereby the performing self is thus acting out and constructing his or her identity.

In the case of Gray, the strange illness of the eye, called "Macular pucker," is a possible metonymy for the deconstruction of a certain compact vision of the world and of the self altogether. The mysterious ocular condition actually triggers the odyssey of the protagonist's journey around the world, his search for divergent cultural and religious solutions. Thus, the distorted eye is mostly an embodiment of a revolt. This is not necessarily an antisocial one, but merely a revolt of the fragile, subversive private sphere, of the unclassifiable hypertrophic selfhood against the rigid rules and verdicts of the social impersonal mechanism (here, embodied by the medical staff). The subversive figure of Gray, a spectator himself from within his own performance, is somehow both critical and comprehensive towards the hybrid multicultural and globalist context in which his "illness" (a physical and a metaphorical one) appears. Instead, Amelia does not express any internal or external revolt, since any possible Other, or inner alterity, any psychological and ideological difference is cut off and censored beforehand, either by herself or and by the hostile and standardizing regime. She is striving, on the contrary, to adjust herself to the requirements of a totalitarian and grotesque system. Her almost ridiculous candor is treated with pity and condescension, as she seems to indulge in a constant refusal to understand, letting herself being manipulated by the occult power of the political regime.

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[3] See, among many analyses of the public/private dynamics within performance theory, the doctoral dissertation of Ryan Matthew Claycomb, *Playing at Lives: Life Writing and Contemporary Feminist Drama.* Dissertation, 2003. The author underlines, in a post-feminist venue, the way in which the performer who exposes her intimate life, as on a publicly sociodramatic stage, enters into agency and into power:"This dissolve of the public/private barrier – a barrier that Kate Bornstein, for example, openly denigrates – represents the entrance of the performer into agency, into identity, and ultimately, into power." See http://drum.lib.umd.edu/bitstream/1903/148/1/dissertation.pdf

Most of the time throughout the play, she acts as a mere puppet, without self-conscience, as a kind of anonymous mechanism, that degrades itself more and more, as years go by. Only, from time to time she allows herself to take a deep breath. And such a deep breath stands for a sort of fragile *corporeal self-conscience*, or for an embodied conscience and self-revelation of her otherwise uncertain – on a psychological and social level – identity. The breath corresponds to a long verbal self-narrative, a prayer addressed (in a tragicomical tone, as if Amelia would be the victim of an occult ironical destiny) to both God and the Communist Comrade Commander. Amelia's excessively melodramatic prayer is a bitterly ironical statement of "gratitude": "Thank you/ For my happy childhood – thank you. / For my quiet sleep/ undisturbed by the underground moans/ of the political prisoners – / thank you. // Because you electrified my country/ and taught me how to read/ in the deafening light of the electric bulb/ syllabifying/ from/ your dailies: / The Red Star. The Red Spark./ The Red Banner (...) Thank you that you don't let me wander about in the world.,/ all by myself – / in this world that belongs not to us/ but to the Capitalist,/ the country traitors,/ who ran away/ and left us, / this ugly and dangerous world, / where my country/ is the only true haven and paradise." In her case, only the reversed version of the feminist maxim "the personal is the political" seems to apply: the political, for her, becomes the personal sphere, in other words it is the political which invades the personal, and is internalized by the ironically "candid" Amelia as her own inner option. The ideological manipulation functions in her case as a "perfect murder" committed by the political totalitarian regime. The subjective sphere, the selfhood, is gradually depersonalized and objectified. Her story is not at all emancipated, in the feminist venue, but remains anonymous and – although manipulated by the patriarchal System – somehow "alternative," an oral history/*her*story and biography. The Big History of a totalitarian regime is somehow subverted by the little stories which compose her otherwise insignificant biography. And, last but not least, those pitiful and sometimes grotesque micro-stories speak nevertheless for her quite impressive sense of communality.

The monodramatic spectatorship and the unreal body. Fictional, autobiographical, aesthetic selfhood[4]

The mono-character is in fact the quasi-fictional matrix for today's so-called autobiographical performance. And it is consequently considered symptomatic for that specific kind of social and politically charged

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[4] I prefer "selfhood"– a term by which I analyze a fully dramatic awareness of the aesthetic, ethical, psycho-physical self, associated with a comprehensive anthropological understanding of the singularity and responsiveness towards the Other– to the much more politicized "identity."

theatricality and performativity involved in the *one-to-one,* or *one-on-one* performances. It had been thoroughly demonstrated that autobiographical performance arose out of the second-wave feminist movement, and as such it "was regarded by women as a means to reveal otherwise invisible lives, to resist marginalization and objectification and to become, instead, speaking subjects with self-agency; performance, then, as a way to bring into being a self. Autobiographical performances provide a way to talk out, talk back, talk otherwise" (Heddon 2008, 3). In fact, beginning with the postmodern "anti-aesthetic" of the years 1970s and the early 1990s, and with the so-called "micro-politics" of the self, cultural analysts and performance theorists have brought along many such critical reversals of the apparently serene and apolitical aesthetic Canon, in literature, in theatre and even in visual arts.

But I would argue that, beyond this ongoing process of enhancing the socio-political awareness of the self – and even beyond defining an emancipated gender and overtly feminist identity –, the micro category of *one-to-one performances* allows of multiple anthropological and finally aesthetic implications that still need to be debated and understood. I propose to look more closely into the thick mutual relation and almost intimate interdependence between the autobiographical performer and his dedicated spectator. A kind of metatheatrical character or role can be identified here. It is a dual, bipolar one, which I would call the *simili-character of the theatricalized spectatorship*. Each individual listener and viewer undergoes a process of self-splitting, by recognizing his/her own double and his/her own otherness when gazing at and listening to the narrative of the performer. Both the performer and the spectator have this revelation of the otherness, of the "ultimate cleavage" which is to be found, as Canadian researcher Josette Féral points out, at the very core of the phenomenon of theatricality.[5]

The performer and spectator, both of them, undergo a circular process: fictionalization, theatricalization, detheatrical enactment, and maybe, once again, fictionalization... Among the paradoxes placed at the core of monodramatic performance and spectatorship, an essential one concerns, once again, the intriguing status of the solo performer's body. The continuously trained body of the professional actor, as a metonymic figuration of the actor's self-identity, mirrors his privileged extra-quotidian state of

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[5] "Thus the spectator's gaze is double: he sees in the actor both the subject that he is and the fiction that he incarnates (or the action he performs); he sees him as both master of himself and subject to the other within him. He sees not only what he says and what he does, but also what escapes him - what is said in himself and in spite of himself. The spectacle is the vehicle for all of this, and it is from this ultimate cleavage that one of the spectator's most profound pleasures arises. [...] When present together, all of the cleavages described above allow us to designate an event, object or action as theatrical. They are not only the bases of theatricality; they constitute it" (Féral 2002, 13).

being. This is a histrionic identity, which I would consider an interstitial, Quixotic state, of an "almost character." During such an intermediate stage of his creativity, the performer somehow incorporates a simili-fiction.

Yet, corporeality equally constitutes a source of a narrative autobiographical construction and performing of the self (as in the case of Spalding Gray's monodramas). The authenticity is this time based on another intriguing paradox, that of a partial self-fictionalization. The body that performs and voices a self-narrative odyssey before an audience is perceived most of the times as mediated, as incorporation of a process of fictionalization, since it is almost inevitably fictionalized by the gaze of the spectator. The spectator sees the body in front of him through the lens of an old theatrical convention, he or she sees a projected quasi-fictional body, that of the expected dramatic character, only temporarily "hosted" by the live performance of the actor. This peculiar phenomenon of reception occurs even when the performer is claiming *to be present* as himself or herself (one could take the well-known example of Marina Abramović's performance retrospective entitled "The Artist is Present," in which presence and the present actions are rather weakly perceived as such, since they are instead rather predictable).

Still, the performer could act as the equal of his or her quotidian self, and thus he or she would reach a de-theatricalized stage of performance. Regarding the de-theatrical condition of the performer that embodies the "non-character" of monodrama, playwright and theatre essayist Alina Nelega points to a crucial dilemmatic situation: "The dilemma here is whether he [the performer] possesses or does not possess an aesthetic presence on stage, or rather his presence is only an existential one. And there is yet another question to be posed: to what extent can we identify, in the *here-and-nowness* of the stage, a moment of transfiguration, of transformation – if we still believe that transfiguration is an essential moment of aesthetic quality on the theater stage. This non-character, on the one hand, takes us out of the crisis of representation, it is true, but on the other hand he or she stands for a risky phenomenon of perception: thanks to him/her, we, as spectators, give up the idea of a theatre of aesthetic relevance in favor of the pure existence" (Nelega 2010, 85).

How could such a dilemma be solved? Or, maybe, a more relevant question would be: is this a true dilemma, whose answer is revealing for the identity of the mono-performer? If we agree that this is a still important question, then the answers to it could be pointing to the rather fragile, flickering aesthetic identity – beyond the fictional, autobiographical, political and social identity – of the performer. All that the actor-to-be possesses during the first stages of his/her training process – based on the nonverbal and improvisational creativity – is actually his/her body, a crucial Other that he or she rediscovers as the self (personal selfhood, but one that resonates

with a universal "essence") throughout the training, since the body is the vehicle of the imagination, of the imagined otherness.

The mono-performer's exposure of his/her experimentally performative self before the spectator is to be understood as an aesthetic and existential *self-revelation* before the eyes of a witness. The duality performer/actor-as-character appears sometimes *in spite of* the fact that the text pronounced on stage and also the message conveyed to the spectator are "real," as a sort of direct communication *one-to-one*, or *one on one*. Whereas *the body* on stage or just before the eyes of the audience is being perceived, paradoxically, as "non-real." In other words, the staged body is being somehow "unrealized" through his mere positioning himself before the gaze of the Other.

Performer's selfhood and the artistic identity

The monodramatic reception has much to do with the particular sort of balance which can be established between modernist aesthetic distance and the temporary-contemporary response based on a private, biographical experiencing of the hybrid "bodymind" on stage. In fact, the modernist aesthetic debate on the duality of reception – both detached and empathetic – needs to be reenacted in view of the frequently participatory and even immersive modes of contemporary spectatorship.

The theatrical species/forms situated on the margins – hybrid forms, such as fictional biographies, or biographical fictions of monodramatic type, as well as monologue performances – constitute the matrix where the paradoxical identity of a solo performer is being displayed. This fluctuating and conflicting identity is successively exposed, then hidden, and then again exposed, but this time (a third time) in a half-fictionalized state. And all these steps of his or her alternative evolution on stage bring about *an aesthetic self-revelation* (situated beyond the personally subjective, or the community-based self-expression). Sometimes, the protagonist of a monodrama appears to be, on another level of his quasi-fictional and quasi-biographical existence, a metacharacter, containing in herself, say, *the actor from the future*, the one that will incarnate him/her on stage. That is, the character awaits and provokes the appearance of a projected actor, as if such an actor would be already "imagined" and contained by the character's psyche. This type of mono-character could then be expected to reveal – in a process of mutual mirroring between him/her and the actor-to-be – certain "memories" from the future before the reader-spectator.

The aesthetic conscience, one that is born, to a certain degree, out of the performer's revelation of possessing an artistically transfigured singularity, could be analyzed in relationship with the duality fictional bodymind/autobiographically

constructed bodymind. What the performer symptomatically searches is an artistic identity, to be found in the privileged histrionic condition, and reaches a creative position in his/her own right, as work of art in herself. The fictional and artistic identity has to be connected with the actor's paradoxical status, which comprises a threefold role: that of being *the artist* or demiurge (creator of an artwork), *the tool or instrument itself of creation*, and finally *the artwork* itself.

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Theatre theorist and professor Philip B. Zarrilli elaborates an "enactive" approach on acting and on the embodiment of actor's experience, looking at training principles and bodily awareness from "inside" his own scenic artistic practice as an actor. He argues for a phenomenological view on theatre (in the post-Merleau-Ponty line, which emphasizes the incorporated experience). By focusing on the unity of the mental and the physical state in performance, Zarrilli emphasizes the connection between this *bodymind* and the revelations brought along by the neuro-sciences. He develops an insightful theory on the existence of a "third body" of the actor, corresponding to an "aesthetic inner bodymind" (Zarrilli 2009, 52-56).

This time, the aesthetic dimension has a lot to do with his/her own identity as a performer, with his/her self-revelation, possibly even more than it has to do with any aesthetic norms and values. Zarrilli admits that this particular "aesthetic inner bodymind" is to be understood in connection with "a fundamental state of absence" (Zarrilli 2009, 56). Therefore, most of the times the performer does not activate or appropriate this stage or condition – a privileged condition, I should say – of aesthetic self-revelation. Such a self-revelation of the actor's special condition, of the freedom to embody various imaginary projections allowed by his or her histrionic self, brings along an experience of the creativity in pure state, i. e., a sort of phenomenological approach enacted by the performing body. One can argue that Spalding Gray's monologues display an almost similar position of the solo-performer, appearing as himself – not only as his intriguing quotidian self, but also as an ironically conscious or even hyper-conscious *artistic self*.

Not only once, the monodramatic discourse enacts, in the here-and-nowness of the stage, the self-revelation of a certain performer – a quasi-autobiographical testimony of *an aesthetic evolution of the self*. The identity of the mono-performer is actually comprising an inner Other, the old but still alive conscience of being in the position of *homo aestheticus.* This could probably be the solution to the dilemma of the monodrama's "non-character" and solo-performer. Even when he or she seems to have abandoned the aesthetic presence for "pure existence," and even when the body is finally present as body, or as a hyper-realist unity of mind and body, he or she actually possesses an inner Other. The potentiality of *the artistic other* comes to be integrated into the histrionic conscience.

Whenever this otherness is felt as a "cleavage" by the fellow-spectator, theatricality, as spectacular duality, arises. But the cleavage could be somehow "healed" within the performer's paradoxical and twofold identity, and by the emancipation of the spectator. The ethical component of such aesthetics of the performer/spectator relationship is to be found within *a threshold* between *identities in the making*, who acknowledge the difference of one another. They – performer, character, spectator or reader – all share a liminal condition, and such a common *liminality*[6] allows each of them to *out-limit* the other, to make the other conscious of her/his limits (aesthetic and ontological ones), and of the possibility of overcoming them by a mutual kind of trespassing.

Temporary conclusions on the aesthetic selfhood

Once the paradigm of performance has become increasingly accepted by the independent theatre companies and by the academic milieu as well, the actor has regained a *bodymind* conscience of herself *as herself*. She or he becomes conscious of his/her own paradoxical role or meta-character, especially when the performance puts forward a thick corporeal textuality, as in Nelega's or Gray's case. The actor (and the actor-as-character) gives up the idea that it is by all means necessary to take on a role, a preexisting fiction in order to perform. But does he or she give up the idea that it is still necessary to participate in an aesthetic existence, to display an aesthetically relevant evolution before the readers/spectators?

Elin Diamond symptomatically gives a sort of a clarifying verdict on the relationship between theatre and performance: "Theater is the repressed of performance" (Diamond 1996, 4). More or less the same way, the body of the performer is the repressed of psychological and realistic theatre, while any fictional role can be seen as the repressed of "live" autobiographical performance. And the other way round, the live autobiographical self has for so long been the repressed of his fictional counterpart on stage. Whereas the aesthetic selfhood or self-awareness, which overflows its previously legitimizing norms,

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[6] The concept of *liminality*, as defined, among others, by anthropologists such as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, and by the literary and cultural theorist Mihai I. Spariosu, encompasses the ambiguous condition of being on the threshold, in the in-between space of creativity which comes to compensate for a state of cleavage or rupture, or even for an ontological gap. For Mihai I. Spariosu, for example, liminality is a much more flexible hermeneutic concept than marginality and otherness. For instance, he makes a nuanced distinction between marginality and liminality, in order to state the specific difference of the latter: "In my view, marginality refers to an agonistic relation (...), whereas liminality refers to a neutral relation (between two or more structures, systems, subsystems, polysystems, worlds, etc.), such as obtains, say, in a no-man's land between two or more state borders (...). In my view, therefore, liminality can both subsume and transcend a dialectic of margin and center." (Spariosu 1997, 38).

symptomatically takes over the private sphere, the "somaesthetic" experiences and the everyday performances of oneself. And this paradox comes true even more so today, I would argue, in an era of onrushing extra-aesthetic – sociological political, largely cultural – interpretations.

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THE *WORLD ANEW*: A FAMILIAR STORY OF MODERN PENELOPE

ANCA PEIU[1]

ABSTRACT. *The* World Anew*: A Familiar Story of Modern Penelope*. *Start Anew World / O lume Nouă* (2014) is a period short film directed by Luiza Pârvu and written by Toma Peiu, two young Romanian filmmakers who work and study together in the U.S.A. The film, therefore, is bound to have emerged from their own life-stories – on the one hand. On the other hand, it was inspired by century-old life-stories of some of Toma Peiu's relatives, who once "*started their worlds anew*" as immigrants overseas. Toma and Luiza employed century-old family sepia photos and astounding historical documentation. The film is a complex metaphor of life and death, of love, and a young couple's harsh first experience that life is unpredictable.

Keywords: immigration, Transylvania, Pennsylvania, map, translation, trap, traveling, family history, home

REZUMAT. *Lumea de la Capăt: O poveste familiară a Penelopei moderne.* *Start Anew World/ O Lume Nouă* (2014) este un film de epocă, de scurt-metraj, regizat de Luiza Pârvu şi scris de Toma Peiu: doi tineri cineaşti români, care lucrează şi studiază împreună, în Statele Unite ale Americii. Filmul, prin urmare, nu putea să se nască decât din propriile poveşti de viaţă ale autorilor săi – pe de-o parte. Iar pe de altă parte, s-a inspirat din poveşti de viaţă, vechi de un veac, ale unora dintre rudele lui Toma, care odinioară "*au luat lumea de la capăt*," ca imigranţi, peste ocean. Toma şi Luiza au folosit nişte fotografii sepia, din albumul de familie, de acum o sută de ani, şi o impresionantă documentare istorică. Filmul reprezintă o complexă metaforă a vieţii şi a morţii, a iubirii şi a primei experienţe dure din existenţa unui cuplu tânăr, care descoperă astfel că viaţa e imprevizibilă.

Cuvinte cheie: imigraţie, Transilvania, Pennsylvania, hartă, traducere, capcană, călătorie, istorie de familie, acasă.

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Motto: "... and then I was in time again, hearing the watch.
It was Grandfather's and when Father gave it to me he said
I give you the mausoleum of all hope and desire..."
(William Faulkner, *The Sound and The Fury*, June Second, 1910)

"*Start Anew World*" is a keenly contemporary film about old universal dilemmas: where is home? Who is looking me in the eyes from this (self)portrait? Is the genealogical tree in a garden, or rather in a forest? Is my map, one of facts or rather one of fiction? Does *history* make any sense without the *histrionic* (or hysterical?) touch of the poet ("Why do you hate the South?" "I don't. I don't hate it." Yoknapatwpha remains for me the perfect illustration for any land of doom and passion.)

As the fortunate result of a collaboration of Root Films (Bucharest, Romania) with: Focus Fox (Budapest, Hungary), penproduction.ro (Bucharest, Romania), The NYU Tics School of the Arts (New York, New York), and last but not least, Dakin (Bucharest, Romania)– this independent period short film (23'33'' long) represents the lively creative reaction to all these vital questions, of a young generation of fine artists, joined in a splendid international crew, to the challenge of an ancient labyrinthine question: is the absolutely "new" beginning even possible? How far can you go from your roots? Is life a matter of personal choice, of destiny, or rather of hazard?

These brave young artists are: Luiza Pârvu – film director; Toma Peiu – screenwriter; Shan Jin (from China) – director of photography; Luiza Pârvu and Tudor D. Popescu – editors; Laura Lăzărescu-Thois– sound designer; Carmen Gociu – graphic designer; Toma Peiu, Luiza Pârvu, Adriana Răcăşan – producers. They got the generous support of Luiza's colleagues from The New York Tisch School of The Arts – from all around the world (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, France, Greece, South Korea, the U. S. A., Turkey).

Therefore we may see in this movie their *ars poetica*, as gifted young artists, starting together their own *world(s) anew*, far from home and their parents' families, relying rather on friends from different cultural backgrounds. Their *lingua franca* is American English. They have earned their precocious maturity by hard learning, tough work, extensive traveling all around the world. And much like the founders of Macondo, the men and women in Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – none of them has yet turned thirty years of age.

Though based upon *facts of reality* (both historical and personal), the story on the screen is *highly metaphorical*, *intensely poetic* by what it rather leaves unsaid. The dialogue merely discloses the tip of an iceberg of deep human emotions and states of mind.

The supreme beauty of this entire team's endeavor lies precisely in their earnest commitment *to both facts and fiction*. Reality concerns not exclusively the past beyond redemption or retrieval: reality already contains *this artistic achievement*, built itself by their lives going on together – much like this story about the painful job of growing up. Their film is now a grown up child, ready to face the world on its own. Moreover, reality has already made *actual mothers* of three of the young women of the crew: Laura Lăzărescu-Thois, Olimpia Melinte and Adriana Răcăşan. This is just to prove that fiction can also influence what we call reality – for lack of a better word.

Therefore, though the characters involved in the fictive story are (at least) five: Anna Chotlosh, Petru Chotlosh, Janusz Wojnarowski, Pavel Chotlosh, plus (last but not least) the yet unborn baby – they only needed three actors cast as follows: Olimpia Melinte for Anna Chotlosh, Florin Penişoară for Petru Chotlosh, and Ioan Ardelean for Janusz Wojnarowski. Their *visible* presence on screen is enhanced by the *invisible* – yet perceptible – looming of two ghosts: Pavel Chotlosh, *no more alive*, yet never absent; and his Chotlosh baby, *not yet alive*, but already there. *There, in America*.

*

The action takes place by the end of the former century's first decade: after the disaster of the Darr Mine in Van Meter, Pennsylvania – the coal mine explosion by the end of 1907, that took the lives of two hundred and thirty nine men, tragically entrapped within. According to the astounding documentation that went into the writing of the screen-story, as gathered by Toma Peiu with a huge effort, from Ellis Island and numerous other museums and archives, from all around the United States of America – more than two thirds of the dead were Eastern-European immigrants, treated hardly any better than slaves. When Anna arrives in Pennsylvania, it is early in the spring of 1908.

Using Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum, in Brooklyn, the oldest building in today's New York City, for its location, the short film teaches the good old lesson of survival, also in point of the *real house*, with tough walls – beside the deeper story of the idealized *imaginary home*. Wyckoff Farm is nowadays a landmark among all American museums. Its foundation was laid back in 1652, by a Dutch colonist of New Amsterdam –a contemporary to Rembrandt and Vermeer. Both Dutch masters of the baroque painting survive in the atmosphere of the film frames: in the *chiaroscuro* play with light and shadows, in this room inhabited by more characters than we can see on the screen; carrying many more than the stories we can actually just learn from the film hints and suggestions; measuring our sense of *time passing* – as both *reality* and *illusion*.

On the other hand, today's museum of Wyckoff Farmhouse holds on display some old documents representing former slave bills of sale, from the

dawn of the 19th century – as another form of *forced immigration* and also as historical evidence of the fact that the Northern United States were by no means innocent of the shameful American institution of slavery.

The three apples on the old dark brown wooden table, by the spilt coffee, could belong to such a painting – by either one of the two Dutch Golden Age masters – which may have gone missing for just a while. Depicting *domestic interior scenes* from everyday life of the *lower middle classes* (e.g. carpenters, cobblers), such a baroque canvas can still share something with this film made in the year 2014.

As the entire film evolves within these walls, with layers-upon-layers of memories, it all works upon our minds as an urge *to focus on the few words* within these sparse replies exchanged between the protagonists, who have to *start the world anew* together, before they know it. *Inwardness* is the key mood of the film screenplay by Toma Peiu – like a precious piece of jewelry, in which the most valuable element is *the spirit of its maker*.

Olimpia Melinte's both lucid and romantic rendering of Anna Chotlosh is concentrated in the frame when she stands in the doorway (see Bakhtin's view of the polyphonic novel protagonist, stuck on the threshold), visibly pregnant, half in the shadow, half in the light filtered from some invisible source – the look in her eyes questioning the nameless spectator in the dark cinema hall and searching for an honest contemporary answer.

*

The handheld camera enriches the gift of vividness in every scene. Since this is a film to be seen *at least twice*, we can better appreciate this by returning to that *original close-up* of Petru's nape of the neck. We cannot see *his mask* yet, we can just guess the trouble on his mind. *The fateful knocking* at the door is the only noise present in *this starting soundscape*: we can sense Petru's tormenting hesitation, and at the same time, his awareness of the inevitability of a momentous decision:his commitment for a lifetime.

Thus Wyckoff Farmhouse becomes itself *a metaphor of an artist's mind*; the knock at the door occurs twice: first, announcing Anna's fateful arrival; then, announcing Wojnarowski, the Pennsylvania village mayor: *the man of the law,* nonetheless just as lightly older *immigrant himself*. Petru is the only one who *knows* beforehand what it means, every time there is a knock at the front door. And he is determined to face it as best he can. And he can only overcome his own vulnerability for Anna's sake.

*

(In)adequate *translation* aspects can function as a source of bitter humor, underlining the irony and the unpredictability of the traveler's fate.

The world anew speaks *a new language*: sometimes, ignorance can work as a provisional shelter for yet another while.

When the mayor inquires about the marital status of *"Miss...is* Chotlosh?"* – Petru just translates his questions to Anna halfway, trying to protect her. Sooner or later, though, she is bound to learn the language of her adoptive homeland, with all its harsh innuendoes.

Anna's answers are already those of a brave new Pennsylvanian woman – or still perhaps those of the tough Transylvanian girl? – when Petru asks her, *not* just out of politeness:

> Petru: "How was your trip on the boat?"
> Anna: "It was fine."
> Petru: "Were you sick?"
> Anna: "A couple of times."

We are aware that this represents another metaphorical nutshell rendering her willingness to accept whole-heartedly the great change brought all about herself by arriving to the new Land of Promise. She will not complain – although this has been her very first experience of crossing the Atlantic by boat (which may have lasted up to fifty days), all by herself, pregnant with her first baby. Anna is no woman of the world: she is too young for that, and moreover comes from some forlorn village lost somewhere by the extreme Eastern frontier of a double European empire. She may well never before have left her own native home in that village of a forgotten province, with changing masters. Last but not least, she is seven months pregnant. Still she keeps herself to herself – "and will not scare."

Particular moments and gestures occur in *one-take shots*, concentrating and deepening the entire tragic meaning of the film which invites to meditation.

For instance, when her first day in her first American home is almost over, when Anna sits at supper table with Petru, it is dark and late in the evening. Heavy rain is falling outside upon and beyond the old house walls. Petru kindles the flame of a candle: both to pay a wordless tribute to the memory of Pavel, his late cousin, lost in the coalmine explosion, and to light up their first meal together, his and Anna's – after Petru's terrible confession. Their survival has now become a moral duty. The baby must be fed.

Anna wipes away her tears and instinctively assumes *the universal maternal role*: by empathy with her bereaved mother-in-law back home, she now intuitively acts like *the mother* of *both* Pavel, her late husband, the baby's father – and of Petru, also. She has to protect them all. She knows she has to take good care of the dead one, before starting her own life *anew*, completely unlike the one they had formerly planned back home, in Transylvania. The

roles in their dialog have reversed 180 degrees: it is Anna who asks the questions now, while Petru answers promptly. She has to know exactly what has been done so far and what her duty is still to do in order to cope with the major change of their situation. Together with Petru, whose eyes are brimming with silent loving devotion for her, she will have to put *a fir tree* by Pavel's grave ("Married or not, he died young and lonely"). And change his wooden cross with one of stone. Before Anna and Petrucan move on with their lives and leave that misfortunate place for good. And resume the act of beginning a "*brave new world.*"

But you cannot afford to blame either destiny or chance, once you have made up your mind *to start the world anew*. There is no room for self-pity – in such a story. Survival means hard work. The most gifted of us turn it even into an art. And whether he admits it or not, a true artist competes with the ultimate Maker Himself.

Petru's slant answers to Anna's candid questions help us see the truth gradually: about Pavel's absence, about Petru's soul, torn between his moral duty and his own genuine affection for Anna. Even when apparently the topic of their conversation eludes Pavel, this vivid ironic strain can still shed light, little by little, on the actual situation.

My favorite illustration of this specific quality of the dialog within the script is their coffee moment in the kitchen. It is Anna's first coffee time – a first intimate moment with Petru, who seems to (simply) initiate her into this "new" drink protocol:

> Anna: "What's this? Tea?"
> Petru: "It's coffee. Some kind of ground beans – some sort of beans, only stronger."
> Anna: "And what's it good for?"
> Petru: "It turns you inside out: makes it show what you feel like down deep. If you're quiet, it calms you down, too. If you're nervous, it makes you ever more nervous."
> Anna: "It's good. It keeps me warm."

If there is anything Anna and Petru will not give up in their efforts to adjust to the rough "novelty" of their American immigrant condition, it is their (old-fashioned European) sense of *decency*. This is the secret source of their *resilience*. It is the same impulse that makes Anna ask Petru: "How do I look?" – as soon as she sets foot in his house. She is definitely no flirt: she just has it in herself to always keep up the kind of appropriate appearances that would not betray her efforts within herself. She will not give in to the prolonged journey fatigue, or to her advanced pregnancy sickness because it is not like her to ask for anyone's help.

This becomes even more evident in the scene with Janusz Wojnarowski, with Petru's protective *mock-translation*. The mayor – obviously himself a newcomer, judging by his Slavonic sounding name –is eager to impress Petru's charming guest, and is giving himself importance by *conventionally* invoking *the law* of the (would-be) land of freedom: "... about being a lone woman, in this country; it's best to have a man. . .she could be deported, you know ..."

So, when Anna asks Petru what the mayor meant, Petru replies: "He says your eyes are beautiful" – thus disclosing his own love for her. Her reply to what she is taking for the mayor's compliment is both "*natural*" (she blushes) and (politically) *correct*: "Tell him I'm married."

Anna's first pang of misgiving occurs when she finds Pavel's broken pocket-watch on the mantelpiece. She had just said: "I've almost forgotten his voice." Then she asks Petru:"What may have happened with this one, any idea?"

Distance in time and space is a permanent threat to efface *memory*. Voices, faces disappear, day by day, fading under our *clockwork-like routine*. The shock of breaking this routine can only make us aware *again* of the fact that we are not here forever.

Petru postpones once again his confession about Pavel's death and his feelings for Anna by avoiding a straightforward answer to her question about the broken pocket-watch.

Then Anna almost continues what has become the closest thing to a stream-of-consciousness, if not a monolog downright: "Do you think he still loves me?" Her helpless question hardly addresses anyone, since Pavel is not there. But Petru is there for her, so he eagerly offers her his support, by yet another delay of the moment of truth: "There's nothing else he talks about." Ironically, his answer is no lie – and yet far from the truth.

Thus the scriptwriter proves his authentic poetic gift. His metaphors give unity and coherence to this dialog between two imaginary mortals, whose love may only *start the world anew* after they have first faced together the darkest depth of human life ambiguity.

<div align="center">*</div>

Yet another metaphorical pattern is closer to us than the classic one of Penelope – and this is the essential Christian legend of the Holy Mother searching for a place to give birth to Jesus. Although the filmmakers may have not necessarily considered this interpretation, the plot they developed can be said to evoke the Nativity story: with the actual Father not to be ever revealed, with the kind-hearted man who takes over the paternal role, in a spirit of humble human love.

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Another instance of *reality* competing with *fiction* is the way in which screenwriter Toma Peiu got rewarded in his search for documentation about the immigrant Chotlosh family, even more and even better *just after* the work at the film was done.

Anna Chotlosh had really existed. That much they had certainly known from the very beginning, from the stories told by Toma's grandmother and my own mother. Anna was my great-grandmother's sister, with a mysterious story: she did not exactly elope with Pavel, her husband. Yet marry *against their parents' wish* they did. The argument against this marriage was the classic Christian one: they were first rank cousins. So the law they trespassed upon was that of *incest*. They were rebels defying a consecrated law of marriage.

When Toma and Luiza first left together for the States – themselves assuming a personal and professional story of *the world starting anew* just for their own sake – they had nothing but some ancient sepia photos of the Ciotloş family, for the last time solemnly reunited before the prodigal daughter's great departure. Real Ana seems to be already outcast from that family album snapshot. Defiantly, Ana does not even bother anymore to look straight into the camera. She is already far away, engrossed in her *obstinate emigrant dreams* and plans for "the future." It may be no more than my speculation upon a tiny clue of body language – still it is there. Ana looks away, questioning her own clan's decisions by assuming she had a choice at all.

The world would soon be theirs – or even better, *of their own making*. So they took their chances and left: Pavel first, and then Ana later, after he had found some work. He was a gifted *tailor* – and not a cobbler, as in the movie. One proof of his actual profession is an ancient *legendary "Singer" sewing machine*, which lay for quite a while in my great-grandmother's attic, as a relic of their ghostly belonging to that ever fading family picture. (Of course this would make me think of William Faulkner's V. K. Ratliff, a.k.a. Suratt, the charismatic story teller's persona in his *Hamlet* and other Yoknapatwpha tales*.*)

Ana and Pavel would have ten children together. Some of these children's children would be kind and supportive enough to send Toma photos with various members of the generations having succeeded one another, in this branch of our family. One of these photos in particular shows Irvin Chotlosh, Anna's youngest son, by her side, as a grown-up, in his American Air Force uniform of an officer in the World War II.

An observation of some concern here goes to the issue of *proper names avatars*. Chotlosh is the *American spelling* of the surname Ciotloş, which had been itself previously adjusted to the *Hungarian spelling* and pronouncing norms of the day, from an original *Romanian family name*, which got lost

forever. (This always reminds me of Michael Ondaatje's protagonist in *The English Patient*, Ladislau Almasy, who can only have taken his *seemingly* Hungarian name from some Transylvanian Romanian-Hungarian family, from around the Almaş Mountains – likewise: a name that had to suit the Hungarian spelling and pronunciation norms of the Austro-Hungarian Empire of those times. The Canadian writer may have never been aware of it, nor even cared to be, either – and by so doing he acted like an "English patient" himself).

Start Anew World is for me a wonderful film, since I happen to have made the acquaintance of the counterpart couple to Ana and Pavel Ciotloş: Maria and Ioan Boeriu. They (thought they) chose to stay *back home* – you will notice I dare not say *in Romania*: it was still too early for that. World War I had to settle that by drawing a "new" map first, for what has always seemed to me the most (self)contradictory part of my homeland: Transylvania. A realm strangely and strikingly akin to William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha – to my mind.

(And for that matter, even the film story of Anna Chotlosh may remind us of Lena Grove, in Faulkner's *Light in August*, in her brave search for the natural father of her unborn baby. She will though eventually find, without even searching too hard, by the end of her long and dangerous journey, the only suitable devoted father for her baby: one who loves her truly.)

Anyway, as Faulkner would put it again: "They endured."

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After her bold departure overseas, Ana kept writing letters to her sister, Maria, for quite a while. In the 1970s one of Ana's sons also happened to venture as far as the village of Ţigmandru, in the County of Mureş, meeting my grandfather, Maria's son and his second rank cousin.

The two couples: Ana – Pavel Ciotloş and Maria – Ioan Boeriu form a meaningful polarity. Maria and Ioan Boeriu appear to be the conventional opposite of the adventurous Ana and Pavel Ciotloş. They stayed home. Or was that place their home, really? They seem to me rather *to have made it into their home,* than to have ever taken it for granted. Often, in those days, in that part of the country, people were treated like *immigrants in their own homeland.*

In the film economy, Pavel – Anna's lost husband and Petru's late cousin, and the true father of the baby soon to be born – appears in one of those *sepia photos* brought from back home overseas, by the young immigrant widow. Thus the Ioan Boeriu from the sepia photo is cast to play the role of his brother-in-law, the actual Pavel Ciotloş.

I knew Ioan Boeriu personally, being the only privileged one from an entire generation of great-grandchildren, who was born early enough to still have met him, the Romanian schoolteacher. When he passed away, I was two years old. He used to show me how the old *clock* worked: that beautifully

painted heirloom, like those they exhibit today, in the medieval Tower of Sighişoara, not far away from that village. He taught me that time passes. I guess I was his last and youngest pupil.

I find this peculiarly ironic and funny –since Ioan Boeriu was no extra, not just some dummy. In his real life, my great-grandfather was a formidable personality himself: as the very first Romanian teacher of that Transylvanian village, he was highly regarded by its inhabitants. He made *his profession into a lifetime creed*, inspiring children with a strong sense of cultural identity and Romanian national awareness. He had started himself as a "newcomer" to that village of Ţigmandru (a German compound name, meaning "a shepherd's goat skin coat"), in today's County of Mureş, yet in what was within the frontiers of the Târnava County in those times, just before World War I.

Ioan Boeriu had come from the town of Veneţia-de-Jos, in the Făgăraş County, another Transylvanian province – the very cradle of the authentic Romanian language as we know it today. He had studied hard to earn his schoolteacher's diploma, in the town of Blaj, the County of Mediaş. After graduation, Ioan Boeriu was officially sent to teach in the village of Ţigmandru, the County of Târnava. There he fell in love with Maria Ciotloş and married her. His brother-in-law was Pavel Ciotloş.

But his best friend was Iuliu Popa, the Greek-Catholic priest of the village, married to Lucreţia, the cousin of Ana and Maria. Together, Ioan Boeriu and Iuliu Popa shared some other kind of romantic experience, also a sort of *forced immigration*: they were both sent to the extremely Eastern front, as World War I cannon food, by the Austro-Hungarian regime. They went as far as Tashkent, to some marble careers, where they were afterwards taken as *prisoners of war*. For seven solid years, then, the schoolteacher and the priest tried to escape. Their wives got no news from them: hence they kept on hoping ever more eagerly. When they finally succeeded, the two men reached "back home" in rags– walking for the best part of their trip.

Maria had just "*known*" all along that her Ioan would eventually return to her and their kids. Yet how she "knew it" remains a mystery: they cannot have written letters to each other; he was a p. o. w.

Meanwhile the country had changed its name: Transylvania was now part of what they called Great Romania. Still whatever they cared to call it, it was "home." She was right; her modern Ulysses would never fail her. And so they endured ...

*

Toma Peiu is a daring traveler himself: before leaving for the U.S.A., with Luiza Pârvu, his partner in fact and fiction, he first explored his great-great-grandfather's itinerary as far as Tashkent. So I am certain that he only

employed that sepia photo of Ioan Boeriu with the best intention of lending Pavel Chotlosh a trustworthy *persona* for their movie. Both men had been great travelers – as "*introspective voyagers*" also – and mastered the universal art of survival. They deserved each other as brothers-in-law. They also deserved their formidable wives, Ana and Maria Ciotloș.

Despite the turmoil and humiliation of being dragged into an imperial European warfare that was not even his own – a fine scholar of his time and place, turned first into a soldier, then into a p. o. w. – Ioan Boeriu *from the sepia photo* finally made it back home. Whereas Pavel Chotlosh *of the movie*– apparently having been spared the misery of being used as cannon food – died "young and lonely" in some foreign coalmine overseas.

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A great merit and asset of the film is the most appropriate choice in terms of *music*. By the end of the story we can hear Grigore Leșe's powerful song (a true Romanian *doina*: a most moving melancholy folk song of sorrow), "Bată-te, America, bată" ("Damn you, America"). The lyrics tell the alienation story shared by so many Romanian immigrants of that time – and of much more recent times, as well, for that matter. Many of them did not lack schooling when they left, on the contrary – yet they were ready to accept whatever they were offered to work, no matter how primitive and perilous.

Grigore Leșe, the Romanian composer, is more than an artist: he is one of the very few Romanian music scholars of today, reviving our folksong heritage. He is devoted to his cultural mission of keeping the authentic strain of the music he researches and recovers. Without unnecessary emphasis, the simple tragic song in his voice fills in the silence left by Anna's conclusive reply: "We'll have one put to him" – symbolically meaning *the stone cross* by the head of Pavel's grave, before she and Petru leave that doomed place for good.

The film is meant "*For Passengers*" – as the final dedication of its makers reads: "to the memory of all those who have departed *before ourselves*." The line mentions names of Toma's and Luiza's late grandparents and friends, dearly missed by the bereaved young film-artists.

Yet *passengers* is what we all are: so here is the metaphorical gift of a short film, bringing us all together for twenty three minutes and a half. The final dedication includes us all, deserving all our gratitude and appreciation.

*

If Irvin Chotlosh, Anna's youngest son, proudly wore the American Air Force uniform in World War II, further to become a history professor, like his elder brother who later came to Țigmandru for a visit – Ioan Boeriu, Jr., Maria Boeriu's only surviving son, went abroad with a scholarship, to Germany,

where he earned his diploma in engineering. He also won the heart of Margarethe Bahlhorn – a beautiful big blue-eyed blonde, who thus became his wife and my maternal grandmother.

Born in Wismar, by the Baltic Sea shore, in the District of Mecklenburg, she emigrated to the Great Romania with her Third German Reich's passport, valid until August 1940. World War II had burst out meanwhile – almost one year before the passport expired. For her, there would be no more homeland to return to.

Regarded with suspicion by most of her in-laws, whether Ciotloş or Boeriu, Margarethe found some comfort in her friendship with a Russian woman of her generation, who had sought refuge from the Bolsheviks, in the same country of the Great Romania – *of all places*. Here is another example of how *immigration dreams* may entrap one in self-delusions. Or rather – of the whims of chance, that turn such narrow strips of land into matters of dispute and warfare.

But that is from some other film, yet to be written by Toma and directed by Luiza, one fine day: again about fluid frontiers, maybe. And houses which are never home. And homes that one should never take for granted.

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The short film *Start Anew World* has already been part of numerous and prestigious international and national film festivals and special screenings, such as: the Transylvania International Film Festival (TIFF) in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in June 2014; Special Screenings – "Night of the Cultural Institutes" – The Romanian Cultural Institute, Bucharest, Romania, in June 2014; Romanian Short Films – TIFF Szereda – in Miercurea Ciuc, Romania, in July, 2014; Romanian OFF & Special Screening – The *Anonimul* International Film Festival – in Bucharest, Romania, in August 2014; Romanian Shorts and Special Screening – Alba Iulia Music & Film Festival – in Alba Iulia, Romania, in September, 2014; the "Filmul de Piatră" Short Film Festival in Piatra Neamţ and Piatra Fântânele, Romania, in September 2014; the Special Screening "The White Night of the Romanian Film," in Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in September 2014; the Special Screening "Independent Producers' International Film Festival" (IPFF) in Târgu Jiu, Romania, in September, in 2014; the Special Screening TIFF Mureş, in Târgu Mureş, Romania, in September, 2014; *Leben und Tod – Let's CEE Film Festival* in Vienna, Austria, 02 – 11 October, 2014; the National Competition – Timishort International Short Film Festival – in Timişoara, Romania, October, 2014; *Une Autre Vie Est Possible* – the *Brest European Short Film Festival* – in Brest, France, in November 2014.

Start Anew World/ O Lume Nouă will be released in the Romanian cinemas as the first (symbolically – the very *ace of spades* in their graphic

representation) in a series of four short films, which form the omnibus feature *Scurt/4: Istorii de inimă neagră* (*4 Shorts: Stories of Spades*), on November 28th, 2014.

Luiza Pârvu is currently attending an MFA in Film Production, at The New York Tisch School of the Arts of the New York University in New York City, as a recipient of the 2012 Grad Film Dean's Award. Toma Peiu is currently attending an MFA in Media Studies, at the School of Media Studies, of The New School in New York City, as a recipient of the 2013 Grad Media Dean's Award. They both graduated from The National University of Theatre and Film Arts (UNATC) "I. L. Caragiale" in Bucharest, Romania. They are currently working together on their debut feature film– an independent project, as well.

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JANE AUSTEN'S *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* AS A CLASSIC EXAMPLE OF AN ENLIGHTENMENT TEXT

ROSEMARY TOWNSEND[1]

ABSTRACT. *Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility as a Classic Example of an Enlightenment Text.* Jane Austen's novel, *Sense and Sensibility,* presents a classic juxtaposition between reason and emotion as typified by two sisters. Some of the stereotypes of women as excitable, hysterical and over-emotional will be explored, particularly as embodied by female characters within *Sense and Sensibility*, but the primary focus will be on Elinor Dashwood, an unusual heroine, who represents the rationality and strength of character the novelist clearly wanted to foreground as desirable in a woman.

Keywords: sense, sensibility, Enlightenment, heroine(s), women authors, marriage

REZUMAT. *Rațiune și simțire de Jane Austen ca exemplu de text iluminist.* Romanul lui Jane Austen *Rațiune și simțire* prezintă o juxtapunere clasică a rațiunii și emoției, reprezentată prin cele două surori. Vor fi explorate stereotipuri ce prezintă femeile ca emotive și isterice, așa cum sunt ele întrupate de personajele feminine din *Rațiune și simțire*, dar în centrul atenției va sta Elinor Dashwood, o eroină atipică, ce reprezintă rațiunea și tăria de caracter pe care romanciera a vrut să le evidențieze ca trăsături dezirabile la o femeie.

Cuvinte cheie: rațiune, simțire, Iluminism, eroină, autoare, căsătorie

    Sense and Sensibility, one of Jane Austen's earliest novels, was first published anonymously in 1811, designated simply as being authored 'by a Lady', as women authors were still coming into their own at the time. This novel is patently the product of the same period that generated Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Using their respective genres, an array of female authors at the time were reshaping the role and place of women in contemporary society.

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The heroines of the novel, Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, represent sense and sensibility (or emotion) respectively. Ultimately Marianne learns from her sister and experience as her teachers, and sense prevails. In this novel (conceptualized and written between 1795 and 1799), Jane Austen shows the tremendous appeal of the strongly emotional way of life, particularly to women of the age. But she shows the strength of character, and the superior wisdom, of espousing reason as *modus vivendi*.

The novel presents the reader with two sisters, emotional Marianne and rational Elinor, who represent two poles of negotiating the world for women in Jane Austen's age – the age of the Enlightenment. It started off as an epistolary novel called *Elinor and Marianne* and has precursors in the literary world, namely an essay called 'Sense and Sensibility' of the 1790s published in the *Lady's Monthly Magazine* as well as Mrs Jane West's *A Gossip's Story* (1796) also concerning two sisters, the younger even called Marianne as well (Honan, 1987: 276).

This paper explores the two poles represented by the title of the novel *Sense and Sensibility*. Until this point typically Romantic heroines in novels had been depicted as stormy, passionate, impetuous, irrational – emotionally unbalanced, as it were – in short, like Marianne. Suddenly there appears this understated heroine, Elinor Dashwood, with her reserve, her diplomacy, her tact, and her sensible, rational decisions. Elinor was the rational steadying centre of the family after the death of her father. She was also the household accountant. 'Jane Austen's life – as well as those of her female protagonists – revolved around economic dependence' (Kucich & Taylor, 2012: xx). Mrs Dashwood, the mother, and her daughters lost their financial status to her stepson John Dashwood, who inherited all of his father's estate at his death, as was custom at the time. This left his stepmother and half-sisters with next to nothing to live on. While Mrs Dashwood and Marianne became desperately unhappy at this state of affairs, it fell to Elinor's lot to make the best of a bad and impoverished situation.

In addition, Elinor had sensitive matters of the heart to bear on her own, once she realizes that the man she loves, Edward Ferrars, has been secretly engaged to Lucy Steele for years. Elinor does not even let her closest relatives, her mother and sisters, know her feelings for Edward Ferrars. They surmise what her feelings are, and what the nature of the understanding between her and Edward Ferrars may be, but Elinor reins them in, cautioning them not to make unfounded assumptions, carrying in her own breast her own secrets – firstly, about how she feels about Edward Ferrars herself; and secondly, her knowledge about his secret engagement to Lucy Steele – hard burdens to bear. As though this were not enough to bear, she is constantly being judged by her younger sister as cold and unfeeling.

In the film of *Sense and Sensibility*, where Emma Thompson wrote the screenplay and also acts the part of Elinor and Kate Winslet the part of Marianne,

the body language of the two central characters further suggests their difference. Marianne pants, she runs, she speaks feverishly quickly at times, she pouts, she is visibly outgoing when she likes a man like John Willoughby, and obviously rejecting when she wants to put off a man like Colonel Brandon. Ironically, he is the man she eventually marries, by which Jane Austen shows how easily emotions mislead and deceive us. Elinor, on the other hand, is constantly, consistently reserved, moves in a steadier, more contained way; in short, is in control of her emotions. Mrs Dashwood, their mother, is more like Marianne – emotional and, in the context of this novel, weak and less adult than her eldest daughter Elinor.

The title of the novel *Sense and Sensibility* can seem confusing when one conflates the term 'sensibility' with the current connotation of 'sensible' today but of course at the time 'sensibility' meant 'the capacity for feeling'. The cryptic first word of the title, 'Sense', says it all: this is the attitude to life Jane Austen wishes to promote in this novel. Perhaps only *Mansfield Park* is more didactic than this one, although Jane Austen – like Elinor – is understated in her approach as a writer.

Every situation serves to highlight the contrast between the sisters. 'Jane Austen frequently foregrounds her heroines against the backdrop of other female characters, not infrequently sisters. This is both a useful and natural contrast as siblings frequently develop aspects of personality more forcibly in order to be distinguished from one another' (Townsend, 1999: 23). This is the case with Elizabeth and Jane in *Pride and Prejudice*, and it is especially true in the case of the novel under discussion. In *Sense and Sensibility* the unique characteristics of each sister is foregrounded in relation to the other one. Where Marianne throws caution to the winds, Elinor strives to conduct herself within the constraints imposed by due decorum.

When questioned on the nature and state of her relationship with Edward Ferrars by Marianne, Elinor responds:

> 'I do not attempt to deny,' said she, 'that I think very highly of him – that I greatly esteem, that I like him.'
> Marianne here burst forth with indignation - 'Esteem him! Like him! Cold-hearted Elinor! Oh! Worse than cold-hearted! Ashamed of being otherwise. Use those words again and I will leave the room this moment.'
> Elinor could not help laughing. 'Excuse me,' said she, 'and be assured that I meant no offence to you, by speaking, in so quiet a way, of my own feelings. Believe them to be stronger than I have declared; believe them, in short to be such as his merit, and the suspicion – the hope of his affection for me may warrant, without imprudence of folly. But farther than this you must not believe…' (Austen, 1969: 55)

Elinor attempts by all means to keep to the actual nature of things and not to allow her sister nor her veryown wishes to construe the relationship as other – or more advanced – than it actually is. Marianne despises her

perspicacity. And yet, a few lines later, the reader is informed that 'Marianne was astonished to find how much the imagination of her mother and herself had outstripped the truth' (Austen, 1969: 55). This question of how dangerous it is when imagination 'outstrips the truth' is foregrounded in the nearly disastrous consequences when Marianne is seen to have allowed her feelings to run ahead of the actual state of her understanding with Willoughby. She almost loses her life in the illness which ensues from her disappointment when Willoughby becomes engaged to somebody else.

Gilbert and Gubar (1984: 87) write that 'women authors … reflect the literal reality of their own confinement in the constraints they depict. … Recording their own distinctively female experience, they are secretly working through and within the conventions of literary texts to define their own lives.' Jane Austen as author might be construed as defining the position of women at the time, including her own position in her family as an unmarried woman (as daughter, sister and aunt). Her major character Elinor's secret, knowing as she does about the secret engagement between Edward Ferrars and Lucy Steele, is also a constraint in the context of the novel. It governs her behaviour towards Edward Ferrars, the man she loves, as well as her conversation with her mother and sisters. She is not in a position to give free rein to her emotions as her sister Marianne continually does.

Elinor represents, according to the modern meaning of the term, the 'sensibility of sense', as it were:

> Austen … helped inaugurate the self-disciplined, quasi-sociological, clinically observant novelistic sensibility that held sway from the 1820s onwards. Austen, whose reputation grew steadily throughout the 19th century, did more than popularize the courtship plot; she also inspired a new self-consciousness about the integrity of narrative form and an unprecedented attention to psychological depth and complexity, as well as a minute interest in the nuances of class gradation as they showed themselves in behaviour, taste, wit, and conversation. (Kucich & Taylor, 2012: xxvii)

In this sense, Elinor is a 'classy' heroine, and Marianne has a lot to learn from her sister before she is able to settle down into her own, modified version of domestic bliss at the end of the book. Elinor chastises her sister when she behaves immodestly with Willoughby, driving off alone with him in an open curricle and allowing him to call her by her Christian name. Those who flout 'Society's Rules' on modesty – as do hotheaded Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* and (to an incomparably worse degree) Lydia Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* – are hazarding their entire future happiness, along with their reputations' (Ross, 2006: 82).

Marianne's appreciation of the more sedate Colonel Brandon – who in his sincerity and genuine regard for her is always contrasted to the more flashy and

self-regarding Willoughby– arises from an altered perspective due to her illness. She is lovingly nursed through her illness by her elder sister Elinor, who proves herself to be as emotionally moved and vulnerable to the potential loss of her nearest companion as the situation warrants, thus illustrating that being sensible does not preclude appropriate emotion.

Certain authors argue that marriage for the heroines in Jane Austen's novels are inevitable:

> Whereas in the earlier 19th century tradition of domestic romance (the novels of Jane Austen, for instance), marriage is generally conceived as the natural, unquestionable outcome and goal of the heroine's emotional development from adolescence, Eliot, in these later novels, portrays marriage not as the final act of women's self-formation but rather as one more thread in the web of social constraints by which they are enmeshed.(Salmon, 2012, 102)

Yet although Jane Austen's novels do all end in marriage, it is not held out as the necessary goal. Emma Woodhouse in *Emma*, and Elinor Dashwood, for different reasons, are willing to remain single, as was Jane Austen herself. Having accepted the hand of a man she did not love, Jane Austen repented overnight and called the engagement off the very next day.

Kirkham (1983: 84) asserts that 'Jane Austen's heroines are not self-conscious feminists, yet they are all exemplary of the first claim of Enlightenment feminism: that women share the same moral nature as men, ought to share the same moral status, and exercise the same responsibility for their own conduct.' All Jane Austen's novels attempt to present women in this light, censuring them if they do not accept their equal moral status. An example of this would be found in *Northanger Abbey*, where the heroine Catherine Morland is judged severely by the hero, Henry Tilney, for allowing her imagination to run riot and to judge his father irresponsibly as a murderer:

> 'If I understand you rightly, you had formed a surmise of such horror as I have hardly words to – Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English, that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the probable, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does our education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known, in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?' (Austen, 2005: 704)

Not even Elinor makes as impassioned a plea for reason as Henry Tilney does in addressing Catherine Morland and her runaway imagination, reminiscent

of the overdeveloped sensibility of Marianne Dashwood. Henry Tilney presents England as an enlightened Christian country – the kind of place that Elinor rightly inhabits, accepting its norms and values of propriety, unlike her more rebellious sister, forever straining at the leash of good manners and decorum in her pursuit of Willoughby.

Finally, it remains to be said that virtue is its own reward, and in the novel *Sense and Sensibility* having 'sense' and living by it is presented as virtuous. While Elinor does suffer having to bear her own secrets, she nevertheless is spared the kind of humiliation and consequent illness that Marianne almost dies from. Elinor keeps her dignity; Marianne has very little. In the end Marianne nevertheless sinks into the loving arms of the very Colonel Brandon she once viewed as old and infirm. She makes a prudent rather than a passionate marriage, after all. Elinor is of course rewarded by the man she loves, Edward Ferrars, coming through his ordeals of being expected to marry a woman he no longer loves or being governed by a tyrannical mother and made to marry a heiress he does not love at all. As a free man he can marry Elinor, the woman he himself loves and who reciprocates his love.

The novel *Sense and Sensibility* thus has a doubly happy ending with the marriages of both major female characters. It has particularly shown that the Enlightenment virtue of Reason is not confined to men but can be espoused and lived out by women too and, as such, Elinor Dashwood is the perfect example of an Enlightenment heroine.

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MIRCEA ELIADE AND THE "INSUFFICIENCY OF LITERATURE"

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ABSTRACT. *Mircea Eliade and the "Insufficiency of Literature."* This study briefly outlines some of Mircea Eliade's views on the role of literature in the process of knowledge. Originally deemed to be "insufficient" and inferior to art, literature subsequently becomes one of the privileged ways of acquiring knowledge, within the context of the new theories of the imaginary.

Keywords: *Mircea Eliade, literature, art, imagination, knowledge.*

REZUMAT. *Mircea Eliade şi „insuficienţa literaturii."* Studiul de faţă prezintă, în linii mari, câteva dintre perspectivele lui Mircea Eliade asupra rolului literaturii în procesul cunoaşterii. Considerată iniţial „insuficientă" şi inferioară artelor, literatura devine ulterior una dintre modalităţile privilegiate de cunoaştere, în contextul noilor teorii ale imaginarului.

Cuvinte cheie: *Mircea Eliade, literatura, artă, imaginaţie, cunoaştere.*

In a text from the year 1927, Mircea Eliade deplored the precarious nature of literature as an "impure and insufficient synthesis" of spiritual and empirical elements, catering for the tastes of a mediocre culture, incapable of adhering to the superior functions of knowledge[2]. According to Eliade, literature mirrors, "through infinite nuances," the mixture of elements that penetrate consciousness through various experiences, bringing together "diverse results on diverse levels." By contrast, art, as "pure synthesis," reflects aesthetic emotions on a single, unique layer, pointing thus to a transcendent reality. Ultimately, literature and art have different spiritual essences, distinct universes and, in any case, different forms of the imaginary, with their own structures and functions.

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[2] Mircea Eliade, "Insuficienţa literaturii," in *Profetism românesc*, I, Bucureşti, Roza vânturilor, 1990, pp. 43-47.

"Literature fulfils the need for sentimentality, sensuality, idealism, philosophy, mysticism, for gaining knowledge of social realities, etc. However, it caters for these needs only in a conscience in which they have reached a mediocre stage of development. A strong, rich, complex inner life would strive to differentiate the functions of knowledge as categorically as possible. [...]. Literature provides very useful cultural criticism and sometimes encapsulates fragments of pure art. Still, for us, this cannot be a final position. We will always return to literature, finding respite in it and replenishing our resources from it. Literature, moreover, will always remain the purifying synthesis of a tumultuous, albeit undifferentiated conscience."

While the thinker Eliade could be described, following in the footsteps of Constantin Noica, more *and* less than a philosophical conscience[3] and while Eliade the historian of religions could be regarded as more *and* less than a "simple" religious spirit, the same cannot be said about Eliade the fiction author, who writes literature, according to his own confessions, from sheer inspiration, "seeing" ideas and grasping symbols, as well as catching glimpses, throughout this "nocturnal" undertaking, of solutions that shed unexpected light on the directions of his scientific work. He was convinced, in the spirit of Nae Ionescu, that it was necessary to combine logical-rational and symbolic-poetic knowledge,[4] and he upheld the importance of literary creation as an instrument of knowledge, insisting on the solidarity between literature, philosophy and religion.

"I was writing, full of inspiration," he noted in his *Journal*, "and everything seemed 'beautiful' to me because I was dreaming my dream and could not see the text I was writing. And, unfortunately, I can only write literature if I am 'inspired'."[5] On another occasion, he confessed that he could "see" a novel, *Noaptea de Sânziene* (*The Forbidden Forest*), and under the impulse of this irresistible delight, he interrupted his work on *Şamanismul şi tehnicile arhaice ale extazului* (*Shamanism and the Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*), which, as he confessed, he would have liked a few poets, playwrights, critics and artists to read too: "Perhaps some of them would benefit more from reading it than some Orientalists and historians of religions."[6] Convinced of the literary value of the materials available to the historian of religions, he launched the hypothesis, in the same journal, that his research might "one day be regarded as an attempt to retrieve the forgotten sources of literary inspiration."[7]

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[3] Constantin Noica, "Adevăratul înţeles al sacrului," in *Dosarul Mircea Eliade, IX (1972-1977). Infamie morală*. Foreword, edited by Mircea Handoca, Bucureşti, Curtea Veche, 2004, p. 97.

[4] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, II, 1970-1985.* Edited, index by Mircea Handoca, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1993, p. 227.

[5] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, I, 1941-1969.* Edited by Mircea Handoca, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1993, p. 189.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 385.

As the mentor of the "younger generation," whose members were against almost all the aspects of older modernism, Eliade did not give up on "insufficient" literature, even at the risk of affirming his own "undifferentiated" conscience, poised as it was at an equal distance between the spiritual and the mundane and permeated by the reverberations of a programmatically embraced "experientialism." For this reason, his friend Eugene Ionesco critically assigned him, as Cioran, also did, the position of "eternal inbetweenness," of being stranded between multifarious adventures of the spirit and "doomed" to remain a man of letters eventually.[8] For Noica, similarly, literature amounts to "sinning against thought, however rich it may be." Eliade "sinned through literature so as to find a respite or to enjoy himself, out of the sheer voluptuousness of sin."[9]

While it may be true that Eliade the writer constantly assumed this posture of "eternal inbetweenness," he did this by virtue of a philosophical creed that became crystallized with increasing clarity. This creed confirmed the opinion G. Călinescu expressed at the publication of the volume *Solilocvii* (*Soliloquies*) in 1932, in that the young essayist had opted for the "magical" solution of art and aesthetic emotion as his preferred modality of reaching ultimate knowledge.[10] Much later, other commentators, like Matei Călinescu, concluded that the implicit metaphysics in Eliade's work is "an aesthetic ontology grounded in the idea of creativity, in which the imagination serves both as an instrument of knowledge and as a means of existence."[11]

In the volume *Solilocvii*, the "anti-philosopher" declared himself to be "vexed" by the logical, objective structure of rational judgments, preferring philosophy as a "mythology" and as a "fantastic activity."[12] More than three decades later, in a discussion with Emil Cioran, Eliade denied the very possibility that classical, rational arguments might shed light on "the problem of God," situated at the center of theology and metaphysics: "I do not think that, for now, we have right to bring philosophical arguments. The issue should be left in abeyance. We shall have to limit ourselves to personal certitudes, to "bets" grounded in dreams, prophecies, ecstasies, aesthetic emotions. This is also a way to acquire knowledge, but it is devoid of "arguments" (of whatever nature they may be: logical, cosmological, ontological, etc.).[13]

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[8] Eugen Ionescu, "Mircea Eliade şi *Şantierul*," in *Dosarul Mircea Eliade. Elogii şi acuze (1928-1944), III.* Foreword, edited by Mircea Handoca, Bucureşti, Curtea Veche, 2000, p. 95.

[9] Constantin Noica, "Opera. Introducere în biografie," in *Dosarul Mircea Eliade. Elogii şi acuze (1928-1944)*, ed. cit., p. 190.

[10] G. Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent.* Edited, foreword by Al. Piru, Bucureşti, Minerva, 1982, p. 954.

[11] Matei Călinescu, "Imagination et sens. Attitudes esthétiques," in *Les Cahiers de l'Herne. Mircea Eliade.* Editions de l'Herne, Paris, 1978, no. 7-8, p. 374.

[12] Mircea Eliade, *Solilocvii*, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1991, p. 12.

[13] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal I, 1941-1969*, ed. cit., p. 541.

Although in his first texts art enjoys a privileged position compared to literature, the differences tend to fade away more and more. The historian of religions repeatedly invokes the "metaphysical dignity of narrative,"[14] the possibility of fantastic literature to reveal "everything that the past fifty years have revealed to us,"[15] the initiatory camouflage of the works of fiction, in which the entire spiritual tradition of humanity survives concealed. Against the "cliché" of the scientist in academic milieus, the scholar defended, in 1976, the essential role of poetic imagination in the process of knowledge:

"Many believe that poetic imagination and literary creativity are incongruous with 'objective' scientific research [...]. Very few know that 'real' scientists believe the very opposite [...]. Another ten or fifteen years will have to pass before the analogy between scientific creativity and artistic creativity becomes obvious to everyone, including to the academic circles."[16]

The anthropology of depths or the "new scientific spirit" founded by Gilbert Durand in the footsteps of C.G. Jung, Henry Corbin and Eliade and the transdisciplinarity advocated by Basarab Nicolescu, with influences from the thought of the Romanian philosopher, are just a few examples that confirm this perspective. The Quantum Revolution about which Basarab Nicolescu speaks, with frequent references to Mircea Eliade, reveals, essentially, the "poetic dimension of existence."[17] The transdisciplinary vision that is associated with "cosmodernity" is a transcultural, transreligious, transnational, transhistorical and transpolitical vision, which is also anticipated by the poetic horizon of the sacred that Eliade describes. Like the historian of religions, the physicist discusses the "levels of reality" and the unity of knowledge, the problem of the sacred as a key element in the structure of consciousness and the possibility of a new humanism. All these are seen through the lenses of the so-called "quantum imaginary," which opens up infinite perspectives to subjectivity in the process of knowledge.

Eliade had relations of friendship and mutual admiration with Gilbert Durand and Henry Corbin, modern theorists of the imaginary, or with Gaston Bachelard and Roger Caillois. Some of the ideas espoused by the Romanian writer are consistent with Durand's anthropology and "mythodology" and with the "metaphysics of imagination" elaborated by Corbin on the basis of Islamic philosophy.

The philosophical theories assumed by the historian of religions are actually found in the far-from-"insufficient" space of literary imagination. The theory of the unrecognizable quality of miracles, for instance, which are

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[14] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, I, 1941-1969*, ed. cit., p. 210.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 553.

[16] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal II*, loc. cit., p. 227.

[17] Basarab Nicolescu, *Transdisciplinaritatea. Manifest*, translated by Horia Mihail Vasilescu, Iaşi, Polirom, 1999, p. 107.

manifested not by contrast, but by contact, after the Incarnation, is perfectly "camouflaged" in literary works: "From Wordsworth to James Joyce, this is what the great European writers did: they discovered the sublime, the tragic, the exceptional, the mythological, etc., in everyday life, as well as in each of us..."[18] Knowledge is, therefore, a simple hermeneutics of the quotidian, which is regarded as a combination of facts that may be located on different levels of reality, as suggested by Eliade's fantastic prose:

"In the short story that I am about to write (*Podul, The Bridge*)," Eliade confesses, "I would like to make its secret meaning clearly understood: the *camouflage of mysteries* in the events of *immediate reality*. The idea is to bring out the ambivalence of any 'event,' in the sense that an 'event' that is seemingly trivial can reveal an entire universe of transcendent meanings and an 'event' that is seemingly extraordinary, fantastic, can be accepted by those who experience it as something that comes naturally and not as a surprise to them."[19]

The old metaphysics thus becomes a hermeneutic approach; the "integral" man prophesied by Eliade is the interpreter or the intercessor of a fluid, plural reality, which is "objectively" constituted from the vantage point of its various possible meanings. Knowledge is recognition, that is, an interpretation of archetypes with all their latent meanings. Literary imagination offers such a perspective, which is both unifying and infinite. It is no wonder that some philosophers choose plays, novels or diaries as their means of expression, Eliade notes, reflecting on Ernst Jünger's diary.[20] In modernity, literary imagination, which is also mythical imagination, "unravels the great structures of metaphysics"[21] and supplants inexistent religious life; its source, the transconscious, is the place of archetypes, which are decipherable, as symbols, through an epiphany of the universal. The artistic act is, according to the writer, an intuitive passageway to this extrarational area of consciousness, encapsulating an ecumenical and universal symbolism. Symbols operate at the transconscious level through a coherence of their own, through an "abstruse" logic, intelligible through aesthetic contemplation, which is equivalent to "sight" as an interpretation of the metaphysics inherent in the work of art.[22] Imagination, a mirror of the sacred implemented in any artistic creation, has an existential function, an epistemological function and a supraexistential, religious and soteriological function. It "integrates us within cosmic rhythms, which are ignored or

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[18] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal I*, loc. cit., p. 486.

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 476.

[20] Mircea Eliade, "Notes sur le *Journal* d'Ernst Jünger," in *Briser le toit de la maison. La créativité et ses symboles*, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, p. 250.

[21] Mircea Eliade, *Încercarea labirintului*. Translation and notes by Doina Cornea, Cluj-Napoca, Dacia, 1990, p. 18.

[22] Mircea Eliade, "Insula lui Euthanasius," in *Insula lui Euthanasius*, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1993, p. 17.

minimized by modern man."[23] It is simultaneously an instrument of knowledge, "revealing to us the modes of the real in comprehensible and coherent ways."[24] Through the unifying, mediating function of symbols, it enables the conjunction of the so-called "levels of reality" and provides access to pure, archetypal forms.

Convinced, early on, of the impossibility of absolute knowledge, of systematic philosophy or of the truth, which he regards as "one of the ineptest terms,"[25] Eliade nevertheless subsequently mentions the possibility of ultimate knowledge in two contexts: through contemplation and through imagination. Contemplation is the "actual, concrete, experimental knowledge" of ultimate realities[26] and having imagination means seeing the world in its totality, because images, which imitate exemplary models, fail to show all that remains refractory to concepts.[27] Ultimate reality, which cannot be accessed through reasoning, must be seen or contemplated through a "theoretical" act, in the traditional, Platonic sense of the term, both at the level of creation (itself an enacted contemplation of ideas) and through aesthetic contemplation per se. Also in a Platonic sense, this hermeneutical perspective aims to change the existential status of the viewer, placing him on a higher ontological plane. Art is, moreover, for the author of *Solilocvii*, a "magical transcendence of the object, its projection into another dimension, its liberation through magical achievement, through 'creation', through the imitation of God's work." Man is not a mere rational animal, but a creature characterized precisely by the instinct of transcendence.[28]

Two decades after the publication of the 1927 text, the essayist attributed the same role of "magical transcendence of the object" to "insufficient" literature, this time in contrast with the imperative of politically committed art.[29] Like the creative artist, the writer illustrates "a specific way of being, different from the other ways of being man can experience in the Universe (religious, economic, political, etc.)." Literature is a "battle against time," against history, given its tendency to include as many "zones of reality" as possible, which attests its openness to the general and the universal. The "metaphysical" vocation of the writer aspires to reach the "transcendent zones of archetypes" and asserts itself as an essentially free act, with primordial overtones The writer, Eliade says, contributes to completing creation, establishes "a new way

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[23] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, II*, ed. cit., p. 207.

[24] Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, I*, ed. cit., p. 58.

[25] Mircea Eliade, *Solilocvii*, ed. cit., p. 18.

[26] Mircea Eliade, "Contemplaţia," in *50 de conferinţe radiofonice, 1932-1938*, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 2001, p. 138.

[27] Mircea Eliade, *Imagini şi simboluri. Eseu despre simbolismul magico-religios*. Preface by Georges Dumézil, translated by Alexandra Beldescu, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1994, pp. 19-25.

[28] Mircea Eliade, *Solilocvii*, ed. cit., pp. 47-48.

[29] Mircea Eliade, "Scrisul şi misiunea literaturii," in *Împotriva deznădejdii. Publicistica exilului*. Edited by Mircea Handoca, foreword by Monica Spiridon, Bucureşti, Humanitas, 1992, pp. 43-50.

of being in the universe" through the liberty inherent in the literary work, and shows "what man can be, what man must be," anticipating a human condition that is freed from any determinism.

"For such a 'profane,' that is, desecrated era in which we live," the philosopher concludes, "this message and example that literary art brings is almost tantamount to a mystical technique. It is degraded, as it were, so that it may be comprehensible and available to modern man, the man of the 'dark age', but this does not make it any less a mystical technique; in other words, it is a method of saving man."

Imagination seems to be the solution adopted by the historian of religions for this "theoretical" knowledge that is specific to traditional forms of spirituality, but also by the philosopher who is searching for that philosophy from "before philosophers," to use the syntagm advanced by Georges Dumézil.[30] In the *Treatise on the History of Religions,* Eliade observes a phenomenon that is specific to modernity and that has also been discussed by other theorists: the "degradation of metaphysical meaning and the rise of the aesthetic."[31] Dante, we find in *Mystical Births*, is "the most famous example of this tendency – which anticipates the modern world – to consider art and, in particular, literature as the exemplary means of communicating a theology, a metaphysics or a soteriology."[32] Eliade, who confesses his distaste for literature in a letter to Emil Cioran from 1935,[33] embraces more and more similar ideas, confirming this displacement of the old "theoria," especially from romanticism onwards, first into the aesthetic sphere, and later on into the domain of the imaginary.

As an intermediary between sensitivity and intellect, imagination – already regarded as such by Aristotle, but valorized mostly in a Neoplatonic vein – represents for Eliade the "place" of knowledge, the interface between man and transcendence or the manner of accomplishing the coincidence of opposites. Like Gilbert Durand, Henry Corbin and other theorists of the imaginary, the essayist tends to attribute this mediating role to the imaginary, even if only through unsystematic considerations. The imaginary has ontological significance primarily as a reaction against the positivist, historicist orientation, which insists on a strong separation between subject and object. If man is, according to the definition in the volume *Solilocvii*, an intercessor between an absolute reality and a vegetal subreality, driven by the instinct of transcendence, then full self-realization may also be achieved through a mediating faculty, the source of artistic

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[30] Mircea Eliade, *Tratat de istorie a religiilor*. Preface by Georges Dumézil. *Foreword* by the author. Translated from the French by Mariana Noica, fourth edition, București, Humanitas, 2008, p. 13.

[31] *Ibid.,* p. 444.

[32] Mircea Eliade, *Nașteri mistice*. Translated by Mihaela Grigore Paraschivescu, București, Humanitas, 2013, p. 236.

[33] Mircea Eliade, *Europa, Asia, America...Corespondență, I, A-H.* Foreword, edited by Mircea Handoca, București, Humanitas, 1999, p. 151.

creation, in which the philosopher sees the passageway to the absolute. Through his work, the artist transcends the object, projecting it into another dimension and making it inaccessible to quotidian consciousness, and overcomes the limitations of the species, managing to imitate the work of God and thus to "accomplish that dimension of dreams, where absolute freedom reigns, where the categories of existence are neglected and where destiny is suppressed."[34] Because of the very fact that it is an "insufficient," "impure synthesis" of sensible and intelligible elements, literature, as Eliade understands it in his article of 1927, conceals all these latent potentialities.

Translated into English by Carmen-Veronica Borbely

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[34] Mircea Eliade, *Solilocvii*, ed. cit, pp. 47-49.

BOOK REVIEW

Ioana Mohor-Ivan, *English Literature in the 17th and 18th Centuries. Texts, Contexts and Critical Readings,* Galati University Press, 2011, 181 p.

Structured into four chronological tiers, which correspond to the main chapters of the book (the Late Renaissance, the Restoration, the Augustan Age and the Age of Sensibility), Ioana Mohor-Ivan's systematic survey of literature produced in the British Isles over the course of the 17th and the 18th centuries is more than a university course: it is an attempt at providing not only students of English, but also broader categories of readers with insights into the rich potential for signification that these poetic, fictional and dramatic texts of the past activate when they are examined through the (critical) lens of the present.

As the author programmatically undertakes in the Foreword, the approach to these literary texts is conjunctive, integrative, for this periplum across historical and cultural timeframes with permeable frontiers "steers" the reader not only beyond the constraints of periodicity, but also into an acknowledgement of the equally pertinent analytical gazes catalyzed by New Criticism and New Historicism, with their distinct emphases on close readings of literary works as self-contained aesthetic objects and, respectively, on cultural contexts of production and reception as the poles between which networks of meaning are constantly woven into existence. In light of this irenic solution to the Ricoeurian "conflict of interpretations," it becomes apparent that one of the important (edifying) merits of the book is its author's responsible guidance of contemporary readers towards an understanding that the meaning of literary texts is not finite, unchanging or immutable. As Ioana Mohor-Ivan cogently argues, meaning is to be seen rather as the "composite" – in the sense of complex and compound – and endlessly (re)generable outcome of a ceaseless process of signification, which pays due tribute both to the New Criticist notion of the work of art's permanence in time and to the New Historicist assumption that meaning is contextual, mutable and changeable and that historically contingent texts resonate for and "appeal to readers distantly placed in time of space."

Hence, the twofold purpose of this book: to outline the social, cultural and ideological *contexts* of the literary periods under consideration and to illustrate the relevance of this synoptic overview with focal forays into representative *texts* of the "literary landscape" under survey. The works
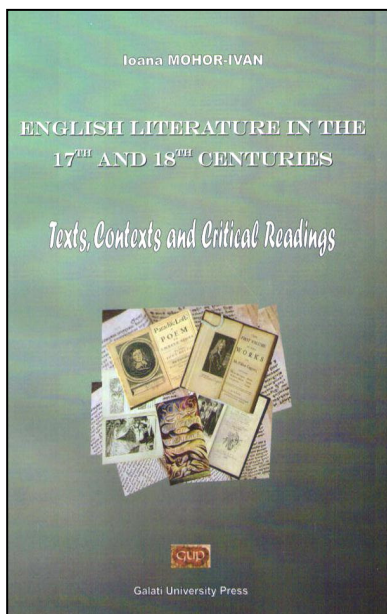
of poetry, drama and fiction selected by way of illustration occasion Ioana Mohor-Ivan to round off her two-pronged undertaking with a third move, namely a dialogic take on existing *critical readings* of these texts and contexts from various theoretical perspectives, including a con/textual reading of Andrew Marvell's "An Horatian Ode," a feminist approach to two Restoration / post-Restoration playwrights (Aphra Behn and Susanna Centlivre), a narratological analysis of Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and a postcolonial interrogation of Austen's *Mansfield Park.* This tripartite structure is detectible in each of the four chapters, contributing to the neatly articulated architectonics of the book.

Largely focused on the Late Renaissance period, the first chapter illustrates the author's intention to provide a "record of major historical events, cultural debates and literary forms characteristic for each period." Since the dominant literary mode of this timeframe is reckoned to be the lyrical one, this section tackles the poetic works of 17th-century writers in three subsections, profusely illustrated with excerpts and dedicated to: "Cavalier Poetry" (Ben Jonson and Robert Herrick), "Metaphysical Poetry" (John Donne and Andrew Marvell) and "John Milton" (deemed to be the last great liberal representative of the Renaissance on English soil). The second chapter, devoted to the Restoration, naturally encompasses references to the lyrical, dramatic and critical works of "John Dryden," an outline of "Restoration Drama and Beyond" (with a focus on heroic tragedies and comedies of manners) and a brief incursion into "Drama after 1700: George Farquhar, George Lillo, Richard Steele and John Gay." The third chapter discusses the literary accomplishments of the British Enlightenment in the form of three main subsections: "Augustan Poetry: Alexander Pope" (charting the neoclassical poet's pastorals, satires, philosophical essays, transla-

tions and adaptations), "Augustan Prose" (in which emphasis is laid on Addison's and Steele's periodical essays, as well as on Swift's satirical prose) and "The Rise of the Novel" (where due attention is granted to the works of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett and Sterne). The fourth chapter rightly regards the "Age of Sensibility" in light of the transition from Neoclassicism to Romanticism and, in addition to examining the works of the Robert Burns, William Blake or the Graveyard Poets, it continues its assessment of other forms of the novel engendered by this period (for instance, the Gothic romance, sentimental or domestic fiction and the regional novel).

Determined to ensure that her readers are equipped with all the necessary tools for progressing on the path of meaning making in their own explorations of 17th- and 18th-century literature, Ioana Mohor-Ivan ends her study with an enlightening "synoptic chronology" of the period and with an extensive Appendix that clarifies generally applicable concepts and techniques in critical approaches to works of poetry, fiction and drama. Conceived as a voyage that follows a predetermined itinerary and meanders through paradigmatic *texts, contexts and critical readings* of these centuries, this book essentially allows the readers the freedom to construct their own understanding of "what literature is" (the Wellekian question from which Ioana Mohor-Ivan's study starts) not by casting them adrift on uncharted waters or by leaving them stranded in unmappable territories, but by bestowing them with the navigational instruments that can assist them in finding their own bearings and, indeed, meanings.

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BOOK REVIEW

Voichiţa-Maria Sasu, *Nouvelles lectures québécoises*, Cluj-Napoca (Roumanie), Éditions Şcoala Ardeleană, 2014, 314 p.

Voichiţa-Maria Sasu est une lectrice passionnée de la littérature canadienne, professeur titulaire, pendant plus de vingt ans, de ce cours dans le cadre du master de littératures francophones à la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université Babeş-Bolyai de Cluj-Napoca. Elle a fondé et dirige encore le Centre d'Études canadiennes et québécoises. Son expérience didactique et de chercheur dans ce domaine a été concrétisée, une première fois en 2005, avec le volume *Lectures québécoises*. En 2014, elle revient avec un nouveau volume sur ce sujet, un recueil d'articles qui ont ponctué ses dernières recherches, visant les aspects les plus importants de cette littérature.

La couverture choisie met les textes sous le signe du harfang des neiges, oiseau symbole pour le Québec.

Les principes de cohérence de l'analyse sont renforcés par les choix des auteurs canadiens francophones du XXe et du XXIe siècles, et surtout par leur regroupement en quatre sections, illustrant des constantes de la littérature canadienne issues des particularités géographiques du pays (« Immensi-

tés et solitude »), sociales (« Littérature migrante »), linguistiques (« Écriture et langue ») ou tout simplement littéraires (« Fantastique »).

Les six premiers articles sont regroupés dans la section intitulée « Immensités et solitude », qui a pour objet d'étude la fascination du Grand Nord.

Le premier article, « Au pays du castor : *Les engagés du grand portage* de Léo-Paul Desrosiers », présente un roman-document qui décrit le commerce des fourrures par le biais du « castor », animal devenu aujourd'hui emblématique pour ce pays. C'est l'image du Canada du XIXe siècle, où les Blancs s'affrontent non seulement aux Indiens, mais aussi entre eux, conduits par l'arrivisme.

L'article suivant est dédié à une écrivaine incontournable dans la littérature canadienne francophone – Gabrielle Roy, et à son roman exceptionnel qui a pour sujet la condition de l'artiste – *La montagne secrète*. L'auteure montre comment les réalités âpres du Grand Nord sont sublimées en art par la sensibilité, le talent et l'effort d'un être
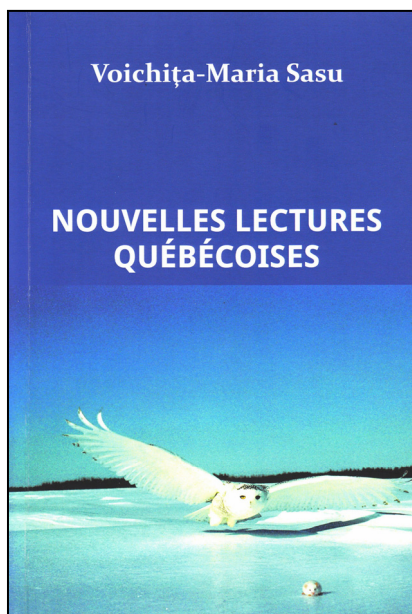
humain poussé au-delà des limites humaines par la force irrépressible de la création.

Dans « Nord-Sud : vues (vies) contrastées », Voichiṭa Sasu utilise les arguments de la géocritique en se servant de cette antithèse spatiale pour l'appliquer, dans le roman *La pêche blanche* d'Lise Tremblay, aux structures psychologiques antagoniques de deux frères, l'un vivant au Canada et l'autre aux États-Unis (à San Diego).

Si dans « L'été rouge de Michel : *Le dernier été des Indiens* de Robert Lalonde », l'auteure remet en discussion le statut de l'Amérindien et du Métis, dans « D'une tribu à l'autre : François Barcelo » est illustrée cette particularité de la canadianité dans un sens plus actuel : du simple fait historique des tribus indigènes, Barcelo passe outre l'idée de nationalisme et s'ouvre au mythe moderne d'une nation libre et sans préjugés.

Dans le dernier article de cette section, « Sur les identités constitutives dans *L'Obomsawin* de Daniel Poliquin », Voichiṭa Sasu se sert surtout de la grille proposée par François Paré dans *Littératures de l'exiguïté*, pour caractériser les « petites littératures », catégorie dans laquelle la littérature canadienne francophone est injustement encadrée. Ainsi des aspects comme l'amorphe, l'atopique, le potentiel de subversion et le dispositif anachronique sont associés à ce roman pour crayonner des « identités contrastives ».

La deuxième section, « Littérature migrante », traite d'un autre aspect incontournable de ce pays, terre d'accueil depuis des siècles. Le Canada se confronte à un rapport de forces qui a mué ces dernières décennies, qui des émigrants Blancs dominateurs des siècles passés, est passé à des émigrants, souvent Noirs, qui trouvent difficilement leur place dans la société, pendulant

entre le désir de retourner dans leur pays d'origine et l'espoir d'une vie meilleure dans un autre pays. Dans cette section, l'auteure met aussi en valeur le phénomène de « transculturation » comme jeu entre le déracinement et l'enracinement d'où naît la création littéraire.

L'article intitulé « Entre le temps de vivre et le temps rêvé » analyse, à travers le roman de Marie-Célie Agnant, *Le dot de Sara*, l'impact social et culturel du phénomène de migration : le choc des civilisations, la situation de la femme et les rapports intergénérationnels qui deviennent encore plus complexes loin du pays natal.

Si l'article antérieur met en scène des personnages venus d'Haïti, dans « L'emblème de nos origines : Naïm Kattan », l'écrivain, né à Bagdad, raconte son odyssée qui l'a fait passer par la France avant de s'installer au Canada. Voichiṭa Sasu met en lumière la vision différente que Naïm Kattan a sur l'immigration, s'opposant à la diminution de l'image du pays d'accueil en faveur du pays d'origine et, également, refusant la nostalgie qui impliquerait l'idéalisation du pays quitté ; la solution serait, selon lui, de récuser le statut d'exilé, d'homme partagé entre deux mondes.

Les textes d'Émile Ollier sont analysés dans deux articles, le premier étant une étude comparative : « Chaud/ froid dans les nouvelles d'Émile Ollivier et René Despestre » où l'auteure remarque que l'écriture n'efface pas la mémoire du pays natal (toujours Haïti), avec ses légendes, ses traditions et ses rituels qui nourrissent leur littérature d'un réalisme merveilleux, mais que, en même temps, le retour au pays n'est plus possible, car, entre temps, une autre identité a remplacé l'ancienne. Le second article, « La parole nomade : Émile Ollier », trace le contour d'une « identité métaphorique », solution littéraire de tous les problèmes

identitaires. Ainsi le marginalisé ou l'exilé devient-il un citoyen du « pays de l'écriture », Voichiţa Sasu analysant en détail les deux types d'imaginaire qui caractérisent l'auteur : l'imaginaire du dehors et du dedans.

« Sara. Sara Sage. D'où vient ce nom ? » se réfère au roman de Monique Bosco, une des voix du féminisme juif, vu par l'auteure comme une biofiction qui intertextualise avec la Bible. L'écrivaine démythifie la légende de Sara et l'adapte à l'image d'une femme juive à la recherche son identité et de sa place au monde.

Le cas de Nancy Huston (« Imaginaire identitaire chez Nancy Huston ») relève moins d'un questionnement sur la migration : Canadienne, elle vit à présent en France. Elle décèle trois phases chez l'exilé : de l'euphorie et du désir de s'intégrer ressentis au début, l'exilé subit ensuite le sentiment d'une perte irrévocable et d'un pays vu comme une prison, pour que, finalement, il se résigne à un désespoir serein. Voichiţa Sasu insiste aussi sur la double appartenance linguistique de l'écrivaine, visible dans le choix du français ou de l'anglais comme langue d'écriture/récriture.

Dans la section suivante, les textes s'articulent autour du registre du fantastique, une branche toute neuve de la littérature québécoise, née après 1990. Le premier article, « Le venin du fantastique : *Sur le seuil* de Patrick Sénécal », est dédié à celui qui est surnommé le Stephen King québécois. Voichiţa Sasu y relève la faible marge entre la réel et l'irréel lorsque le Mal dirige et les choses et la main qui décrit ses crimes. Dans le second article, « Du côté des enfers : *Les chroniques infernales* d'Esther Rochon », l'auteure est à la trace du topos de l'enfer moderne qui est, en fait, un enfer terrestre. Elle remarque que l'imaginaire infernal proposé par l'écrivaine est syncrétique, s'étayant

sur la mythologie judéo-chrétienne, gréco-romaine et bouddhiste.

La dernière section, « Écriture et langue », apporte en discussion des aspects de nature linguistique typiques pour le Canada.

L'article « L'écriture prend des risques : Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska », analyse les nouvelles qui composent le volume *La femme de sable*, écriture de veine féministe, et qui peignent la femme idéale, inaccessible à l'homme. Il faut mentionner que Voichiţa Sasu se sent très proche de ces textes étant donné qu'elle les a traduits en roumain (en 2003 aux Éditions LIMES de Cluj-Napoca).

« Les retouches de l'intime » propose une lecture transversale de l'intime dans la littérature féminine canadienne francophone à partir de la septième décennie du siècle passé. Des noms comme Hélène Dorion, Nicole Brossard, Madeleine Ouellette-Michalska, France Théoret, Louky Bersianik, Yollande Villemaire, Louise Warren, Marie-Claire Corbeil, Cécile Cloutier, Madeleine Gagnon sont rappelés pour montrer comment le corps se voile et se dévoile par l'écriture en vers ou en prose et comment il se constitue finalement en « discours amoureux ».

Le titre du dernier article du volume, « La langue rapaillée », est un hommage au poète Gaston Miron, et il traite du problème du multiculturalisme et du bilinguisme chez les écrivains francophones. La conclusion est que la défense du français et de l'identité québécoise ne devrait pas se faire sans l'acceptation de cette ouverture vers l'Autre, Anglais ou immigrant de quelque pays qu'il soit.

Ces nouvelles « nourritures » littéraires canadiennes réussissent avec succès à synthétiser les constantes de l'*homo canadians*. Voichiţa Sasu démontre une grande facilité

à se promener parmi tous ces écrivains avec le désir de révéler la beauté de leurs textes et les sens qu'ils cachent. Elle revisite des œuvres d'une littérature considérée injustement comme marginale par rapport à la littérature française proprement dite, et ouvre de nouvelles perspectives interprétatives aux lecteurs avisés ou amateurs.

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BOOK REVIEW

Camelia Elias, *In Cite. Epistemologies of Creative Writing.*
Eye Corner Press, 2013, 308 p.

The preoccupation with the art of writing has a long-established tradition both inside and outside the academia. From writers to literary critics, from cultural theorists to university professors, a host of distinguished figures have contributed to producing a significant body of literature devoted not only to circumscribing the characteristics and driving forces behind the creative impetus itself, but also to discussing the diversity of possible connections with other topical areas of study (psychology, mathematics, cybernetics, philosophy, social studies, to name but a few) leading over the past two centuries to a series of multidisciplinary approaches to the subject.

Camelia Elias's aptly titled *In Cite. Epistemologies of Creative Writing* (Eye Corner Press, 2013) is firmly anchored in this tradition. Through a highly erudite and impressively well-researched study, we are invited to embark upon a number of "epistemic adventures" of a revelatory kind. As the author herself acknowledges, the book "tackles the idea that it is significant to pay attention to what is useless in writing" (7). Starting from the premise that both academic writing and creative writing are prompted by occasion and (vaguely echoing Poe, we might say) that creative writing requires, above all, skill and analytical reflection (13), the author sets up the basic equation to be verified along the argumentation to follow. Creative writing, Elias argues, is not only intrinsically linked with epistemology, it *is* epistemology, as it bespeaks the compound of "an acute awareness of the act of writing plus enunciation: 'Now I write'" (16). By looking at some "radical writers" or "writers of the extravagant" – Samuel Beckett, Raymond Federman, Gertrude Stein, Jacques Lacan. Frank O'Hara, Douglas Hofstadter, Brian Rotman, Herman Melville, Kathy Acker, Friedrich Nietzsche, David Markson and Andrei Codrescu) – *In Cite* is centered therefore upon the interplay of "creativity" and "method," while being observant of the double implication of the essential question "can nothing be knowledge?" How one can make sense of nothing relative to knowledge, respectively, how a poetics of space can be formulated as to incorporate "nothingness" together with the creative act become the focal points of an investigation that extends over five analytical chapters.
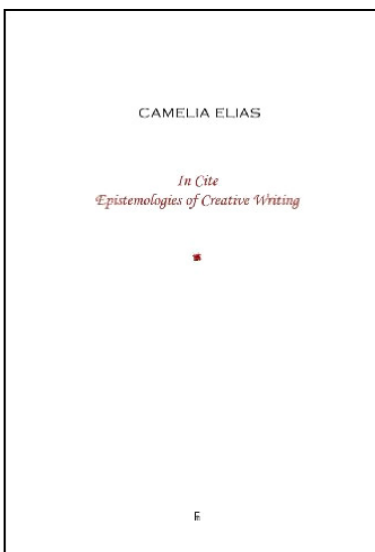
The first of them, Chapter 2, starts by focusing on Samuel Beckett, a writer illustrative of a "conscious movement" marked by the break-up of language, consequent on which a theory of nothingness is formulated, in which "breath" both "usurps" and "transcends" the dissolving body (43). We are offered a first definition of the epistemology of creative writing, as unwillingness to say, unawareness of what one wants to say, impossibility to say, all complemented by a dogged determination to say things nevertheless (49). Aware of the possibility that there might be nothing to say, Beckett's subject exhibits resilience toward relaying information, and yet a compulsion to hear one's own voice and own words uttered. It is what can be described through the metaphor "bracketed breathing." Beckett's reader, the argument continues, is exhausted, like someone climbing a mountain, whose breath becomes increasingly heavier as the air gets thinner. This shows the interest in forcing the limits of the language by eradicating syntax and grammar (51-55). By relying on a series of blanks, ellipses, gaps and an alternating sequence of negations and affirmations which test and tease the reader relentlessly, Beckett's writing revolves around the idea of perfect timing, i.e. the right moment to say something, when the reader is out of breath due to the cadences in the text (56). What we can learn from Beckett is that creativity, once stripped of reason, reveals a "cosmic connection," indebted to the epistemic value of the gesture. This epistemic adventure is also indicative of an indifference to writing, allowing us "to begin in the unbeginning," to make up private analogies and "breathe into the void," into the great "O" (66).

The examination shifts then to Raymond Federman and his *critifiction* – the intersection of critical and fictional discourses, indicative of the existential and ontological indetermination behind autobiographical writing (64). Through his texts about the Holocaust, the author tells us, Federman instructs without a method, thus achieving a "form of mercy" akin to some religious practices (65). Contrary to Beckett's championing of silence, in this scheme a central role is played by repetition. Here, the impossibility to say things is rooted precisely in the realization that everything can be said over and over again. Thus, with Federman, what makes a text good lies in the variations of the same theme, which carry an emphatic value. The trivialization of the story through repetition transposes it into the realm of the banal and the communal, thereby endowing it with the potential to address a universal audience (69). Repeating a story is an act of survival, and the appropriation of the story by others makes it even "more proper" than the original. This is how fiction turns into critifiction (74). Repetition also has a curative effect upon the traumatized subject, by offloading the pain and making it part of a shared experience. Last but not least, this form of "merciful writing" represents an ethical obligation, that of not remaining silent in the face of complete surrender (73). It is both a blessing and a curse, as one is never able to get rid of the continuity of the story (76).

The third chapter concentrates on Gertrude Stein, in an attempt to dismiss the common critical claim that her writings are not connected with mysticism. According to Elias, Stein's works not only reveal something about the "psychology of creativity" but function as a passageway to a "higher form of consciousness," thus resembling shamanic rituals of creating a reality out of words (77). Stein's "psychology of mystery" is inseparable from her "psychology of materiality." By insisting on mystical connections

and the existence of something beyond the capacity of language to express, Stein's stance is analogous to Buddhist practices and the philosophy of Zen (80-83). Stein can be considered a creative epistemologist precisely because she denies the supremacy of reason in the effort to attain a state beyond consciousness – not a replacement of the subjective element by the voice of the crowd, but rather, a state of "evolved consciousness," as her famous statement "I am not any longer when I write" proves (87-88).

Next comes an investigation of Stein's take on autobiography from the perspective of the Lacanian *passage à l'acte.* The exclusion of the self from the autobiography by replacing it with a persona discloses an epistemic logic that goes against spontaneous writing. Stein's "economy of love" implies "losing one's head to own the words (or love of another)" (95). The writer becomes an object of her own desire to be herself, despite the awareness of the impossibility of the act. Also of seminal importance to understanding Stein's epistemic position is the image of the "genius," illustrative of the interplay between construction and self-perception (100). The "genius" makes it possible for the writer to include not only the third person, but also everyone else. Concrete descriptions of individuals can thus turn into generalizations, even a formulation of a "transgeneric 'bottom nature' that fits all" (103).

A final contribution to discussing Stein's position is provided at the end of the chapter, addressing the role of the "fragment" as a type of poetics in itself. At this point, the critical discourse draws on Bachelard (the "essential mobility of concepts") and Barthes ("repetition [that] creates bliss"). This triad leads to further disclosures about the nature of epistemic creative writing, as the realm of fragments, maxims, aphorisms (112). Central to this line of investigation is the understanding of the modernist fragment as a "round space," populated with characters which form an "iconosphere" capable of signifying repetitions (114-115). Through a most inspired choice of words, the author calls the fragment an "unbeginner," a text which never takes off, "a floating negation of beginnings" (115). Thus, the Steinian fragment makes it possible for the text to distinguish conceptually between "thinking" and "naming" as well as between "action" and "thought". As such, it is an "aphoristic performance" (118-131 *passim*), with repetition at its core, as potential for knowledge.

Chapter 4 furthers some of these points, in particular, the Lacanian connections. Centered upon what the author calls "grace," it begins by reinforcing the idea that the epistemic writer is an artist who advocates a program while avoiding method (132). What is to be verified and exemplified is "the space of grace" between epistemology and literary history, the space of the "accidental insight." The investigation focuses on what "happens between nothing and everything," tackling at the same time the effect of the unconscious element of language upon convention. First, we are reminded of a central Lacanian claim, that knowledge is at its most powerful when it cannot be articulated (138). In this context, knowledge can be viewed as "the Janus-face of silence" (139). It is capable of shaping itself in accordance with an agent's attitude in context (ibid.). The previously discussed "repetition" is also given more attention, this time from a psychoanalytical perspective. We learn that it is responsible for making things and knowledge enter "a dissemination process which is both circular and infinite" (140). Knowledge, the author continues, is a creative motor, therefore capable of elevating itself from a self-ignorant level to a self-knowing one (141). This point is

examined in connection with Frank O'Hara's poem "In Memory of My Feelings," which, in the critic's reading, also thematizes some Lacanian precepts. Like Lacan, O'Hara reasons about knowledge. In its turn, this meta-reasoning, leads to the acquisition of further knowledge without, however, barring knowledge. With O'Hara, it is to be found in a "sentimental longing for number," whose listing still leaves room for breathing in quietude (114-115). It is the "quietude of grace," we are told, that lies at the heart of things. Such knowledge makes O'Hara a "prophetic epistemologist" revealing to us the location of knowledge, accessible when we allow ourselves to "stumble over what we can invent" (146).

Naturally, the next section is devoted to examining the role of invention in the epistemic creative act, done through reference to Douglas Hofstadter's ground-breaking *Gödel, Escher, Bach*, epitomized here as a "reinvention of invention" (143). The epistemic writer is one who constantly stumbles upon his own inventions in a conscious way (149). As "stumbling overs," inventions imply renouncing to dualistic patterns of thought and placing oneself in the realm of the "maybe" (153). Hofstadter's use of invention is reviewed through the lenses of Derrida and Leibniz. We learn of its double implication (Derrida's "searching" and "finding") and its peculiar logic rooted in "games of chance" (154-158 *passim*). Hofstadter "re-articulates" old themes as new, through formulae, theorems, axioms and fables. Some of these fables are granted a closer look, with insistence on the essential role played by recursiveness, nested structures and modulations. The conclusion locates the merit of Hofstadter's book in its unique formal structure of random fragments that facilitate the creation of new patterns to be employed by the dialectic

compound of imagination and inventiveness (163).

The remainder of the chapter centers upon a more recent text, Brian Rotman's *Becoming Beside Ourselves...*, with peculiar emphasis laid upon the implications of the book's ending, where its author hypothesizes about replacing "alphabetic graphism" with new systems. The inclusion of this title in the study is motivated through its perceived relevance for academics, who, according to our author, should begin with the "possible" (and its kindred manifestations, the "meanwhile" and the "maybe") and end in the "imaginary," so as to create conditions for new beginnings (167). As usual by now, a review of Rotman's text is also included, with the centerpiece of scrutiny represented by the role of epigraphs and fragments through which a "counter-evolutionistic" post-structuralist philosophical perspective is conveyed. Rotman's book is relevant for understanding the creative epistemic writer as it allows for the element of unreason in reason while it also points out the importance of faith and belief in things that cannot yet be verified by technology. Thus, the creative scientist comes to complement the creative humanist. Furthermore, the author suggests, the taxonomical efforts targeting the epistemologies of creative writing should consider, at least in part, any useful theory concerned with the question of exactitude in creativity, regardless of the field it is tributary to (175).

The scope of the investigation is further diversified in Chapter 5, by tackling the relationship between body, thought and language, through such an unlikely company of writers as Nietzsche, Melville and Kathy Acker. The fundamental claim is that (especially) in the age of the posthuman, epistemic creativity leads to the invention of

"cyborg thinking," as an expression of our desire for immortality (178). In particular, the author sets out to examine the connection between singularity, immortality and the "faith in grammar" and how this is used in works which "sanction instruction according to the rule of 'no rules'" (180). Between two readings of Nietzsche, the critical route touches upon the "interjection," a barebones "hesitation device" that unites style with the gestural. The selection of texts discussed, from Melville's "Bartleby…" to Acker's "The Language of the Body" and Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, we are told, display an unrelenting faith in grammar while suggesting that the body, which "ghosts" being, writing or machine in its attempt to achieve immortality, "violates" its own right to remain in a state of "becoming" (182). Additionally, these interpretive exercises are intended to support the idea that "crossing over" is another central metaphor underlying the epistemic writer's position as "academic witness" to one's own creative efforts. After a brief theoretical preamble that draws on Nietzsche (the need of the profound spirit to wear a mask and to masquerade fear into knowledge) as well as on ideas of contemporary cultural theorists (Kochhar-Lindgren, Rotman again), we are presented with a new conceptual proposal, "O(h)ntology," a threshold dimension, or "grey zone" where the poetics of epistemic creativity unfolds in the form of the ghost / ghostwriting. The first to receive attention is Bartleby, the embodiment of contradictory states which violate each other. His anthological verbal idiosyncrasy is read here as a form of crossing over into immortality, whereby he becomes a "ghost by proxy" that comes to haunt the others (189). In Acker's story, we are told, we find a similar boundary to be overcome, "a door marked by a black O." Since

dreams play a seminal role in Acker's text, it is suggested that one can become immortal by placing one's body in "care of a ghost in the dream machine." The act, reliant on states of altered consciousness has something magical about it, bringing the text close to what may be termed "spirited writing" (197-198), a mode that dismisses the dualistic distinction science *vs* creativity.

In this light, the rest of the chapter returns to Nietzsche, whose *Thus Spoke…* is viewed as an example of "writing for the tightrope," i.e. for nuance and balance. The critical exercise focuses on the philosopher's insistence on "love", respectively, his concern for "eternity," "eternal truth" and its embodiment in the "woman." With Nietzsche, the fragment is manifest through aphorisms (the simple form which encapsulates complex thought, capable of both destroying established ideas and surviving the destructive act) (201). Nietzsche's elastic thought serves as an interlude between man ghost, machine and love, testifying to a major difference between the academic and the epistemic creative writer, for whom the starting point is the "nothing," and its driving force the love of writing outside the confines of dogmatism, with a view to uncovering the bare essentials (213).

The last analytical chapter is devoted to two "epistemologists of site," David Markson and Andrei Codrescu. With the former, we discover "a topos of the graveyard where […] fiction can rest" (215). A number of key points are formulated right from the outset. As examples of the postmodern epitaph, Markson's writing both continues a genre and subverts it. Furthermore, unlike with Beckett, in Markson's case, the epitaph represents "history writing": since neither the death of God, nor that of the author suffices for creative writing, the only thing left is

to write about the circumstances in which those who once detained knowledge died (216). Epitaphic writing is epistemic writing because it invites us to participate to the void through repetition (217). Markson creates fragmentary situations dependent on the structure of the "undone," whereby writing simultaneously questions and undoes itself by not repeating the same question. And, if it is the text, rather than the author that should die at some point, the epitaph-fragment symbolically performs the text's "last rites" (218). Markson's works, situated at the crossroads of subjectivity and speech acts, history and literary representation, also prompt us to reconsider the meaning of "genre." Here, it becomes a performative possibility, wherein readers "embody the nature of several epitaphic voices" (223). Markson's epitaph is a function of "writing for no one," and the genre it comes to reflect is that of the "non-book." The examination of *Reader's Block* (a text which blurs the boundary between author, narrator and reader) offers further insight into epistemic creativity. Thus, at all levels, Markson's work is exemplary of in-betweenness or mediation: author and critic, the author's death and the author's function, fragment and canon, authority consecrated and authority usurped. Or, as our critic perfectly captures it in an alliterative oxymoron: "the complete text's undone doing" (236).

The final section of the analytical part of the book is dedicated to an outstanding figure of the Romanian intellectual Diaspora, Andrei Codrescu. The critical assumption verified along these pages is that his whole *oeuvre* imaginatively reconfigures the creative past by recording the general spirit of the present. Proof is adduced to support the claim that the very "tracing" of one's own history of expressivity can lead

to more valuable insights than what might transpire solely by and through the words of others, or, differently put, that writing must acknowledge the equality between the subject that *writes* and that which *cites* (244-245). Codrescu's "epistemics of the past" is rooted in non-conformity. It builds upon, valorizes, denies and participates in his forerunners' poetics (246). His agenda, Elias explains, is to revisit, revise and reconfigure the past (247). While mapping nonconformist poetry, Codrescu assumes the double role of poet and critic, emerging as an epistemologist interested in discovering the analogies between his own poetry and other writers' creative endeavors (250). With the poet having become a "subverting recorder of his time", what is eventually mapped is a past which reinvents itself as a future (253-254). As for the relation between creativity and convention, with Codrescu, the former creates the rules of the latter, while the latter, in its turn, becomes a "platform" for nonconformity and, afterwards, for knowledge.

It is also at the end of this chapter that a summative attempt is made relative to the distinctive traits of the epistemic creative writer. More than merely an expressive one, we are told, he is a writer who understands the necessity of stepping out of the space that engages the ego (269). Furthermore, the writers discussed in this book have all distinguished themselves by creating situations which they could later embody (270).

It is precisely this last point the closing chapter sets out to illustrate. At the end of a thoroughly researched, vastly informative and highly ambitious enterprise, we would expect to be allowed a respite – a moment to pause and "breathe," as the author (and Beckett) would have it. And

breathe we do, but in a company. As Elias's art is one that enacts what it professes, we are taken on a last(ing) journey along co-ordinates marked off by 33 axiomatic statements and a selection of the author's own prose poems (previously published in other volumes). During this highly performa-tive finale, we get to converse *about* and *with* some of our old acquaintances – Beckett, Federman, Stein, Nietzsche, Markson. One more truth is thus confirmed: that much of what we get to know and what *incites* us when voicing our creativity resides in the space between the *in* and the *cite* too.

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BOOK REVIEW

Ostrava Journal of English Philology, Filozofická fakulta Ostravské univerzity v Ostravě vol. 5, no. 2, 2013, 164 p.

Published under the aegis of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ostrava, each issue of *Ostrava Journal of English Philology* offers a collection of interesting and intriguing articles on topical questions. Since 2009, the journal has contributed to the advancement of English philological studies by publishing original research in the fields of English literature, cultural studies, linguistics, and translation studies. *Ostrava Journal of English Philology* appears twice a year and is available to researchers everywhere via the ERIH PLUS database and on the journal's webpage. The content of each issue is organised into four sections, namely literature and culture, linguistics and translation studies, book reviews, and news/ announcements.

The literature and culture section of the issue under consideration here, namely the second issue of 2013, tackles twentieth-century Irish, American, and Canadian literature, film and gender studies. Galina Kiryushina's study on Samuel Beckett's *Ill Seen Ill Said* opens the section with an insightful approach to Backet's novel as a reflection of the "complexity of multi-perceptual representation" (8). Auditory and visual images, Kiryushina argues, guide the reader's experience with the text and reflect Beckett's experimentation with the relationship between the spoken word and its aural and visual qualities. Becket's technique is investigated from the perspective of its "philosophical and aesthetic affiliation with Sergein Einstein's films and theory of montage based chiefly on the notion of conflict and opposition" (11).

The second study, Giuseppina Botta's "The Parable of Nutrition in Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood"* tackles the relationship between the environment, foodstuff, and sustainable nutrition and the assorted symbolism in Margaret Atwood's work. Although the title only announces *The Year of the Flood*, Botta begins with a series of fairly detailed explorations of eating disorders in other novels by Atwood, such as *Edible Woman, Lady Oracle*, or *Oryx and Crake. The Year of the Flood* is approached from the critical perspectives offered by ecocriticism and
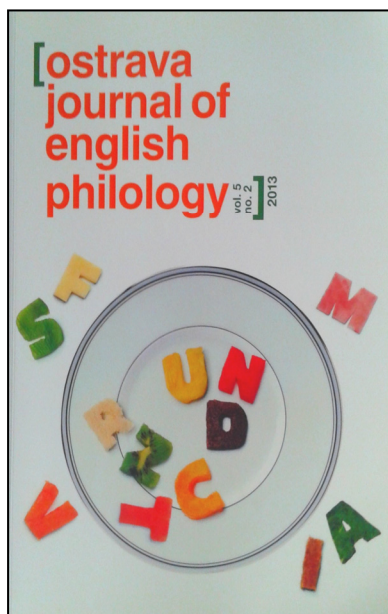
ecofeminism and offers an insightful reading of the novel, as part of Atwood's considerable concern for gender roles and the environment.

Food is also the keyword of the next article, by Andrea Holešová. In "Food as a Metaphor for Love, Sex and Life in Woody Allen's Movies," Holešová follows the complex connection between gastronomy and amorous relationships in Woody Allen's cinematographic works and claims that Allen uses food and the ritual of eating as symbols for "life and sensuality" (32). Food as sexual prelude, the close association between eating and intimacy, spoiled meals as indicative of dysfunctional relationships, culinary choices and preferences as markers of cultural identity and symbols of rebellion against one's ethnic belonging, food as a metaphor for emotional distress or as palliative for the fear of death, these are the main points that Holešová's research explores in sixteen of Woody Allen's most famous films. An extension of this research to cover Woody Allen's short stories would, in my opinion, be just as interesting.

Richard Stock's study, which continues the series, reads Richard Power's *Prisoner's Dilemma* as a 'puzzle novel' to address questions of authorship and narratorial levels. It begins by referring to Gyorg Lukács' and Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of the novel as starting-points for the definition of the 'puzzle novel,' a 'read*ing*-centered' form (as opposed to author/reader/character-centered novels). The study continues with an engaging analysis of the various narratorial hypostases in the novel and draws insightful conclusions about how the 'burden' of putting the pieces of the puzzle together placed on the reader translates into a gesture of "helping the reader live in the world, rather than helping the reader read the book" (56).

Karla Kovalová's study entitled "Does blackness still matter? Black Feminist Literary Criticism Revisited" sets out to investigate questions regarding the rise, the political implications, and the current trends in black feminist literary criticism. The study centers on exploring theoretical approaches (poststructuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis etc.) to the black feminist thinking and ideologically informed criticism. Kovalová's final argument emphasizes the topicality of the basic premises of black feminist literary criticism, but warns about the mindfulness required for navigating "through the conflicting narratives surrounding the ever-problematic issue of authentic blackness" (68).

The exploration of questions of sexism and racism continues in the last study of the literature and culture section with Veronika Portešová's "Sexuality Today: Contemporary African American Women Writers' Chick Lit Novels," albeit from a different perspective. Portešová's study begins with a detailed presentation of Patricia Hill Collins' arguments concerning the complex relationship between sexuality, gender, and race with focus on black sexual politics, which Portešová uses as the theoretical framework for the analysis of racial tensions and sexual politics in *What a Sista Should Do* by Tiffany L. Warren and *The Other Side of the Game* by Anita Doreen Diggs.

The three studies collected in the linguistics and translation studies section address the areas of comparative and contrastive grammar, sociolinguistics, and lexicology and semantics. An interesting comparison between the prototypical properties of English and German modal verbs leading to the conclusion that "central English modal elements such as *must*, *can*, and *will* are not verbs but form a separate part of speech" is to be found in Tomas Bata's "On the Categorial

Properties of English and German Modal Verbs" (100). Danica Maleková's study, "Representation of Social Actors in the Genre of the Institutional Press Release: a Study of Headlines," analyses the degree and linguistic structures of self-reference in the headlines of the press releases issued by the environmental departments of the European Commission and of the British government. The section concludes with "English Canonical Antonyms in Non-Native Speakers" by Lenka Janovcová, which investigates the perception of canonical English antonyms in native and non-native speakers and contends that non-native speakers perceive canonical antonyms in a way similar to native speakers and that the differences that appear are mainly due to the limited vocabulary of non-natives.

The book reviews section includes reviews of important scholarly work in the fields of literature, cultural studies, and linguistics. The news and announcements section includes a conference report on "Contexts, References and Style," the 5th Nitra Conference on Discourse Studies authored by Gabriela Zapletalová.

The other issues of *Ostrava Journal of English Philology* also offer serious and engaging scholarly work, dealing with matters of current interest. The research published in the Journal covers a wide range of topics relevant for scholars of literature, cultural studies, and linguistics alike, which recommends it as a good research resource.

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BOOK REVIEW

Adrian Radu, *Perceptions of Victorian Literature*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, 2014, 240 p.

Adrian Radu is Reader in the English Department of the Faculty of Letters, "Babes-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca. His research area includes: Victorian literature, D.H. Lawrence's fiction, the contemporary British novel, Irish culture and spirituality, Irish poetry, Irish language. His book *Perceptions of Victorian Literature* obviously deals with the period of queen Victoria's reign during the nineteenth century. Dr. Adrian Radu dealt with this topic in other publications as well. For instance, we could mention *Palace of Art*, first and second edition, which is an anthology of Victorian literature. As Adrian Radu asserts in the "Foreword" of *Perceptions of Victorian Literature*, it is a "book of criticism and discussion" and a teaching instrument for generations of students.

In 1967, Ana Cartianu, former professor of English Literature at the University of Bucharest, published *The History of English Literature. The nineteenth century*. She insisted upon the historical and political background during the reign of Queen Victoria. Ana Cartianu carefully analyzed the theoretical and the argumentative prose of the time, namely the essay. Victorian writers were seen as very dogmatic and their literary direction focused on informing, discussing and demonstrating certain theses. The nineteenth century novel was "essentially a social novel" and "[t]he need for entertainment" combines with "the need for edification, for wider human sympathy and human understanding as well as for awareness of the condition of England" (Cartianu 23).

Another Romanian contribution to the study of Victorian society and literature was *Victorianism and Literature* (2000) by Ileana Galea, former English professor of "Babes-Bolyai" University" in Cluj-Napoca. Her input to the development of English Studies in Romania is notable and her multi-faceted interest in becoming a philologist, essayist, researcher, translator and lexicographer is impressive. Victorianism was for Galea a pre-requisite in order to understand modernism and post-modernism in literature. Her intention, as stated in the Foreword of her work *Victorianism and Literature*, had been to demonstrate "the continuity between the ages, and to show that Victorian literature contains the fundamental elements for the elaboration of contemporary literary concepts and
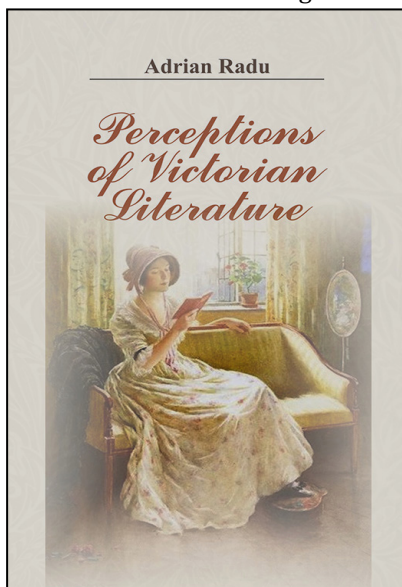
principles" (Galea 8). In her book, the focus was on the novel with its subsequent idea of education of the masses. In comparison with Galea, Adrian Radu put an emphasis on the analyzed writers' biographical data, which appear in his book as footnotes. Moreover, he presented a wider range of the Victorian authors' essays, poetry or novels, interpreting even the less known publications of the famous writers. In addition, Adrian Radu commented upon a higher number of writers of the specific period and he promises to include more writers in an extended edition.

Some other Romanian specialists were interested in the vast domain of Victorian literature. In 2004, Codrin Liviu Cuțitaru, professor of English and American literature at "Al. I. Cuza" University of Iasi, published *The Victorian Novel. A Critical Approach*. He dealt with such authors, as: Dickens, Thackeray, the Brontë sisters, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad. He also insisted on the women writers of the time, more precisely, the Brontë sisters and George Eliot, whose works were influenced by the Victorian woman's emancipation movement that led to feminism.

In 2005-2006, Victor Olaru published three volumes of criticism on the nineteenth century, called *Victorian Writers*. He is particularly interested in Charles Dickens. He compares Dickens with William Shakespeare in terms of originality, accessibility, a flexible language, and the unique human universe the two writers depicted. Olaru also dealt with the Brontë sisters, who are considered "a collective literary genius". Their literary career is unique and unified in spirit and as a proof, "characters as Jane Eyre, Catherine Earnshaw or Agnes Grey tend to outreach their own creators, both in notoriety and humanity, managing to model their

parents according to their own image" (III, 102). They produce some "memorable characters" (III, 103).

Before presenting the book on *Perceptions of Victorian Literature*, we shall interpret its title. The word "perception" was first used in Late Middle English and its origin dates back to Latin "perceptio(-n)", from the verb "percipere", which means to seize, to understand. In Merriam-Webster dictionary, we find the following definition: "a judgement resulting from awareness or understanding, gained through the use of the senses or of the mind". Therefore, by using this term, we endeavour to discern the way in which we regard, interpret, or understand Victorian literature.

The study *Perceptions of Victorian Literature* is divided into four comprehensive chapters: Chapter One is concerned with Victorian England and the Spirit of the Age; Chapter Two deals with Victorian Nonfiction; Chapter Three is about Victorian poetry and the last one focuses on the Victorian Novel.

During the Victorian period, England became a prosperous country; it was the centre of world trade and its rising bourgeoisie dominated an enormous colonial empire. Adrian Radu mentioned three factors that dominated the Victorian frame of mind: the Industrial Revolution with its scientific boom; Utilitarianism with its practical conclusion that something is useful only if it brings happiness to a large number of people; and *The Origin of Species*, the Darwinian theory which shattered the very fundament of religion. Another tendency specific to this age was the 'moral aesthetic'. It meant that art and literature contained moral lessons and had a didactic purpose. Reason and discipline were the main pillars of the literary scaffolding.

Two opposite poles best represent Victorian thought, according to Radu, Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill. The former is "transcendental, idiosyncratic, authoritarian", whereas the latter is "empirical, reasonable, and democratic" (Radu 16). Carlyle combined the Romantic idea of the genius with German transcendentalism in order to counteract the doctrines of Utilitarianism and empiricism. In his most famous writing *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841), Carlyle brings novelty by making the association between the idea of poet and prophet, which brought about a comparison with Jesus Christ that Adrian Radu assures us, "no-one else had dared to make before" (24). Among other theoreticians that had a great impact during the Victorian age are: John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and Walter Pater. They all fathered the great ideas of the epoch, which were also the background of Victorian poetry and novel.

Although the Victorian period put a great emphasis on the novel, poetry also played an essential part in this age of mechanics, industrialism, and reason. The personal feeling and the need for contemplation in a state of meditation or solitude re-emerged. Adrian Radu divides the poetry of this age into three main streams. The first stream resurged the Romantic period, even though this time it was more disciplined and intellectual. Its representative figures were: Tennyson, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne, Meredith. The second direction illustrates the movement of the age that predominated through objectivity, philosophy, scientific discoveries. These poems are analyses or demonstrations that aim at balance. Adrian Radu included Robert Browning into this category. The last stream is a revival of the first and it favoured emotion, beauty, sensibility, and imagination.

Victorian poetry implied an inward movement, while prose or mainly the novel portrayed an outward direction, which was necessary in this age when all kinds of transformations occurred. The veracity of the events is unquestionable, because "literature was journalism and fiction was history" (136). The middle classes expected that the subjects of the novels were about themselves, just as realism presupposed everything that was familiar and typical. Novels were published either in the form of the 'three-deckers' (in three volumes), or serialized (initially in part-issue form and later in weekly papers). The narrative technique is usually traditional, implying an omniscient author, but sometimes it takes some other forms, as for example the first person narration, the narration by an outsider or by a character.

Adrian Radu insists on the features that characterise Charles Dickens' fiction, such as, "satire, attacks on social evils and institutions, exploitation of London as preferred location of stories, benevolence and geniality, inexhaustible powers of character creation, a highly individual and inventive narrative manner" (143). If Dickens tends to be sympathetic with his characters, Thackeray prefers to be impartial and objective, striving to bring to the surface all the vanities of his 'puppets'. He enjoys discussing the fictional situations with his readers. The Brontë sisters foreshadow the psychological novel of the twentieth century. Charlotte's conflict between Passion and Reason, Emily's proclivity towards "majestic landscapes, intense emotion and elemental passion" (176), Anne's symbiosis of two first person narratives with two subsequent perspectives give a new dimension of women's writing and a closer approach to modernity. From Elizabeth Gaskell's sympathy with the oppressed, George Eliot's realistic description and moral

lessons, George Meredith's "aphoristic quality of language" (207) up to Thomas Hardy's tragic fatalism and consecrated pessimism, we encounter a wide range of writers, who are minutely and thoroughly interpreted by Adrian Radu.

Victorian literature is placed between tradition and modernity and reflects the tension of history. The clarity of the argumentation and the quality of the approach recommend *Perceptions of Victorian Literature* as a valuable reading for both the students and the scholars of any English Department. I am also convinced that the richness of information and its rhetoric would make it appealing for the wide public as well.

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BOOK REVIEW

Mihaela Ursa, *Eroticon: tratat despre ficţiune amoroasă*
[Eroticon: A Treatise on Amorous Fiction],
Bucureşti: Cartea Românească, 2012, 212p.

Dr. Mihaela Ursa is Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. She is the co-founder of the Transylvania Digital Humanities Centre and the Phantasma Centre for Imagination Studies. Her academic portfolio includes several books published in Romanian on literary comparativism, critical theory and gender studies, and also numerous articles, reviews and essays in various research areas. Mihaela Ursa is acknowledged as a prominent literary researcher who was awarded several prizes for her scholarly efforts.

Unlike her previous book, *Divanul scriitoarei [The Female Writer's Divan]* published in 2010 by Limes Publishing House, where she offered a broad perspective on women writers translating their feminine identity into their works, the study entitled *Eroticon: A Treatise on Amorous Fiction* concentrates on love typologies and symbolism hidden in amorous fiction. To a smaller degree, the author also focuses on gender related problems by analysing the negative connotations which women received in Greek mythology and Christian religion.

Eroticon: A Treatise on Amorous Fiction is mainly a literary study but Mihaela Ursa also relies on her extensive readings in Gender Studies (Gisela Bock, Maurice Sartre), Philosophy (Allan Bloom, Marsilio Ficino, and Jean Baudrillard), and Religious Studies (Mircea Eliade, Ioan Petru Culianu). *Eroticon* is not a reader unfriendly theoretical description of love typologies, but rather an applied research on amorous fiction which increases its readability and comprehension for the any reader. On the other hand, the book is of interest to scholars and specialists as well. The key concept of the book, "eroticon", is explained, by Mihaela Ursa in her Introduction. It is a term referring to a typology of love which is revealed to the reader not through the plot, but through the descriptive images that carry the reader into the text and make him feel compassion for the characters who fell in love.

In the first chapter of the study the author concentrates on explaining the symbolism embedded in several images from various amorous fictions and clarifying why in some periods there were certain types of seductive women and men, while in other periods different types of behaviour patterns were desirable in men and women.

In the second chapter Mihaela Ursa favours a very systematic approach and describes the main love typologies from world literature and explains their functioning within the texts. Therefore, the reader will find a subchapter for each of the following love typologies: the androgynous, platonic love, magnetic love, damned love, love-passion, idyllic love, and love as a psychological effect.

In the conclusion the researcher completes the list of love typologies by mentioning other important types of love typologies and explaining that research on this topic is still being carried out. Amorous fiction offers vast research material that cannot be contained in just one book.

Although love studies have a long tradition, as a research domain in other parts of the world, this type of study has only recently appeared in Romania and can only be found in thematic researches such as Florica Bodişteanu's 2013 study, *Eroica şi erotica: Eseu despre imaginile feminităţii în eposul eroic* (*The Female Heroic and Erotic: Essay on the Feminine Images in the Heroic Epos*), published by Pro Universitaria Publishing House, or Aurel Codoban's 2010 philosophical research, *Amurgul iubirii: De la iubirea pasiune la comunicarea corporală* (*The Twilight of Love: From Passionate Love to Corporal Communication*), published by Idea Design & Print Publishing House. Therefore, Mihaela Ursa's research initiative is commendable, because it offers both the common reader and the specialist the only comprehensive guide to understanding amorous fiction in its depth. She not only explained how typologies apply to classical texts, but approached modern texts such as Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

Consequently, it is possible to say that Mihaela Ursa's study, *Eroticon: A Treatise on Amorous Fiction,* is a study of considerable originality that will always be part of the Romanian bibliography on the topic. Its translation into English and/or French is advisable in order for this study to enter the international circulation of ideas, which it thoroughly deserves.

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