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SUMAR

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AMERICAN FRONTIERS

THE FRONTIERS OF AMERICAN LITERATURE:
FRANK NORRIS'S *THE OCTOPUS*

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Abstract: *The Octopus*, un roman de Frank Norris publié en 1901, possède tous les traits d'un roman "frontière". Les conflits entre les fermiers en Californie et les companies de chemin de fer nous situent sur la dernière frontière de l'Amerique au début du siècle. Ceci dit, les subtilités de ce livre nous montrent les dons extraordinaires d'un romancier souvent sous-estimé. Lisant attentivement les allusions à une gamme de livres, par exemple, on apprécie mieux les idées littéraires et philosophiques qui ont fasciné Norris pendant toute sa carrière.

Keywords: frontier, railways, corruption, politics, tragedy

Frank Norris's longest and most ambitious novel, *The Octopus*, was published in 1901. It is a robust attempt to depict the rawness of strong emotion, an illustration of some the Naturalists' essential precepts, a case study in the machinations of 19th-century American oligarchs, a powerful political tract, an extended meditation on timelessness and death, and one of America's great frontier novels. As such, it belongs on any long list of such novels, one that would include Willa Cather's *O Pioneers*, O.E. Rölvaag's *Giants in the Earth*, John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* , Page Stegner's *Angle of Repose*, Thomas Pynchon's *Mason and Dixon* – it is an impressive genre.

The Octopus tells the story of a group of settlers at the end of the 19th century who have come to California to make their fortunes, and it features all the themes associated with the frontier genre: the determination to enjoy a new start by bending to one's will the pristine and the primitive; the complex relations between

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first chance and last chance, the desire to be in at the beginning and the feeling of having one last opportunity to make it big; the idea that some force beyond the human is both inspiring the characters and standing in their way; the serene indifference of the natural world across which the newcomers scramble, and the important role of that world for the consequences of their quest for adventure; the difficulties of reconciling a desire for freedom in that environment with a desire for legal security; and the distinctive qualities of a group of individuals that make them representative of an entire nation.

Norris arrived early on the frontier scene, in the sense that his tragically short career as a novelist was confined to the last decade of the 19th century and the first years of the 20th, so he didn't get a chance to see the genre of the frontier novel develop. His fictional inspiration is bound up with contemporary events, and his reputation as a crusading writer attaches his novel firmly to the iniquities in turn-of-the-century America that he sought to expose. Like Steinbeck, he is one of those authors whose polemical gifts and political convictions make them sound simplistic and hortatory at times, which means that, in formal terms, his novels are often found wanting. As one commentator put it: 'All in all, composition in Norris' novels seems to be reckoned exclusively in calculations of decibels and gross tonnage' (Berthoff 225). The critical consensus seems to be that seekers of subtleties should shun him – I am not so sure.

Certainly, the struggles associated with the American frontier intrigue Norris, and he depicts the battle between the settlers and the Southern and Central Pacific in lots of colourful and compelling detail. The railway is the octopus of the title, its tentacles everywhere, a vivid image of the insidious ways power corrupts and spreads, creating both oligarchs, their cronies, and the innocent and not so innocent whom they exploit. Interestingly, the force that has facilitated all the westward movement that enables the development of the Pacific coast is the same one that seems bent on destroying those whose ambitions precipitated that movement. This makes for vivid drama but also considerable confusion, as has often been pointed out.[1] Norris is interested in defending some fairly conventional ethical standards – cheating is bad, greed is an ugly emotion – even while he subverts those very standards by offering a cosmic view that diminishes the importance of all these merely human problems and would seem to absolve individuals of actual responsibility for all the nasty things they do. The frontier is always the place where value systems conflict.

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[1] For a good discussion of this confusion see McElrath.

However, *The Octopus* is a frontier novel in another sense as well, and I want to argue a quite carefully crafted one. It deals with micro-measures as a well as gross tonnage in depicting the forces arrayed against literature, as it tries to find radically new ways to analyze and comment on the changed nature of human experience as the century turns. There is confusion here too. We learn practically on page one that Norris's protagonist, observer, commentator, and alter ego, a young adventurer named Presley, wants to write the great American poem. This notion is articulated in language that is important for understanding Norris's interest in literary frontiers, but also rather puzzling because of the gap between his character's poetry and his poetics. There are also the novel's many literary allusions to consider. They show how *The Octopus* works to create and occupy its own intertextual space, and in what follows I propose to annotate some of them, with a view to illustrating how Norris's interest in the novel's status as an artefact actually manifests itself.[2]

On the self-reflexive frontier, Presley's poem is going to be one of the definitive features of a new culture, but we are told that it is anti-civilization, anti-culture, in its original inspiration. The poem that he aspires to write constitutes a hymn to the sort of atavistic passions that proved to be so central for the naturalists' project. Believing that convention, conservatism, and censorship had worked together to prevent America writers from telling the truth about the generative darkness in the souls of ordinary citizens, they wanted to confront this darkness. If that is the poet's agenda, we need to think about why his poem turns out to be a sentimental, derivative, kitschy jeremiad on the fate of the honest worker.[3]

Some of the references to literature and history illustrate just how many large issues are at stake in these explorations on the literary frontier. Towards the end of *The Octopus*, Norris assiduously goes about demolishing what he thinks is wrong with American culture, namely its frivolousness and its aestheticism. This last is inherited from England, and it was already something of a straw man by the time Norris got around to attacking it. He sees aestheticism as exemplified by British writers like Austin Dobson, who produced books of poetry with titles such as *Proverbs in Porcelain* and *Old World Idylls*; or Walter Pater, a master at evoking the sensuous appreciation of ascetic beauty, and a writer who invites us to think of life as a series of radiant moments, as evocative as a work of art and as ephemeral. Only

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[2]See also Graham: "examination of the aesthetic background yields a renewed respect for Norris's accomplishment, both in discrete details and general conception" (122).

[3] See, for example, Walker (261-62), for the identity between Presley's poems and Edwin Markham's "The Man with the Hoe".

people of a certain class care about these superficialities, and Norris wants to explore other, more radical possibilities, both on the aesthetic stage and on the political one.

One sign of how different a writer Presley aspires to be is the profoundly disintegrative quality of his aesthetic sensibility. Norris says that his alter ego dreams of "one single, mighty song, the Song of the West … while things without names— thoughts for which no man had yet invented words, terrible formless shapes, vague figures, colossal, monstrous, distorted—whirled at a gallop through his imagination" (10). The inspiration for Presley's art then is not going to be something the Chamber of Commerce can use. It is an attempt at what at first sounds like an improbable marriage between America's tireless expansionism and the throbbing insistence that animates the frontier spirit, on the one hand, with a quasi-allegorical figure that stands in for the unmoved mover in the universe, on the other.

Revealingly, the passage quoted above concludes as follows: 'Presley heard the sound of a bell from the direction of the Mission itself. It was the de Profundis, a note of the Old World; of the ancient regime, an echo from the hillsides of mediaeval Europe, sounding there in this new land, unfamiliar and strange at this end-of-the-century time' (48). The formless menace of the monsters has dissipated, but there are competing strains here too. The passage juxtaposes an allusion to the Old Testament, David's psalm as *cri de coeur* from the depths of a real despair, with an invocation of the comforts of religion and an array of apocalyptic hints. If the tolling bell is being heard in real time, then the old timeless world still has something to teach those who respond to its rhythms. If, on the other hand, words like "ancient" and the "medieval" mark the sound of the bell as a throwback to a utopian past, then America is the "new land" where everything important is happening. Presley's reaction to it is more interesting than any transcendent meaning it hints at. It both speaks the language of a conservative appeal to tradition and announces, in plaintive self-abnegation, the radical's acceptance of a sharp break with the past.

Before examining in more detail some of the literary references in *The Octopus*, it may be useful to take a brief look at how the novel inscribes itself in American history. The way that Norris draws on contemporary events for his fiction has been well documented (Graham 66-67). And of course the battle between railway and ranchers that Norris chose for his subject has a great deal of resonance for those interested in economic development in the American west. Yet the subtext of some of these references makes it clear that Norris wants his novel to constitute a comment, not only on the literary antecedents of his fiction or the history of California, but also on the major texts of the American republic itself. In short, Norris makes *The Octopus* a forging of a new aesthetic frontier as well as a record

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of one, by suggesting that this is a drama already scripted by and anticipated in the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

Such claims will seem more plausible if we remember precisely what forces were deployed in the attempt cut the tentacles of the octopus, to bring down the seemingly almighty railroad. They were marshalled by those who sought to bring a different sort of democracy to California, and the battle they fought constitutes the most important struggle for power in the state's history. Inspired by Switzerland's experiment with direct democracy, Californians hoped that a more direct form of citizen involvement, with its referendums and private initiatives, might give back to the people the power that the railroad had appropriated to itself.

But reapplying this ideal on the frontier of the New World proved difficult. The Swiss model came into existence when a thriving sort of democracy had already been in place for hundreds of years. It was also always understood as a mode of compromise, whereas the California model, conceived in confrontation between the frontiersmen and the railway, was to become a system that turned California politics into internecine warfare on a semi-continuous basis. Citizens were empowered to make their own laws, which the legislature could not overturn, with all the chaotic consequences that naturally ensued. Norris would simply smile ruefully if he could be brought back to hear about Proposition 13 and the chaos, bizarre political consequences, and general ill feeling it created.[4]

In political terms, *The Octopus* invites readers to consider the idea that corruption of this magnitude is a violation of first principles of American democracy, which helps explain, in the description of a murderous encounter between the two sides, the fervid references to the battle at Lexington, where the first shots of the Revolutionary War were fired. In the same passage, Presley repeatedly invokes the workers' plight by saying 'Let my people go'. This depiction of a quintessentially adversarial situation helps explain Norris's emphasis on something that on the face of it seems senseless, namely the idea of winning at all costs as opposed to compromise, the notion that those who grow the grain are the fight-to-the-death opponents of those who move it from one place to another. The political dimension adds to the book's amplitude, in the sense that it reminds readers of an "American narrative", something that transcends its humble objectives in space and time. At the practical level, the political subject is left open. Presley's attempt at actual involvement in the political struggle turns out to be a damp squib. He throws a bomb – to no effect. He announces his sympathy for Caraher, a communist, saying "*By God, I too, am a Red*" (535), but

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[4] In this section I have drawn extensively on "Democracy in California", *Economist*.

he is no more a communist than Norris is, and he quickly goes back to the role of impassioned observer and commentator.

The point is clearer if we consider another passage describing Presley's aesthetic and political ambitions. Presley is determined, we are told, that his epic creation be larger than life, larger than the individual, focussed on that part of the United States where everything was happening: it 'should be of the West, that world's frontier of Romance, where a new race, a new people—hardy, brave, and passionate—were building an empire; where the tumultuous life ran like fire from dawn to dark, and from dark to dawn again, primitive, brutal, honest, and without fear' (9). Such language identifies the goal with a mystic's clarity, the description of a world that is immersed in history and transcends it. Presley wants 'the diapason, the great song that should embrace in itself a whole epoch, a complete era, the voice of an entire people, wherein all people should be included—they and their legends, their folk lore, their fightings, their loves and their lusts, their blunt, grim humour, their stoicism under stress, their adventures, their treasures found in a day and gambled in a night, their direct, crude speech, their generosity and cruelty, their heroism and bestiality, their religion and profanity, their self-sacrifice and obscenity—a true and fearless setting forth of a passing phase of history, un-compromising, sincere' (9-10). Specific and general at the same time, he outlines here an epic account of America at the confines of history, of a country that is going to make its own history, its own myths, its own language.

The idea of making a grand harmony out of what only seems like noise, a quintessentially sociological approach to human behaviour, takes us back to Benjamin Franklin and his reluctance to judge and condemn, his interest in describing and understanding. It is also a language that invokes both a particular time and a representative one, the specifics of American experience in a recognizable place, and the homogeneity of diversity. Norris's narrator goes on to refer to the whole continent, 'the Dakotas to the Mexicos, from Winnipeg to Guadalupe, gathered together, swept together, welded and riven together' (10) to drive home the ambiguity. What these have in common is that they mark the differences and the immensity of the frontier to be settled. Their multi-faceted nature will be that much more apparent once he has proven to his readers that they are part of a whole.

At such moments, the language suggests that the British Romantics, particularly Wordsworth, and their great American counterpart, Walt Whitman, constitute the tradition to which he wants to contribute. Wordsworth's diatribe against consumerism in 'The World is too Much with Us' is quoted at a crucial point in *The Octopus*, in a passage that features laudatory references to epic poets from a range of cultures. The 'new race, new people' rhetoric comes straight out

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Homer and the Nibelungen poets, but the giant who bestrides like a colossus even these monumental figures is Whitman. Wordsworth's pagan sympathies, the idea that modern man is "out of tune" with his environment, the sense of power wasted and of regenerative potential, all these notions in Wordsworth have obvious relevance for Norris's *Octopus*, but Whitman's project as outlined in the Preface to *Leaves of Grass* is the mirror image of Presley's.

What is interesting about this link with Whitman is how little Norris's critics have made of it. No doubt this is partly so because, despite all the important parallels and corresponding sympathies, Whitman is curiously under-admired by his would-be successor. We are told that Presley thinks of America's poetic achievement as rather limited: 'Something (to his idea not much) had been done to catch at that life in passing, but its poet had not yet arisen' (9). This dismissive comment suggests that Whitman's work is of a piece with other experiments in American literature in the second half of the 19th century, in that it merely catches contemporary American life 'in passing'? That seems an odd way to characterize it when one considers that it was Whitman's deliberate flouting of convention and his courage in writing without judging, describing without omitting, presenting without moralizing, that made him such a revolutionary force in the first place.

A number of reasons for this casual sleight suggest themselves. In one sense Whitman is too eastern-seaboard American for Norris's purposes, too New York oriented, and too urban generally, despite all those vicarious flights of fancy over the continent that the great grey poet effects. In another sense, he may not be American enough, in that he sometimes downplays American exceptionalism at the expense of its universality. Norris is also more class conscious than Whitman too. In *Song of Myself*, for example, Whitman enlists in his cast of characters the president, prostitutes, opera singers, a boy on a hay rick, a frontiersman with his Indian bride, firemen, lobbyists, sea captains, Jesus and so on. The effect is a massive exercise in levelling, an egalitarian take on America's work-a-day drama and its spiritual antecedents.

Presley wants his great poem to tell the story of man and nature, but the focus is on the human going about his work in a more orderly way: 'each group in its proper environment; the valley, the plain, and the mountain; the ranch, the range, and the mine' (10), as he puts it at one point. In this environment class distinctions remain important. Whitman is happy to celebrate the things men and women do every day in America, but shows little sense of proper environment or appropriate place. Besides, he is just as interested in birds and animals; in fact, in some moods he liked them better. Norris's novel has its share of outcasts and misfits, but those who aspire upward often seem as materialistic and self-centred as those who are already there.

Whitman's omnipresence is suggested by the long meditation on death featured at the end of the novel. Here it is the wistful Vanamee, a character who has lost his beloved to a mysterious rapist, someone whose views on life and the circle of death make him sound a lot like Whitman too. A typical example:

'Death and grief are little things,' he said. 'They are transient. Life must be before death, and joy before grief. Else there are no such things as death or grief. These are only negatives. Life is positive. Death is only the absence of life, just as night is only the absence of day, and if this is so, there is no such thing as death. There is only life, and the suppression of life, that we, foolishly, say is death. 'Suppression,' I say, not extinction. I do not say that life returns. Life never departs. Life simply *is*. For certain seasons, it is hidden in the dark, but is that death, extinction, annihilation? I take it, thank God, that it is not. Does the grain of wheat, hidden for certain seasons in the dark, die? The grain we think is dead *resumes again*; but how? Not as one grain, but as twenty. So all life. Death is only real for all the detritus of the world, for all the sorrow, for all the injustice, for all the grief. Presley, the good never dies; evil dies, cruelty, oppression, selfishness, greed— these die; but nobility, but love, but sacrifice, but generosity, but truth, thank God for it, small as they are, difficult as it is to discover them—these live forever, these are eternal. You are all broken, all cast down by what you have seen in this valley, this hopeless struggle, this apparently hopeless despair. Well, the end is not yet. What is it that remains after all is over, after the dead are buried and the hearts are broken? Look at it all from the vast height of humanity—'the greatest good to the greatest numbers.' What remains? Men perish, men are corrupted, hearts are rent asunder, but what remains untouched, unassailable, undefiled? Try to find that, not only in this, but in every crisis of the world's life, and you will find, if your view be large enough, that it is not evil, but good, that in the end remains' (635-36).

This passage is a curious mix. Vanamee says pseudo-oracular things like 'Life must be before death', the sort of ponderous cliché that anticipates those of the prophet in Leacock's *Arcadian Adventures*, who assures us that 'Many things are yet to happen before others begin.' Yet Vanamee also argues, like Wordsworth in 'We are Seven', that human life is incomprehensible unless one attributes to it dimensions beyond the physical, that to live and live intensely is more important than insisting on classification or trusting in biological categories. So to assert that 'Life is positive' or 'Life simply *is*' is at once to attribute far too much importance to individual existence and to ignore the significance of nature's extraordinary fecundity. It follows from this that 'the good never dies', but only if one means by "good" something like procreative energy and the irrepressible nature of human

life. The best way to think of Vanamee is as a mystic with the ability to hint suggestively at what cannot be articulated.

The novel alludes to other kinds of literature in similarly suggestive ways. We are told that, in the midst of an intellectual upheaval, Presley flings aside the books of the poets whom he most admires and 'addressed himself to Mill, Malthus, Young, Poushkin, Henry George, Schopenhauer'. He is particularly interested, we are told, in 'the subject of Social Inequality' (387). Again, the novel's critics have been curiously reluctant to take up the implications of this sharp shift in the protagonist's intellectual interests and the eclectic list that results. Perhaps this is just so much posturing, Presley dropping a lot of names? Earnest Marchand suggests that 'If Norris, however, ever read these or similar writers, no hint of his doing so exists.'

No hint? That cannot be right. We know that Norris was extraordinarily erudite even as a young man. Mill's interest in defining the relations between a potentially coercive society and a potentially vulnerable set of individuals, the conflicting claims of utility and natural rights, ways in which certain socialist tenets should be part of any set of principles of political economy – these are all important topics in Norris's novel. Malthus, perhaps the most famous evolutionary biologist who ever lived and an important political thinker who restated the ways in which humanity was defined, made important contributions to economics and even wrote a treatise on wheat and the prices at which it should be sold. He sounds like a tutelary spirit for Norris's project. Edward Young made himself the spokesperson for the idea that Presley articulates at great length, namely of the poet as inspirational genius and the importance of originality as superior to imitation, an idea that informs Young's view of the poet as prophet, another of Presley's great subjects. Pushkin is the immortal creator of the 19th century's most famous 'superfluous man', Eugene Onegin. Pushkin links his hero's exploits, much as Norris does Presley's, to the social and political well-being of the nation. And so it goes: the reader interested in linking Schopenhauer's thought to the novel might begin with the notion of a force in man that supersedes mere reason. Norris's protagonist is known for what it is and turns his novel at times into a disquisition on the subject of desire that the German philosopher singled out for special mention.

But the name that really stands out on this list Henry George. The reasons Norris would be interested in him are at least fivefold. First, he sold three million copies of a book in which he mused about how poverty and grown along with progress, and the oddity of the extent of poverty in developed nations and its consequences; second, he was convinced that ownership of land, something that should by rights be available to everyone, was the prime cause of this growing inequity in the west; third, he predicted that the railway boom would only benefit

the lucky few who owned the railways or the enterprises they directly benefited; fourth, he foresaw the particular effect on land value and rents in areas served by the California railway and how their dramatic increase would make wage earners poorer; and, finally, although his ideas on the communal ownership of property did not in the end carry the day, they made an eloquent and compelling case that influenced a wide range of writers and thinkers.

As different as they all are, these writers have at least one large thing in common: in their most important works they discuss the interactions of the individual and society as a confrontation of forces, pitted against each other in a struggle that by definition can have no clear outcome. Norris thinks that these writers have a didactic function to perform despite the fact that they don't pretend to having arrived at definitive answers. That is why it is so much more important for us to read writers like Malthus and Mill and Henry George to see if humanity, with all its contradictory tendencies, is actually capable of learning something from them. He mentions them at a crucial juncture in *The Octopus* because he wants to remind his readers that the large questions he chosen to engage with in cannot possibly be answered in a work of fiction.

Because the works referred to in the novel's allusions have so much to say about the book's large subject, it would seem that Frank Norris has been undersold, even by his admirers. Distracted by the crudity and the power of his fiction, his critics have tended to overlook the intricacies of the work he actually produced. The matrix of allusions that he uses to orchestrate the assault on American frontiers in *The Octopus* show just how skilled he was at creating complex texts. They shed light on his interest in a range of writers and thinkers who worked hard on explaining how the individual and society were to sort out their relations. His auto-commentary on the esthetic frontier that opened out before him and other writers of fiction at the turn of the 20th century reminds us of just how deeply indebted the modernists were to their precursors. The texture of *The Octopus* shows how inextricably bound up with previous texts Norris's extraordinary novel was. The care with which he chose these texts and the skill with which he integrated them prove just how essential such references were to the overall scheme of his ground-breaking novel.

The last frontier referred to in Norris's novel is the one his characters see when they gaze at the heavens. 'The stars were out, strewn thick and close in the deep blue of the sky, the milky way glowing like a silver veil. Ursa Major wheeled gigantic in the north. The great nebula in Orion was a whorl of shimmering star dust. Venus flamed a lambent disk of pale saffron, low over the horizon. From edge to edge of the world marched the constellations, like the progress of emperors, and from the innumerable glory of their courses a mysterious sheen of diaphanous light disengaged

itself, expanding over all the earth, serene, infinite, majestic' (382). Those constellations are scheduled to flame out, annihilated in slow-time the way those emperors were. In their place have come the new lords of the earth, America's robber barons, as impressive in their wealth and pomp and as doomed to ultimate oblivion. They constitute the deep sky objects that mark the acme of human aspirations and fears.

Humanity has mythologized all the galaxies that Norris mentions in the passage, representing Ursa Major as a bear and then making a verisimilar drama – lusty Zeus, jealous Hera, the beautiful Callisto – out of this collection of stars, incorporating them in a story of human desire and folly. Similarly, Orion the helpless hunter, and Venus the planet that oversees human passion and its (often disastrous) consequences. These are stories from the old frontier, and because they bear an uncanny resemblance to their present-day versions, we are invited to entertain the notion that there is something eternal about them. Our encounter with their fiery celestial counterparts in the new future, in the new frontier, will perhaps be more exotic and compelling. Yet the 'mysterious sheen' of galaxies still to be discovered and explored, like the one that obscures our own complex selves from investigation, will no doubt help to keep their darkest secrets hidden for a good while yet.

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UN COŞMAR AMERICAN

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Abstract: The present paper investigates the features of an American icon, the automobile, as presented in Stephen King's novel, *Christine*. This symbol is used in King' horror novel to portray the social mechanisms of an American community and to convey the overwhelming meaning of alienation. The text goes beyond the supernatural or inexplicable forces which determine intricate love and death relationships, and focuses on technofetishism and its ethical implications.
Keywords: Stephen King, automobile, technofetishism

Esenţa spiritului american poate fi lecturată prin emergenţa mai multor simboluri, dar cu siguranţă *automobilul* este unul dintre cele mai apropiate de specificul acestei naţiuni. Numeroase studii[1] consideră acest icon ca fiind de primă importanţă pentru cultura americană, urmărindu-i metamorfozele şi diferitele implicaţii estetice. Aşa cum precizează Roger Casey, automobilul este cel care „a marcat profund dezvoltarea literaturii acestei naţiuni"[2](t.n.) O astfel de afirmaţie ar putea fi cu lejeritate considerată drept deplasată, dacă implicată nu ar fi identitatea literară a unei naţiuni născute sub semnul modernizării şi al progresului. Căci generată de şi plasată într-un alt context naţional, această

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[1] Cynthia Golomb Dettelbach, *In the Drivers's Seat. The Automobile in American Literature and Popular Culture*, Greenwood Press, 1976; *The Automobile and American Culture*, editat de David Lancer şi Lewis Lawrance Goldstein, University of Michigan Press, 1983, *The Automobile in American History and Culture. A Reference Guide*, de Michael L. Berger, Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001; Shelby Smoack, *Framing the Automobile in Twentieth Century American Literature: A Spatial Approach*, Proquest, 2007; Deborah Clarke, *Driving Women: Fiction and Automobile Culture in Twentieth Century America*¸ John Hopkins University Press, 2007; Jerry W. Passon, *The Corvette in Literature and Culture: Symbolic Dimensions of America's Sports Car*, McFarland, 2011 etc.
[2] Roger N. Casey, *Textual Vehicles. The Automobile in American Literature*, Garland Science, 1997, p. xi.

observaţie ar putea naşte un surâs politicos sau poate o reacţie mai virulentă care ar chestiona chiar (im)posibila dependenţă a discursului literar de un astfel de obiect. Dar, intim legat de dinamica acestei naţiuni, de transgresarea graniţelor şi de afirmarea unui individualism bine ancorat în economic, acest obiect-simbol apare frecvent în literatura americană, mai ales cea a secolului al XX-lea. *Marele Gatsby* al lui F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Fructele mâniei* al lui Steinbeck sau remarcabilul *Pe drum* al lui Kerouac sunt câteva dintre textele care exploatează bogata încărcătură simbolică a automobilului. Plasat la întretăierea unor complexe relaţii economice şi personale, prilejuind etalarea unor spaţii geografice şi subiective diverse, automobilul este şi o modalitate de a oferi coerenţă şi adâncime portretizărilor umane. Parte componentă a scenariilor tehnofile sau tehnofobe, el se manifestă, cel mai adesea, drept spaţiu *al violenţei*, *al sacrului* sau *al consumului* (Shelby Smoack). Automobilul este, afirmă Deborah Clarke, şi un complex motiv literar, mai ales pentru că uneşte puterea tehnologică cu antropomorfizarea; astfel sunt puse în dialog, influenţându-se reciproc, două lumi, una tehnică şi una umană.

Plecînd de la constatarea relevanţei simbolice a acestui (în cele din urmă) obiect, prezenta lucrare urmăreşte semnificaţiile automobilului în romanul horror al lui Stephen King, *Christine*. Opţiunea pentru acest autor, considerat de mulţi dintre criticii literari americani drept un *autor de consum*, aflat mai degrabă în căutarea unui senzaţional (poate ieftin, uneori) pe care ştie foarte bine să îl ofere cititorilor, ar putea părea nejustificată. Unul dintre textele canonice ale literaturii americane ar părea o alegere mai logică. Dar succesul la public înregistrat de romanele lui Stephen King este un şi semn că acest autor reuşeşte să surprindă elemente de maximă relevanţă colectivă, fiind, cum spune Tony Magistrale „un barometru social al vieţii din America cea contemporană”[3]. Căci textele lui Stephen King pun adesea un diagnostic nemilos asupra unei întregi societăţi; aşa cum explică Kenneth S. Wagner, în *Introducerea* volumului scris de Tony Magistrale (*Landscape of Fear: Stephen King's American Gothic*, Popular Press, Chicago, 1988): „Pentru a fi înţeleasă în mod adecvat, literatura lui King trebuie văzută ca o satiră socială contemporană, care scoate la iveală fantezii şi temeri culturale care altfel ar fi trecut neobservate. Astfel, groaza (*the horror*) din literatura lui King oglindeşte maladiile curente ale relaţiilor noastre sociale”[4]. Iar receptarea în cheie *noir* a textelor nu ţine, neapărat, de intenţia autorului, ci scoate la iveală temerile mult mai adânci ale societăţii contemporane. Acest lucru este, de altfel, şi ceea ce îşi propune autorul, care scria: „În această carte [*Danse macabre*], am încercat în variate moduri să sugerez că povestirea horror este, în multe feluri, o experienţă

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[3] Tony Magistrale, *The Moral Voyages of Stephen King*, Wildside Press LLC, 1989, p. 9.
[4] Kenneth S. Wagner, *Introduction*, Tony Magistrale, Tony Magistrale, *Landscape of Fear: Stephen King's American Gothic*, Popular Press, Chicago, 1988, p. 6.

optimistă şi revigorantă; că adesea este modul prin care o minte dură înţelege să se confrunte cu probleme groaznice care s-ar putea să nu fie deloc supranaturale, ci foarte reale"(t.n.)[5] Astfel, literatura horror devine o modalitate de a testa limitele umanului şi justeţea sistemelor de norme morale, iar exerciţiul poate fi adesea o experienţă traumatizantă; nu prin subiectele tratate de autor, ci prin concluziile la care ajunge cititorul.

Poate neaşteptat, acest autor este reprezentativ pentru ceea ce înseamnă America, lucru sugerat şi de Tony Magistrale; criticul vede, dincolo de elementele horror din textele lui Stephen King, o literatură cu autentică tematică socială care „conţine un comentariu asupra şi o critică a sistemului de valori american – politica noastră, relaţiile interpersonale, instituţiile noastre venerate şi de încredere. Opera lui descrie o anumită felie temporală; poate fi asociată direct cu aspectele esenţiale ale culturii americane şi cu tipurile de relaţii umane pe care aceasta le întruchipează"[6] Plasarea unei maşini într-o comunitate americană devine un prilej pentru a cartografia dinamica relaţiilor umane şi a valorilor morale. Relaţiile de cuplu şi cele dintre părinţi şi copii, atmosfera ucigătoare (şi la propriu, şi la figurat) din liceu şi problematica maturizare a adolescenţilor, variatele metode a încălcare a legii, toate sunt raportate la enigmatica şi independenta Christine. Pentru că autorul construieşte un roman cu o complexă relevanţă culturală ce are drept personaj principal o maşină. Antropomorfizată, demonică, dar totuşi o maşină. Cu riscul de a pierde mult din ramificaţiile poveştii, evenimentele romanului ar putea fi rezumate astfel: adolescentul cuminte şi tăcut Arnie Cunningham vede, în timpul unei plimbări cu prietenul său, Dennis, o maşină veche, un Plymouth Fury model 1958, pentru care face, instantaneu, o pasiune anormală. Maşina, aflată în evidentă stare de degradare, este cumpărată, reparată, devenind punctul central şi ulterior unic al vieţii lui Arnie. Maşina pare a avea o capacitate uimitoare de a se repara singură, de a-i pedepsi pe cei care încearcă să-i facă rău şi, nu în cele din urmă, mânată de o suspectă gelozie, îi elimină pe aproape toţi cei dragi din viaţa lui Arnie. Istoricul ei, aflat de Dennis din diverse surse, pare a sta sub semnul unor nesfârşite şiruri de morţi. În cele din urmă şi Arnie moare, iar Christine îşi găseşte sfârşitul (deşi aici ar fi nişte semne de întrebare) sub o presă de fiare vechi. Evenimentele sunt narate din două perspective: o naraţiune la persona I, ce apare în părţile iniţială şi cea finală ale textului, care-i aparţine lui Dennis Guilder, cel care-şi rememorează astfel anii de liceu. Într-o încercare de a înţelege evenimentele inexplicabile la care a fost martor, Dennis urmăreşte neputincios treptata metamorfoză a

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[5] Stephen King, *Danse macabre*, diposnibil la http://www.retro-cafe.com/scayre/books/ Stephen%20King%20-%20Danse%20Macabre%20%281981%29.pdf, accesat 12 decembrie, 2012.

[6] Tony Magistrale, *Landscape of Fear: Stephen King's American Gothic*. Chicago: Popular Press, 1988, p. 25

prietenului său. Partea mediană a textului, cînd Dennis este în spital, este o narațiune obiectivă la persona a III-a. Acest joc al perspectivelor naratoriale contribuie din plin la suspans și la sentimentul de alienare indus cititorului. Denumirile celor trei părți ale textului, *Dennis – cântecele de volan ale adolescenței*, *Arnie – cântecele de dragoste ale adolescenței* și *Christine – cântecele de moarte ale adolescenței*, surprind atât triunghiul personajelor principale, cât și întrepătrunderea permanentă dintre exuberanță și macabru.

Textul nu este doar o poveste despre un tânăr și o mașină, ci despre întreaga încărcătură simbolică a acestui obiect și despre relevanța lui în înțelegerea culturii americane; iar dovada o formează toate motto-urile ce însoțesc fiecare capitol al cărții. Acestea conțin extrase din numeroase melodii reprezentative, din cântecele unor artiști sau formații foarte cunoscute: Eddie Cochran, Chuck Berry, The Doors, Bruce Springsteen, Glen Frey, The Beach Boys, Janis Joplin, The Who, The Clash, Elvis Costello etc. Toate fragmentele de versuri susțin omniprezența acestui simbol în imaginarul cultural american, iar portretizările, multe dintre ele poetice, de care automobilul beneficiază, mai contracarează atmosfera horror din roman; „părticică de rai aici pe pământ", „dacă Ea ar avea aripi,/ Știu că ar putea să zboare", „sub învelișul de rugină, ea era aur,/ Nu o rablă." În același timp, alte versuri susțin aspectul terifiant al poveștii: „Pe șosea este un ucigaș,/ Creierul său se agită ca o broască râioasă…", „Cauciucuri care țipă, focuri scânteietoare și/ dus a fost acel tânăr star". Scrise în registre diferite, patetic-duios sau agresiv, versurile descriu o civilizație trăind permanent sub semnul vitezei, într-o neobosită încercare de a păcăli monotonia și de a înghiți spații geografice diferite.

Este cunoscut modul în care mai toate textele lui Stephen King meditează asupra subtilului raport dintre ființa umană și descoperirile științei; așa cum sintetizează Tony Magistrale, „povestirile lui King sugerează două percepte care contrazic premisele fundamentale ale științei moderne: „1. că fiecare descoperire în domeniul chimiei sau al fizicii are drept consecință imediată un pericol ce va produce, la rîndul său, o reacție ce va scăpa controlului uman (cum s-a întîmplat cu energia nucleară și rezultatele combustibilului radioactiv); 2. că universul nu este, în cele din urmă, un loc deschis înțelegerii și dominației umane."[7] Pe acest fundal plasate, evenimentele din *Christine* traduc alienarea umană și fetișizarea tehnologiei, autodistrugerea și izolarea. Iar tehnologia, ilustrată aici printr-o agresivitate nițel tezistă, nu este intrinsec malefică, ci devine astfel prin puterea cu care omul o învestește. Dependența de lucruri traduce, cum spunea un cunoscut teoretician al kitsch-ului, Abraham Moles[8], nu doar o relație de tip hedonist, ci și una profund kitsch, marcă a alienării. E o altă ipostaziere a

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[7] Tony Magistrale, *The Moral Voyages of Stephen King*, Wildside Press LLC, 1989, p. 4.
[8] Abraham Moles, *Psihologia Kitsch-ului. Arta fericirii*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1980, p. 26.

consumismului, nu cantitativă, ca acumulare irațională de obiecte, ci calitativă, ca anulare a independenței ființei umane. Și aici intră în scenă marele paradox; și poate așa s-ar explica și tezismul textului. În condițiile în care toți analiștii culturali (de exemplu Peter Marsh și Peter Collet, *Driving Passion: The Psychology of the Car*) preocupați de impactul automobilului asupra vieții americanului aduc în discuție efectele benefice, mai precis afirmarea individualității și a libertății, posibilitatea de a-și exercita controlul asupra mediului fizic și social, asupra vitezei și timpului, textul ilustrează, dimpotrivă, modul în care autonomia individuală devine izolare, iar libertatea se transformă în egoism. Devine evident astfel profunda încărcătură etică a textelor lui Stephen King, autor care, dincolo de variatele forțe supranaturale ce străbat textele sale, urmărește permanenta confruntare dintre bine și rău și, mai ales, reacția umană în fața inexplicabilului. În acest text supranaturalul este camuflat de tehnic, iar umanul este chemat să rezolve dilemele sociale și etice generate.

Fetișizarea tehnologiei, tradusă în acest text prin relația ciudată pe care adolescentul Arnie o are cu misterioasa mașină Christine (care are un nume feminin, dar, mai mult, pe tot parcursul romanului se vorbește despre ea ca despre o persoană – folosindu-se, în engleză, nu pronumele *it*, specific obiectelor, ci *she*, propriu ființelor umane) susține această nouă relație dintre ființa umană și lumea materială; automobilul nu mai este doar un instrument care servește scopurile ființei umane, ci devine centrul unic la care ființa umană se raportează, o autentică proteză, cum ar spune teoreticienii postumanismului. Iar dependența tehnologică (cu schimbătoare vârste ale tehnologiei, de la cea mecanică la cea digitală, tradusă prin variate produse) ilustrează exemplar precaritatea ontologică a ființei umane. Căci, cu cît automobilul este mai animat de sentimente, cu atît mai inanimată și mecanizată este lumea în care Arnie se mișcă: ciudat este că un obiect a fost cel care i-a determinat o dureroasă înțelegere a mecanizării vieții pe care o duce, și a modului în care familia sa nu este decît o mașinărie aproape funcțională; cu o mamă permanent la conducere, cu un tată obedient și cu dorințe permanent ignorate, cu un copil ce-și obișnuise părinții să fie doar model de ascultare. Într-un fel, caracterul horror al textului este anulat, căci amenințarea nu este indusă de maleficul automobil (sau dacă o formează, ea ține, mai degrabă, de senzaționalul de suprafață al textului), ci tocmai de dezumanizarea și vulnerabilitatea ființei umane pe care acest automobil le scoate în evidență.

Răsfățata Christine este frecvent descrisă ca mustind de senzorialitate și de un tip de viață ce scapă înțelegerii umane a lui Dennis, iar relația dintre Arnie și Christine e construită dintr-un amestec de iubire și moarte, cu întregul arsenal de emoții: tandrețe și disperare, gelozie și adorație, delicatețe și morți violente. Întâlnirea dintre ei (prezentată într-un capitol ce de intitulează *Arnie se însoară*) este o dragoste la prima vedere, deși mașina nu are, de fapt, nimic atrăgător; într-o avansată stare de degradare, plină de rugină și cu multe piese lipsă, ea reușește totuși să atragă atenția unui simplu trecător. Dar dincolo de această drăgăstoasă

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întâlnire, există deja sentimentul unei amenințări sumbre: intrarea lui Arnie în mașină este surprinsă astfel de Dennis: „Într-un fel, era ca și cum mașina l-ar fi înghițit"[9] Ecourile acestei fraze premonitorii din începutul textului vor pluti pe tot parcursul romanului, alimentând imaginea unei treptate anihilări a personajului masculin. Nu doar afectiv sunt legați cei doi, ci și fizic, împărtășind un evident proces de ameliorare a aspectului; după achiziționarea mașinii, fața plină de coșuri a lui Arnie devine mult mai netedă și arătoasă, în vreme ce Christine, dincolo de reparațiile, mai ales minore, pe care i le face stapânul său, pare a se repara singură. Dar aceste retușări ale exteriorului (o variantă la *Portretul lui Dorian Gray*) ascund mult mai grave răni interioare. Acest *dans macabru* dintre Arnie și Christine pigmentează și impulsionează firul evenimențial; ruperea lui de sânul familiei și maturizarea, însingurarea și criza de comunicare în care se afundă, șirurile de morți suspecte în care pare a fi implicată Christine, crescânda ei gelozie născută mai ales după intrarea în viața adolescentului a frumoasei Leigh, reducerea ei la un „simplu obiect, un mijloc de transport"[10] sunt câțiva dintre pașii acestui tangou macabru dansat de cei doi. Christine pune în practică răzbunări teribile: pedepsirea cu maximă cruzime a celor care au vandalizat-o, încercarea (sau poate e doar o nefericită coincidență) de a o ucide pe Leigh prin asfixiere, eliminarea părinților lui Arnie etc. Cert este că prietenii lui Arnie percep mașina ca fiind fundamental malefică, incapabili totuși să-și explice rațional evenimentele la care asistă; există mai degrabă o rețea de vise și viziuni, de secvențe derulate rapid și încărcate de imagini violente. Iar interiorul ei poartă mirosul morții („un miros oribil, de putregai", „un miros pătrunzător de carne putrezită ") pe care toți cei apropiați lui Arnie (Dennis, Leigh) îl simt. Și, cu excepția lui Arnie, nimeni nu se simte bine și în largul său în acea mașină, care pare să aibă o viață autonomă. Deși încearcă să înțeleagă profunda schimbare a prietenului său și, mai ales, rolul pe care Christine îl are în acest proces, Dennis simte din plin ridicolul explicațiilor sale: „Ce era? Un fel de diavol? O mașină ordinară care, într-un fel, devenise sălașul periculos, urât mirositor, al unui demon? O manifestare misterioasă a personalității persistente a lui Le Bay, o casă infernală și bântuită ce se rostogolește pe cauciucuri Goodyear? Nu știam. Știam doar că eram speriat, terorizat."[11] Lipsa unei explicații mulțumitoare întreține un mister ce va persista până în finalul textului. Agent al morții, cu violente accidente auto sau sinucideri, Christine scapă unei catalogări definitive, iar supranaturalul pălește în fața spectacolului naturalului uman la care asistăm. Nu cruzimea lui Christine șochează, ci lipsa de reacție a lui Arnie, incapabil să se poziționeze etic în contextul evenimentelor la care asistă.

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[9] Stephen King, *Christine*, traducere de Dana Sarca, Editura Nemira, București, 1994, p. 45.
[10] *Ibidem*, p. 166.
[11] Stephen King, *op.cit.*, p. 408.

Spre deosebire de celelalte personaje, Arnie pare a fi cuprins de o buimăceală pe care refuză să o traducă raţional, dar, mai ales, de dorinţa de a se contopi cu obiectul pasiunii sale; reveriile sale, niţel patetice, sunt totuşi ilustrative pentru ceea ce înseamnă automobilul în fantezia consumatorilor, sau pentru armonioasa fuziune dintre om şi maşină: „el evada din aceste visuri şi ajungea la realitate cu o singură imagine repetată: El era la volanul Christinei, conducând încet printr-o furtună de zăpadă, ninsoarea fiind atât de deasă încât nu putea să vadă mai departe de botul maşinii. Vântul nu urla; producea un sunet mai grav, mai sinistru, un muget de bas. Apoi imaginea se schimba. Ninsoarea nu mai era de zăpadă; erau confeti. Vaietele vântului erau aclamaţiile mulţimii adunate de ambele părţi pe Fifth Avenue. Mulţimea îl aclama pe el. Ei o aclamau pe Christine. Ei ovaţionau pentru că el şi Christine… *Evadaseră*."[12] Ea devine astfel pretext pentru ieşirea din anonimat şi pentru consolidarea respectului de sine, sau pentru a păcăli o realitate ce ar putea părea claustrantă. Adolescentul îşi trage energia din contactul fizic cu această maşină; cu cât se afundă mai tare într-o răutate ce nu-i este caracteristică şi cu cât este mai încolţit de poliţie, suspectat fiind că este implicat în morţile acelor oameni, cu atât dependenţa lui de Christine creşte: „încordarea din corpul lui s-a risipit, iar el s-a sprijinit de maşină atingând-o cu mâna stângă, mângâind-o, părând să-şi tragă putere de la ea"[13]„a găsit-o pe Christine – suprafaţa ei tare, răcoroasă, reconfortantă – şi totul a devenit iarăşi normal."[14], „În schimb se va gândi la Christine. Nu la mama lui sau la tata, nici la Leigh sau la Will Darnell, nici la Slawson – toţi căcănarii mizerabili care îl trădaseră. Se va gândi la Christine."[15] E un refugiu care nu oferă căldură umană, ci un neproblematic suport inanimat. Căci în vreme ce familia şi prietenii vin cu dramele şi aşteptările lor solicitante, Christine pare a fi tăcută şi docilă, răbdătoare şi de încredere. Evident că dincolo de acest calm înşelător, Christine se dovedeşte a fi mai de temut decât umilii oameni, cu umilele lor drame.

Simbol de o amplă rezonanţă culturală, automobilul reprezintă o lume a experienţelor banale, dar şi profunde, a violenţei greu de imaginat, dar şi a gentileţii profund umane. Iar textul lui Stephen King vorbeşte, în cele din urmă, despre fragilitatea fiinţei umane şi despre căutarea confortului psihic, indiferent de sursa ce-l poate furniza, fie obiect sau persoană.

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[12] *Ibidem*, p. 349.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 186.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 326.
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 337.

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AN ALL-AMERICAN NARRATIVE: SPIN-OFFS AND BORDERS IN PAUL AUSTER'S FICTION

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Abstract: The paper argues that Paul Auster's novel, *The Book of Illusions*, is an all-American spin-off. Considering the development of the writer over a fifteen year period, I read him in terms of the follow-up routine he indulges in. The bond between his 2002 novel and *The New York Trilogy* (1987) is the unfolding of a coveted literary discourse, heavily indebted to its cultural environment. However, I think that the exchange between the former and the latter is mutual: tapping into the reservoir of what has become mainstream – partly due to its own accomplishments – both redeems and plagues his writing.

I aimed to track down the translation of social references into fictional language, with a view to proving that the author evolves from the mannerism of aesthetical disengagement (*The New York Trilogy*) to interventional practices (*The Book of Illusions*). I mean that cultural action politicises the novel, with the notions of economics and liberation lurking in the background. The resulting post-capitalist narrative quotes the camerawork technique, dormant in the movie-going audience of the twentieth century, and climaxes in pop-culture stock phrases.

Keywords: popular culture, literary-cultural studies, identity recognition, USA ethos

Paul Auster is a household name of the 20th century United States fiction. After his celebrated *The New York Trilogy* (1987), his other seven novels single him out for the nowadays reader. Up to his 2002 *The Book of Illusions*, he delivered on his literary promise, broadening the scope and the means of his output. He openly extrapolated, paralleled, or partly reiterated all of his prior productions. I primarily mean the three short novels *City of Glass, Ghosts* and *The Locked Room* of the trilogy, which are a benchmark against which Paul Auster tuned his later fiction, at least up to *The Book of Illusions*.

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The bond between his 2002 novel and the trilogy is the case in point for the idiosyncratic makeup of an influential literary discourse. At the same time, this literature is heavily indebted to its cultural environment. However, I think that the exchange between the latter and the former is mutual. Tapping into the reservoir of what has become mainstream – partly due to its own accomplishments – both redeems and plagues the writing of Paul Auster.

My paper argues that his 2002 novel is an all American spin-off, both literarily and culturally. I read it in such terms because of the follow-up routine the author indulges in: the novel epitomizes the literary convention (plots, themes, motifs, and characters) that made Auster's name, while spelling out the abridged version of the cultural enterprise his ten novels (at the time) convey. His work edits the immediately recognizable setup of commonsensical America, as showcased by hackneyed literary and, cinematic narratives.

A brand of aesthetical mannerism, quite fashionable in the second half of the last century, took over his literature in terms of self-absorbed narrative technique and stylishness. Its identifying mark, inescapably, is the postmodern label. Considering the development of Auster's discourse over a fifteen-year period, one is tempted to read his choices in terms of a minutely articulated first production which, when revisited, gradually gives up self-righteousness.

However, the context-oriented reading of cultural literary studies (McGuigan, 1992) is able to circumvent such questions and to understand his work outside the box of literary criticism. The ideologically charged phrasing of his writing classifies and assigns meaning within the most influential pop culture of the 20th century. I intend to conclude on the literary appropriation of a culturalist (Rimmon Kenan, 2002) vocabulary, quite conspicuous with Paul Auster. Basically, I will track down the translation of social references into fictional language, with a view to proving that the author evolves from the mannerism of the aesthetical disengagement (*The New York Trilogy*) to interventional practices (*The Book of Illusions*) which politicise the novel genre. In the Marxist wording of cultural studies, economics and liberation (Bowman, 2007) lurk in the background of a post-capitalist narrative which quotes social and ideological traditions (Jameson, 1981).

The negotiation of the author with the reader (sometimes viewer), the ethnic and gender discrimination, and the comprehensive USA ethos bring together my interpretation of *The Book of Illusions*[1].

Emancipation is the anecdote the novel professes in the background of the detective story. The protagonist, David Zimmer, retraces the biography of Hector Mann in order to stumble on the story of Blue Stone Ranch where, unknown to the world, his hero has been making his movies. The public and the

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[1] Auster, P., 2002, *The Book of Illusions*, London: Faber & Faber Ltd, hereafter *TBOI* in quotations only.

private overlap in the redemption all characters seem to be after. Personal trauma and racial anxiety fuel the search for a safe haven, outside the reach of social and historical constraints. On the other hand, the text hints at ordinary economic models (Gramsci, 1971) that believe scarcity is the cause of collective interaction. This comes against the emphasis on surplus and expenditure, particular to the popular beliefs about American society. By focusing on the borderline behavior between the two paradigms, the narrative prompts a circumstantial positioning of characters and readers.

The Book of Illusions conclusively analyses the function of the 'folk' author, openly an American one. Zimmer is mesmerised by the resplendent screen persona of Hector Mann in his white tropical suit. The meaning of his characters and of the way they evolve against the universal backdrop of Hollywood identity codes is the concern of the story-telling. For example, the reader is provided with a professional description of Hector's stage persona, in his twelve silent movies he made before disappearing. Identity attribution between literature and its social context is achieved by the opinionated assessment of otherness, community, ethnicity, irrespective of literary achievement or failure. The author and the characters become the detectives in a proficient story which exhausts itself and, sometimes, the reader too. The mirroring of their intellectual pursuit is less a highbrow achievement than it is a matter of cultural conditioning, targeting one audience or another.

The example of the readership the author envisages for the novel helps to discuss the cultural credentials of a book of illusions. The figment of the author's imagination is a volume which inhabits a literary convention occasionally proven obsolete in the progress the plot. I presume the reader of Auster's novel(s) to be, ostensibly, an expedient 'he', i.e., gendered according to the patent features most of his heroes and narrators boast – male, Caucasian (in fact, Semitic), white collar, on a self-proving quest, etc. Such a reader is shown to believe he faces a traditional plot, in which the story is in control of the discourse, the events being ordered in a way that offers a close meaning. It turns out that he is misled by a text which only apparently does so. As he goes on reading, this likely persona passes for the cultural marker that corroborates the undertones of the discourse, while playing along with the intricacies of the story.

On the contrary, women characters are secondary and briefly paid attention to, usually in a gender-biased language, which reinforces offensive female stereotypes. For instance, 'Sylvia was an uneducated hick, a semi-illiterate vulgarian…' (*TBOI*: 188); even more: 'You screw like a princess, darling […] but you lack much in the thought department, don't you?' (*TBOI*: 189-190). If it is not entirely the case and one woman is multifaceted enough to sustain the narrator's scrutiny for more than a couple of paragraphs, she is still the subject of the same overgeneralising, paternal reading. I'm thinking of Alma Grund, the overemotional figure who suddenly shows up with a gun in her hand. She is also,

eventually, wiped out of the picture, whenever actual events occur. Everything happens much to the dismay of the story-teller (himself) who concludes that: 'It couldn't have happened that way, but that's how I remember it' (*TBOI*: 223). Nevertheless, she is closest to taking over the control of the story, once even becoming its narrator, recounting to Zimmer Hector's missing years.

The narrative discourse makes a point out of repeatedly addressing notions pertaining to identity recognition, for instance circumscribed to language skills: '…he had advanced to the point where it was becoming increasingly difficult to tell where he had been born. He didn't sound like an American, perhaps, but neither did he sound like a raw, uneducated immigrant (*TBOI*: 157). The pronunciation lessons for the Jewish national Chaim Mandelbaum are, alongside all other trials of his American alias Hector Mann, constituting the binary opposition which instantiates both terms of the ethnic contrast in the text. For example, the disappearance of the hero strengthens the narrator's own feeling that he too is a nonentity, a dead man, with the probable outcome that David and Hector are, once more, shown to be akin. Correspondingly, they share the same blood feud with the world that famously targeted them, accidentally or not. The narrative voice plays on this subject matter enthusiastically enough to keep the audience guessing about the outcome of the process.

I find particularly revealing the packaging of controversial issues, seldom addressed in racial terms by American public narratives. A blunt statement about inter-war U.S. mores construes the already mentioned Caucasian-Semitic contrast which, it is suggested, victimises minorities. Namely: 'It wasn't a crime to be a Jew in Hollywood back then. It was merely something that one chose not to talk about. […] …he might have been ashamed of it, but it was difficult for me to imagine that he had been killed for it' (*TBOI*: 86). Once more, the narrator trades sides with the (male) hero, and, possibly, with the addressee: '…I was too caught up in Hector's story…' (*TBOI*: 200); 'As we listen to Martin's narration…' (*TBOI*: 245.) The substitution blurs distinctions, while laying bare taboos, so that the story ends up displaying revisionist overtones which may very well, ultimately, account for the withdrawal-from-the-world tale of Chaim/Hector.

On the other hand, the national narrative whose many versions have been detailed by Paul Auster's carrier is obvious in the revisiting of the *New York Trilogy* by the authorial discourse in *The Book of Illusions*. Hector Mann's sudden disappearance, the work he left behind, his appearance at the end of the novel and his death, all these remind of Fanshawe in *The Locked Room* and of the unnamed narrator who throughout the novel was in search of a biography and, implicitly, of self-identity. The similarity between the two novels is openly acknowledged. At the beginning of the novel, we find out that Hector Mann is dead, and then, a letter overturns the narrative: 'Hector has read your book and would like to meet you. Are you interested in paying us a visit? Yours sincerely,

Frieda Spelling (Mrs. Hector Mann)' (*TBOI*: 4). Zimmer has joined what Auster calls in *The New York Trilogy* 'the ghosts'. However, he is not the only ghost in the novel; there is also Hector Mann, the most prominent ghost-figure, who although physically missing, is perceived as being the most present of the characters. Like in *The Locked Room*, Zimmer's search for Hector Mann becomes a quest for the author of the text or for its meaning. At the same time, the protagonist-narrator reasserts his identity by the end of the novel and, along with Hector Mann's coming back to life (not only through Zimmer's book, but through Alma Grund's narration of Mann's biography as well), we witness the narrator's development from a non-entity to a clearly defined one.

Travelling is an iconic practice that fosters a sense of apprehension caused by the cultural geography of the U. S. Time and space are secondary to the text's discourse. What is of concern is, for instance, the narrative of assent to the ritual of driving, commonly, to scheduled tasks: 'The last time I had driven to Logan Airport … […] Turn by turn, they had made the same trip; mile by mile, they had covered the same ground. Route 30 to Interstate 91; 91 to the Mass Pike…A part of me welcomed this grotesque re-enactment' (*TBOI*: 117). As always, locomotion is the same American infatuation with the internal combustion engine. Mainly the car and, occasionally, the plane secure the juxtaposition of exemplary political and cultural borders within U.S.A. The narrative highlights the troublesome inclusiveness of a compressed geography that agglomerates otherwise mutually exclusive landmarks.

Vermont and New Mexico are locations which contrastively function in order to signal the magnitude of the project entailed by the quest at hand. Devious Spanish names trigger conservative reflections on whether or not they are actual places of the U.S, regardless of the matter of fact landscape: 'Every address in America was listed in the zip code directory, and if Tierra Del Sueño wasn't there, I could throw away the card and forget all about it. But it was there. […]…a proper town with a post office and its own five digit number' (*TBOI*: 4).

The melodrama structure of *The Book of Illusions* amounts to a new text derived from the ones that already exist: perplexing revelations, switched identities, sudden disappearances, improbable coincidences and overlapping pasts. The relation between David Zimmer, the narrator-protagonist, and the long forgotten comedian of the silent age Hector Mann paraphrases the story-telling routine. 'The Silent World of Hector Man', a study of Mann's film, is written by the Vermont literature teacher not as a biography. Only *The Book of Illusions* may be called a biography, and to some extent, an autobiography. As the story goes with Auster's novels, the trigger of their plots is the protagonist's recently suffered great loss or somebody's disappearance.

Even though the narrator claims to be the author of *The Book of Illusions*, the reader is right to consider Hector Mann to be the one who assumes the authorial role in the story, because his movies and disappearance have

generated the plot of the book David Zimmer is writing. Irrespective of the paternity dispute the novel hints at, this vernacular is embedded with obvious national references. They range from the literary canon, conveniently clustered in a library ('Hawthorne, Melville, Emerson and Thoreau' *TBOI*: 283), to the founding fathers of the 20th century cinema ('Chaplin, Keaton, Lloyd' *TBOI*: 10), or to casual fashion comments ('Unlike the hair of most American Women in June of 1928 … *TBOI*: 39).

Zimmer decides to embark on the search for the twelve two-reel comedies Mann made in the late 1920s, before he walked out of his house one morning in January 1929 and vanished. This quest introduces to the reader the underpinnings of every noir story – the deadly occurrences. The narrator records quite a number of violent murders and a few demises. Several characters, usually female, die: the pregnant Brigid O'Fallon confronting the new fiancée of Hector, prior to his departure, Alma who, once Hector has expired, accidentally kills Frieda Spelling, his wife, and then commits suicide. In addition, the son of the Spellings died a long time ago too, after they moved to the New Mexico ranch. The dramatic device of death structures the plot and contextualizes much of the authorial intentions.

The focus on the US pop-culture of silent cinema is legitimating the author's actual mode of expression which, to all intents and purposes, does its best to mimic such media: 'Cut to Hector's office. Chase enters carrying something… […]. What is it called? Hector asks' (*TBOI*: 41). The literary discourse takes over the trappings of motion picture and paraphrases their usage in the narrative unfolding of events. Alongside the literary manner proper to the author, the impersonation of the filmic communication amounts to a coherent discourse which internalizes skills particular to the target audience. *The Book of Illusions* derives an expository formula which depends for its meaning on the camerawork assumptions dormant in the movie-going audience of the twentieth century.

As far as its production and reception are concerned, the book is a cultural construct which complements the dramatic art of the big screen. The cinematic technique of the novel is layered, ranging from the above-mentioned story-board quotes to less obvious establishing frames that work up the audience to climactic resolutions: 'A paper bag rose up from the ground and flew into the window of Sam's Army-Navy Store; an empty soda can went clattering down the street toward the river; bullets of rain pelted the sidewalk' (*TBOI*: 95). This is the regular detective fiction setting the author is always keen to promote as a means to assemble the verifying circumstances for the male characters who are rooted in the template that gave to the world a leadership recipe coined in the Western genre (John Wayne, Clint Eastwood, etc.): '…I was knocking off more than half a bottle of whiskey every night' (*TBOI*: 8-9); '…looked like a second rate leading man…' (*TBOI,*: 32); 'I don't think I was wrong to have held onto my secrets for all those years…' (*TBOI*: 318).

The borrowing of means and attitudes from dramatic arts, as they are over-simplified in Hollywood movies, is conducive to 'the responsibilities of the novel as a medium for shaping our pasts and giving them public meaning' (Morrison, 2003: 23).

The concept of the American ethos, in terms of shared beliefs inscribed in public narratives, is resistant to the idea of shaping up into a list of entries identifiable as such in a literary text. Respectively, *The Book of Illusions* is not the depositary of a national ideology. Nevertheless, it presupposes the context of a cultural language which makes it intelligible: 'Poland is remote country to Americans, far more remote than Germany…' (*TBOI*: 84). The values which conceptualise U.S.A., by comparison with other contrastive ideologies and their in-between boundaries, are embedded in the fabric of the text. They totalise no brief list of topics prompted by a possible inventory. The original Promised Land comes with its current disclaimer which amends notions of equality under the law, safety of moral practices, transparency of public agenda, lawfully enforced coercion, etc. All of these challenges concern familiar parties – i.e., the characters and the readers. American popular culture circulates right or wrong designations which originate in a number of sources: truth as God-guided enterprise, the Protestant work-ethics, liberal and pragmatic standards, the exemplary new and virtuous republic, etc. To pursue the effective embodiments of similar insights seems doomed to wishful thinking. It is safe to say that they may very well be everything one can think of – the best case scenario for fallacious interpretation.

And yet, for instance, the author's investigation of Hector's epic ramblings about his birthplace and, generally, ancestry, is riddled with value-judgments which suffuse all orthodoxies. Moral commitments are intertwined in the biography pieced together from various interviews, with the underlying purpose of advocating cultural pluralism and, of course, civil liberties: 'that's where Sandusky, Ohio, comes into the picture. […] The journalist is side-tracked, and instead of asking more questions about Poland, he […] begins reminiscing with Hector about alfalfa fields of the Midwest. Stanislav is located just south of the Dniestr River, halfway between Lvov and Czernowitz in the province of Galicia' (*TBOI*: p 85). Bearing in mind the events of the plot, it becomes obvious that Hector failed in North America, the way his forefathers had in Eastern Europe.

The legitimation of the novel is provided by the cinematic lingua franca which turns out to be less of a conceptual abstraction than literature. It follows that the narrative accommodates cultural recognition rather than logical procedures. Consequently, everything boils down to the understanding that reflecting the norm (the most widely accepted views – and not the exceptional) is the likeliest choice in order to secure approval. Furthermore, fostering mistaken perceptions (sensory or intellectual), although the purported mission

of the book, is a policy that the author employs in order to downplay the stylistic proficiency of his original grand narrative – the trilogy. There is a debate on what is customary practice going on in the plot.

This argument is never settled and, yet, every party struggles, at given moments in time, to make its point: 'In 1946, the conventions of moviemaking would have required the scene to end here' (TBOI: 254.) As a result, the same twofold structure (*The New York Trilogy* vs. *The Book of Illusions*; the written text vs. the visual story; America vs. the world) binds the text together.

Intently or incidentally, the novel is a representational by-product of Auster's prior experience. It is properly marketed to secure both the commercial venture, analogous to a Hollywood sequel, and the literary package, matching expectations of advised audiences. The previous statement is consistent with the story's quotational camerawork technique which climaxes in the broadcast of pop-culture stock phrases. Conclusively, the popular story-telling and the ideological debate on false needs/consciousness firmly place the *The Book of Illusions* in the mainstream of the publishing industry.

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WESTERN VALUES AND MANIFEST DESTINY
IN JOHN M. CUNNINGHAM'S *THE TIN STAR*

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Abstract: This article approaches the symbolism of the sheriff badge in John M. Cunningham's short story, *The Tin Star*. It follows the moral dilemma of sheriff Doane, confronted with a Ricoeurian boundary situation, and his final decision to face history rather than try to escape it. The analysis focuses on interpreting the ways in which wearing a tin star changed one's destiny, transforming the individual into a historical tool, predestined to defend the values of Americanness.
Keywords: Americanness, manifest destiny, American West

Better known for its filmic adaptation as *High Noon*, John M. Cunningham's *The Tin Star* remains a classic of the Western literary genre, with a simple plot that accommodates all necessary elements of a typical frontier story. It follows the ever-successful recipe of a binary structure, good vs. evil, in an attempt to highlight the implacable, archetypal forces that conflicted at the dawn of Americanness.

In almost real historical time, this short-story questions some of the fundamental, consecrated values of the Old West – order, loyalty, freedom, to name the most relevant ones – through the mind of the main protagonist, sheriff Doane, who finds himself in the middle of a moral dilemma, which is likely to have repercussions upon his social existence. The set of values he adhered to for a lifetime seems to lose meaning when deputy Toby tells him that he intends to quit. But it is not fear that drives him to this conclusion, but the lack of belief in what was generally accepted to represent the western code of values, both moral and social: 'I'm not afraid. I'll see you through this shindig. I'm not afraid of Jordan or young Jordan or any of them. But I want to tell you know. I'll wait till Jordan's train gets in. I'll wait to see what he does. I'll see you through whatever happens. After that, I'm quitting.'(Cunningham, 1975, 209) Of course,

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Toby's refusal to take over and continue the legacy of sheriff Doane has deeper meanings: he does not merely refuse a public position, but a way of life. In Toby's mind, it's not necessarily being a sheriff that loses meaning, but it is the type of existence associated with it that no longer interests him: 'What's the use of holding down a job like this? Look at you. What'd you ever get of it? Enough to keep you eating. And what for?' (Cunningham, 1975, 209) Thus, Toby clearly states his distrust in the set of values normally associated with a sheriff of the Old West. He can see no positive outcome at the personal level because being a sheriff implied a total surrender of one's existence to the needs of the job. And it was not a job one could adapt to personal needs, but a job one could only adapt to without much negotiation. Being a sheriff implied the open acceptance of a predestined existence, in which the individual transformed into a tool in the service of American history. Apparently, a sheriff no longer lived for himself, but for history. He was transformed into an agent of Americanness, pushing forward and imposing, often by force, the values required to settle, that is, to Americanize, an ever-transforming and moving frontier. A sheriff led a double existence and belonged to two different, yet converging histories: on the one hand, he belonged to his local community, identifiable as micro history, which he had to protect, and on the other hand, he belonged to macro history, which defined and determined his destiny. Caught between the two, he had to mediate his existence between his inner self and his social self, constructing or reconstructing, adjusting or readjusting himself so as to fit the position. And, by questioning the meaning of this, Toby questions the meaning of American history. He no longer wants to belong to a history that is not his own, but is rather imposed on him by forces larger than he can control. In his understanding, being a sheriff meant not only lending your existence to the community and, by doing so, lending it to national history, but also risking it all for apparently no outcome. For Toby, being a sheriff, associated with an inevitable surrender of the self, has now become void of meaning. He refuses to become an agent of history, to be one of those who make history happen, and seems to prefer instead a more passive role, retiring within the community, where history moves at a slower pace and is likely to take less out of the individual. While being an active agent of history gives nothing to the individual, quitting the front row of a fast moving historical system provides at least a hope for survival. The pressure of history is less intense if one steps out of the center of the historical system and stays on the margin. To be more specific, the West is easier to cope with if you are not the one pushing it forward, but the one being pushed forward with it. All risks are taken and annihilated by those who push the West westward, who make the West meet its own destiny; those who come behind follow a smooth road. While the former take on the wild side of the West, the latter enjoy its tamed version. And this is Toby's wish: to take a step backward and stay with those who enjoy a safe ride

across the frontier. Sheriff Doane doesn't contradict him. Having placed his entire life in the service of the West, he now admits he cannot see much meaning in it: 'That's right. They don't even hang the right ones. You risk your life catching somebody, and the damned juries let them go so they can come back and shoot at you. You're poor all your life, you got to do everything twice, and in the end they pay you off in lead. So you can wear a tin star. It's a job for a dog, son.' (Cunningham, 1975, 209)

The tin star becomes an intriguing and multi-layered symbol not necessarily of the position of authority usually associated with a sheriff, but rather of a way of life which imposes itself on the individual through a set of values which, apparently, cannot simply be discarded. The tin star functions as a reminder of a predestined existence which one cannot give up. It becomes a symbol of the pressure of history upon the individual – an individual left only two alternatives: one would be to accept history and the other one to escape it. And, in my opinion, it is around this situation that lies the moral dilemma of the whole text: how should sheriff Doane react when confronted with the usual inevitability of (American) history: should he accept his destiny or should he try to run away from it? The community for which he stands strongly encourages him to leave and give personal life a chance, while his inner self constantly reminds him that his only acceptable alternative is to stay and face whatever is to come. From this perspective, the community behind sheriff Doane becomes an atypical one – the West was created, as a space and as a history, by pioneering spirits, driven forward by undaunted courage. Fear, cowardice and refusal to either face or accept history were not among the typical features of such a community. Perhaps that is why John Wayne, who had been offered the role, referred to this as being the most un-American thing he had ever heard of. The reaction of the community contradicts the core values of the type of Americanness generally associated with the West. They don't fit any of the two major theories which attempted to define the way the West was won and the nation was built. Thus, the community in Tin Star lies somewhere in-between Buffalo Bill's perspective (according to which the West was built with the help of the gun) and the famous turnerian frontier theory (according to which the West was built by hard-working hands). In my opinion, they are neither heroes, nor cowards. Instead of being those who push the values forward, instead of facing, assuming, and controlling history, they choose to lay low in order to escape the pressure of history. In ricoeurian terms, this community faces a 'boundary situation' which asks for a preconditioned reaction. According to Ricoeur, when a community's identity is threatened, it will seek refuge in its mythical structures: 'There are certain boundary situations, such as war, suffering, guilt, death, in which the individual or community experiences a fundamental crisis. At such moments, the whole community is put into question. For it is only when it is threatened with destruction from without or from within

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that a society is compelled to return to very roots of its identity; to that mythical nucleus which ultimately grounds and determines it.' (Ricoeur, 1991, 484) However, the community in Cunningham's short-story behaves differently and the responsibility of activating the core values is transferred to the sheriff. The cradle of the values that have to stand is the tin star. Through the tin star, sheriff Doane becomes the repository of the Western code, the guard of identity, the representative of the American spirit. The tin star transforms him into a pushing engine of Americanness. Therefore, I consider that the tin star is history itself, forcing the individual to act based on a prewritten scheme, one which echoes the ideals behind the concept of manifest destiny, which was developed by John O'Sullivan in 1845 'to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.' (O'Sullivan, 1839) But the roots of this concept go deeper into American history, back to the colonial beginnings. The tin star not only encompasses significant elements of the manifest destiny policy, but it also echoes some of the destinarianism that characterized America's beginnings. 'English Protestantism, early on, had developed a notion of England as not only spatially but also spiritually separate from the European continent, as the bastion of true religion and chief source of its expansion: a place divinely singled out for higher missions.'(Stephanson, 1995, 3) The tin star that sheriff Doane keeps in his hands is a re-encoded mytheme of the space and spirituality that stood at the basis of America. It is the basic, irreducible unit of Americanness, it is the idea of America itself. Just like the Separatist Puritans were driven across the ocean by the idea of America, so is sheriff Doane driven back into the main course of American history by a symbol of that idea. His destiny is charged with a sense of mission which annihilates the individual and forces him into abandonment of the self and surrender to the mission itself. This sense of mission has always been part of American history, and responding to the call of mission has been the key element of the American spirit. A spirit which leaves sheriff Doane without the possibility of personal choice and offers him the only acceptable, and therefore American, alternative: embarking on the ship that takes that spirit across the new 'oceans' of the American West. His duty is to save the *idea of the tin* star and, because of that, he cannot leave town. The tin star is like a mark on his chest which allows no behavioral variation and offers him no middle road to approach history. The tin star stands as a reminder of the fact that he is an actor playing on the vast and tumultuous scene of macro history. Leaving town would have been acceptable for the *individual* Doane, a normal individual seeking refuge from a threatening situation (or an overwhelming historical pressure), but that cannot be the solution for *sheriff* Doane, in spite of all encouragements to do so. The tin star gives him an identity different from that of the common individual within himself, and his only choice is to act upon it. As a human being, he is afraid and he trembles, and that is not a condemnable behavior, but

as a sheriff, he must respond to the call of duty, he must respond to the call of America. 'His knees began to quiver very slightly and he began to walk, very slowly, down the road. (…) He began to hurry, stumbling a little in the ruts. And then he stopped short, his face open in fear. 'My God, my empty horse, those shots-Toby, no!' He began to run, shambling, awkward and stumbling, his face ashen.'(Cunningham, 1975, 221) Such was the reaction of the man behind the tin star; nonetheless, the man wearing the star fulfilled his mission, like he was supposed to. If we were to return to the ricoeurian concept of the boundary situation, sheriff Doane can be singled out as being both the repository of mythical values and the actant of those values. He saves the community by acting upon them. And, in the end, I consider that it is not actually Doane who faces a boundary situation, but the tin star, and, through it, the pioneering, westering American spirit. Doane becomes a necessary tool for American history to pursue its goals. He basically shares the same behavior as the rest of the community, only that, because of the tin star, he acts differently – and in Cunningham's text, 'different' means 'American.' Thus, the role attributed to him through the tin star, as a defender and protector of American national values, gives him a universal value, with strong prophetic connotations. He mixes the two elements of manifest destiny – 'a particular (and particularly powerful) nationalism constituting itself not only as prophetic but also universal.' (Stephanson, 1995, xiii) What is at stake in this short story apart from Doane's moral dilemma? The answer should not be a surprise: the ever-treasured American ideal of liberty. And this takes up back to the very beginning of the text, where Doane explains the ways in which wearing a tin star could affect one's destiny: 'That's right, Toby. It's all for free. The headaches, the bullets and everything, all for free. I found that out long ago. But somebody's got to be around and take care of things. I like it free. You know what I mean? You don't get a thing for it. You've got to risk everything. And you're free inside. Like the larks. You know the larks? How they get up in the sky and sing when they want to? A pretty bird. A very pretty bird. That's the way I like to feel inside.' (Cunningham, 1975, 210) Freedom of the spirit is what ultimately motivates Doane to act the way he does. The tin star subjugates the individual, but it also encircles him with a type of freedom whose meanings are deeply American. The sheriff almost inevitably associates this idea of freedom with a bird (the lark), only that, when he actually sees a lark flying, it flies above the cemetery near the town. There is freedom in death, too. And there is meaning in it: the idea of the tin star survives and, at the end of text, it is transferred on to Toby who, while witnessing Doane's death, assimilates the values and symbols the latter stood for. In the opening dialogues of the text, Toby could not associate the tin star with anything truly valuable, less so with freedom: 'That's the way you look at it. I don't see it. I've only got one life. You talk about doing it all for nothing, and that gives you something. What?'

(Cunningham, 1975, 210) Now, after the sheriff's death, he feels ready to give up that one life and take on the tin star – a decision that would transform him into a *somebody* in the service of a higher mission, grander than the mere survival of the self: adopting and defending the set of values and the type of freedom Doane died for. 'Shut up, Toby said. 'Shut up or get out.' His eyes were sharp and his face placid and set. He turned to another of the men. 'Get the doc,' he said. 'I've got a busted leg. *And I've got a lot to do*.'' (Cunningham, 1975, 222) The lark keeps flying through the new keeper of the tin star. And through the star, the American spirit keeps flying. Like a lark, singing his melodious song. The charming song of triumphant Americanness.

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THUS SPAKE BOETHIUS! – IGNATIAN INTIMATIONS OF BOETHIAN WISDOM IN JOHN KENNEDY TOOLE'S *A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES*

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Abstract: The present article is devoted to John Kennedy Toole's iconic anti-hero, Ignatius Reilly, more precisely to his misreading of the novel's hypertext (*The Consolation of Philosophy* by Roman philosopher Boethius). In accordance with several authoritative voices in the field of Toolean studies, the article explores the Boethius-Ignatius-Toole triangle and argues that Ignatius, for all his blighted worldview, exemplifies a paradigm of the human condition that sometimes affords a reject the liberty to reject his rejecters.
Keywords: *A Confederacy of Dunces*, Boethius, hypertext, proaïresis, human condition

The mother-son hospital scene in Chapter Thirteen of *A Confederacy of Dunces* features an overtly farcical denunciation of the novel's professed hypertext, Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy, as John Kennedy Toole pokes fun at both his protagonist and at the gullible readers who take Ignatius's bombast for Boethian insight. However much the protagonist may have delved into the sixth-century philosophical opus, it is his beliefs that betray his weltanschauung (*CD*, 61) as blighted; it is clear that the authoritative value he bestows upon the early medieval classic is not backed up by a profound understanding of the book's message.

Toole's narrative also contains clues that empower the reader to read *Confederacy of Dunces* as a modern parody of Boethius's life and philosophical work, in accordance with what Richard Keller Simon calls a pattern of rotation and repetition (1994, 101). Boethius informs the readers of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* that his fall from grace at the court of Emperor Theodoric occurred because of his allegiance to the older Roman Senate rather than to the

Ostrogoth emperor. Consequently, the Emperor had one of his agents forge Boethius's signature on a letter addressed to the Eastern emperor of Constantinople so as to frame him as part of a conspiracy and thus accuse him of treason and throw him in jail. Toole's modern repetition has Ignatius forge Mr. Levy's signature on the letter he writes to I. Abelman, favor the Middle Ages over the twentieth century, and live on Constantinople street (ibid., 109).

According to another tradition, the terror inflicted upon the Romans by the Ostrogoth emperor determined Boethius to contact the Byzantine emperor: Theodoric was a follower of Arianism, whereas Justin I of Constantinople, as well as the Roman subjects of Theodoric including Boethius, observed the provisions of the First Council of Nicaea (*AD*, 325). In response to Theodoric's persecutions against the Nicaean Christians, Justin I retaliated persecuting the Arian Christians of Constantinople. Apparently, Boethius was caught in the middle as the Roman insider of the Byzantines and charged with high treason.

Similarly, Mr. Levy persecutes the employees of Levy Pants (e.g. at his wife's insistence, he won't allow Miss Trixie to retire, while the Negro workers receive little above the minimal wage), while Ignatius 'sends word to Abelman in Kansas City not to bring Levy back to Christian faith[1] but to the cause of Jewish dry goods manufacture' (ibid.). Boethius's apparently unjust imprisonment and ensuing despair are satirically repeated in Mr. Levy's gesture of firing Ignatius, which expels him to the dungeon-like home on Constantinople Street, where he is also seized by despair, as attested by the scathing entries in his journal. Repetition and rotation mark Ignatius's trajectory as a prophet manqué:

"Boethius exhorts others to believe in God while Ignatius exhorts others to believe in Boethius. Boethius explains that he left the retirement of his library to put Plato's teaching into practice, to allow the state to be ruled by according to philosophy. It is for a similar reason, finally, that Ignatius understands why he must leave his room on Constantinople Street, littered with his own writings. He desires to bring the principles of theology and geometry to the world, and Boethius is the author of books on theology and geometry". (ibid.)

Otherwise, Ignatius is forever complaining about the whimsical character of Fortuna, fancying himself a sort of twentieth-century Boethius, a captive in the prison of modern life. What he fails to understand is that, according to Lady Philosophy, the world moves on paths that are preordained

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[1] The letter addressed to "Abelman's Dry Goods Kansas City, Missouri U.S.A., Mr. I. Abelman, Mongoloid, Esq." contains the following allusion to faith: "(Our loyal and dependable outlets can vend any trouser bearing the Levy label no matter how abominable their design and construction. You are apparently a faithless people.)", and ends in tones of menacing majesty: "If you molest us again, sir, you may feel the sting of the lash across your pitiful shoulders. Yours in anger, Gus Levy, Pres." (*CD*, 105)

by so much more than happenstance, that people are not inescapably strapped down to Fortune's Wheel and their lives partake a loftier design, where the divine gift of free will awards them reward for virtue and punishment for sin. As Michael Kline observes, 'the narratively sequential and the seemingly haphazard grotesque cohabit fruitfully in the reprises of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*' (1999, 287).

Indeed, Toole aptly indicates to the reader how shallow Ignatius's understanding of Boethius really is whenever the protagonist calls upon the undiscriminating goddess of fate. Unmindful of the subordination that Fortune owes Providence with regard to human destiny, Ignatius divides his otherwise stale life in upward and downward cycles spun on Fortune's Wheel. For example, his unfailing antidote against the ravages of a bad cycle is encapsulated in the following piece of advice, subtly undermined by Toole's background commentary: 'When Fortuna spins you downward, go out to a movie and get more out of life. Ignatius was about to say this to himself; then he remembered that he went to the movies almost every night, no matter which way Fortuna was spinning' (*CD*, 65). Furthermore, appeals to the gnomic relevance of his worldview and elaborate invocations of Fortuna are frequently accompanied by sonorous belches: 'You must realize the fear and hatred which my weltanschauung instills in people.' Ignatius belched.' (*CD*, 60-61); 'Oh, Fortuna, blind, heedless goddess, I am strapped to your wheel,' Ignatius belched. 'Do not crush me beneath your spokes. Raise me on high, divinity' (*CD*, 35).

During Mrs. Reilly's explanatory session in the hospital, Ignatius is finally granted a chance to understand Boethius's philosophical rationale, and how the ultimate order of the universe is derived from the unchanging mind of God, who, 'in his Providence constructs a single fixed plan of all that is to happen, while it is by means of Fate that all He has planned is realized in its many individual details in the course of time' (Boethius, 1969, 105). As Mrs. Reilly describes the venturesome circuit[2] of Ignatius's English translation of *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and returns the book to him, he appears to be possessed by a brief state of illumination, being 'unknowingly wiser than ever he supposes' (Clark, 1987, 273).

He surely acts on impulse when he decides to find the misused medievalist, and it is his professed worldview – operating with typologies instead of individuals; relying on chance rather than volition – that leads him astray, far from the course of deliberate action. For all his theatrical lamentation, the

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[2] The book is lent by Ignatius to Patrolman Mancuso to comfort him during the long surveillance hours he spends in the rest room at the bus station; when Mancuso nearly apprehends George, the latter grabs the book from under the agent's arm, hits him upside the head with it, and runs away; finally, Lana Lee employs the stolen volume in her latest, and last, pornographic project.

protagonist shows timid signs of appropriation with regard to the fact that it is more than mere determinism and medieval allegory about the concatenation of apparent coincidences that conjoin in the shaping of human destiny:

"Oh, my God! This has all been arranged, Ignatius screamed, rattling the huge edition in his paws. 'I see it all now. I told you long ago that that mongoloid Mancuso was our nemesis. Now he has struck his final blow. How innocent I was to lend him this book. How I've been duped. … Taken in by a Third Reich strumpet hiding her depraved face behind my very own book, the very basis of my worldview. Oh, Mother, if only you knew how cruelly I've been tricked by a conspiracy of subhumans. Ironically, the book of Fortuna is itself bad luck. Oh, Fortuna, you degenerate wanton!" (*CD*, 399)

Ignatius's characterological inconclusiveness is best expressed in the frequent externalizations of his beliefs. To the very end of the novel, the protagonist purposefully pictures himself as a Christian stoic, whose contentment with his current position and acceptance of Fortuna's whimsical decrees are to be admired and emulated. This is why he lends Patrolman Mancuso the philosophical tract in the first place, although he scoffs at the wretched policeman with every occasion and thinks lowly of him: a hater of the middle class, whom he assimilates with materialism, cupidity, moral relativism and ambition, Ignatius cherishes hopes – deluded as they are – to disrupt its social entropy by engendering a circle of ego-titillating Boethian proselytes.

This is why he makes mention of the Roman philosopher to a host of other characters: Mr. Clyde, Lana Lee and Darlene, Dorian Greene, even Burma Jones. Operating as usual with generalizations, oblivious of such urgent matters as deprivation and poverty, as well as of the ravages of social discrimination, a self-aggrandizing Ignatius lectures the colored janitor of the Night of Joy:

"You can't possibly realize how confused you are. Your value judgments are all wrong. When you get to the top or wherever it is that you want to go, you'll have a nervous breakdown or worse. Do you know of any Negroes with ulcers? Of course not. Live contentedly in some hovel. Thank Fortuna that you have no Caucasian parent hounding you. Read Boethius. … Boethius will show you that striving is ultimately meaningless, that we must learn to accept. … If only I were in your shoes. I would stir from my room only once a month to fumble for my relief check in the mailbox. Realize your good fortune". (*CD*, 349-350)

While Jones remains unimpressed by the redemptive nature of stoicism as the needs that press him are a matter of material immediacy, not the portent of a spiritual crisis ('The fat mother was really a freak.' (*CD*, 350), Jones thinks to himself.), Patrolman Mancuso offers the reader a different perspective, from which Boethius's book is not regarded as the miraculous liberating solution in times of adversity, but rather as a means to conjure up the soothing quality of

consolation in such times and nothing more. In the clutches of the contemporary world, the nature of such consolation is at best transient, if not spurious.[3]

As Christopher Brown points out, 'Our attention to Ignatius can be likened to Mancuso's reaction to Boethius' (Brown, 2009, 5). Mancuso's opinion of Boethian wisdom pinpoints the novel's ultimate allegorical framework, according to which modern life affords man only the consolation of illusion and no viable resolution, stripping him of any agency of action:

"He looked again at *The Consolation of Philosophy*, which was opened on his lap, and turned a limp, damp page. The book was making him more depressed… Patrolman Mancuso felt sorry for the guy and felt obliged to read what he had written. So far he had covered only about twenty pages and was beginning to wonder whether this Boethius was something of a gambler. He was always talking about fate and odds and the wheel of fortune. Anyway, it wasn't the kind of book that exactly made you look up to the brighter side". (*CD*, 221-2)

Stranded in the men's room at the bus station, Patrolman Mancuso cannot derive any consolation from the teachings of Lady Philosophy as he lacks the intellectual instruments afforded by proper education and consequently fails to see any relation of causality in his plight. Lady Philosophy counsels Boethius to accept suffering, as suffering is not a sign that God has abandoned humanity or refused to impose order upon human life, but rather a purveyor of hope: in effect, human suffering carries a purpose, which man cannot always discern but should always regard as an opportunity for self-improvement.

Even though this lesson seems to be lost on the patrolman, to whom, unlike Ignatius, escapism is not an option, the Boethian vision of God's overall design reaffirms the ultimate rightness of the universe with regard to his fate, when expert police shunner Lana Lee is finally tricked by his otherwise ineffective disguises and apprehended. Despite this and the handful of fortunate resolutions that the novel spins, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, with its ultimate bleak perspective on life (Book Five), fails to make for an adequate existential manifesto, when put in conjunction with the novel's teleological dimension.

As one arrived at a wider philosophical understanding of the world, Boethius concludes his opus in cautionary advice headed for all those who suffer unjustly under the spokes of Fortune's Wheel: it is human virtues not human vices that get elevated to a god-like status, to be sure, and God-centered, altruistic love is available to all men, not just heroes and sages, but an attitude of uncompromising trust in God's rightful oneness will not miraculously deliver

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[3] In Hugh Ruppersburg's opinion, Ignatius's character reflects exquisitely the inherent confusion and hopelessness of modern life: "He [Ignatius] is the essence of modern man – disembodied, alienated, deluded, spiritually disenfranchised, fundamentally absurd" (1986, 124).

a person from physical imprisonment; it will only palliate his/her worst fears that the world outside has become a prison itself.

The path to the true happiness of serenity and acceptance is perplexed by abstraction and cold detachment, as the 'consolation which philosophy lends Boethius is a state of mind, a <u>lens</u> by which to rationalize his predicament' (ibid., 6, *underlining mine*). If one manages to overlook the undercurrent that makes *The Consolation of Philosophy* a hypertextual fetish in Toole's novel, then the philosophical tract and *Confederacy of Duces* share something in common: they both appear to convey the reader's attention toward a false ending that exalts a specific content without offering a final resolution. While Boethius's book extols man's dignified stance in times of outrageous misfortune, his stoic acceptance of any predicament, Toole's novel 'exults in episodes of the quotidian, the grotesque, and the hilarious' (ibid., 7), occurring in a microcosm of modern life that allows for any conceivable form of corruption. When they don't indulge in corruption and perversity, Toole's characters engage them with counter-reactive endeavors, however absurd and meaningless.

The connection of these endeavors with reality is often hazy since the characters' motivations frequently evade the logic inherent in a teleological narrative. Ignatius' narrow escape at the end thwarts the readers' expectations of a resolution that keeps pace with each correspondent episodic thread, which affords the novel's end a relief from too much responsibility of significance. Analyzing the novel's structure of continuity, Michael Kline calls upon the Aristotelian notion of proaïresis[4] , or deliberate choice, applied to literary criticism by Roland Barthes, according to which the reader of a narrative possesses a deliberative capability as to the outcome of a course of action predetermined by a cause-and-effect relationship of events, 'regardless of how twisted they appear to have been' (1999, 288).

Since all the resolutions in *Confederacy of Duces* are engendered by metonymic links of cause and effect that do not operate logically, the proaïretic process turns the reader into a detective who attempts to reorder the operational mechanisms of the metonymic process, upset by strange combinations of events, while inviting him/her 'to interpret the trope non-seriously, providing a pleasurable release from the rational linking of signs that nonhumorous rhetorical figures demand' (ibid.). Toole's further stress upon the unresolvedness of his narrative is metonymically achieved by the functional gap that engulfs the openness of Myrna's and Ignatius's fate(s). Generally speaking, narrative unresolvedness possesses a universal value with regard to the human condition, as it accounts for its ambivalence, skepticism, and fragility.

It is ambivalence that exemplifies best the fallen state of human nature: forever caught between the misappropriating poles of contemplation and

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[4] *Cf.* Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (Εθικά Νικομάχεια), written around 350 BC.

action, man undergoes transformation, sometimes in spite of himself. Resolution is awaited and dreaded at the same time, which makes people permanent fugitives. If we do away with the interpretation of Toole's novel as an act of sublimation that engenders the freeing form of the carnivalesque, Mrs. Reilly's bitter reproach addressed to her son: 'You learnt everything, Ignatius, except how to be a human being.' (*CD*, 427) might as well be directed at humanity by and large as indicative of the plight of the human condition – we are born human beings; what we have to learn is how to live with this.

Mrs. Reilly's imputation invokes an 'empathetic feeling between the reader and Ignatius' (Brown, 2009, 5), as we all find Ignatian traits of character in ourselves: fear, confusion, uncertainty, selfishness, procrastination, callousness, and possibly many others. Ignatius's reply to his ill-affected mother: 'It's not your fate to be well treated,' Ignatius cried. 'You're an overt masochist. Nice treatment will confuse and destroy you.' (*CD*, 427-428) baffles the reader with its indelibly diversionary quality; beyond his apparent delusion, Ignatius 'wins us to his rotund and ever-wheezing side' (Ruppersburg, 1986, 125), as in his unfeeling response one detects the iteration of existentialism's unremitting anguish: What if God has forsaken man?

Even though the reader is initially repulsed by Ignatius's grotesqueness, manifested through his plentiful collection of shortcomings, empathetic connections are made by virtue of common features: most of the time, Ignatius acts as a blameworthy fool, but don't we all sometimes? The author mitigates the possible conflict between his protagonist and the readers by appealing to their common quality, or curse, as fellow-sufferers of the tribulations inherent in the human condition. Indeed, Ignatius may well be the caricature of debased modern humanity to the very end of the novel, but his offhand manner of going through life, his hedonistic cynicism, and his professed incongruity with the world unleash an irresistible sense of fun that engenders the liberating laughter of Menippean satire (Brown, 2009, 8).

Certain similarities between Ignatius and J. K. Toole (the presence of a controlling mother, the protagonist's sense of intellectual solitude, the manuscript with an editorial potential) might bring about the temptation to read *Confederacy of Dunces* in an autobiographical key. As Richard Keller Simon puts it, 'The novel is, among other things, a four-hundred-page suicide note' (1994, 104). The writing of the book must have afforded Toole a powerful cathartic discharge, while its rejection by several publishers, Simon & Schuster of New York being the most notable, hid the features of his face behind an unabated mask of despair and sealed his adherence to the Swiftian mistrust of humanity. Contemplating in retrospect the story of the novel's publication, we can almost sense that Ignatius's unflattering portrayal as an image of self-degradation is a hypostasis of Toole's self-mockery.

In an age of no positive certainties, Ignatius fancies himself to be the genius of Swift's epigraph; his story is a reject's rejection of his rejecters. Unable to achieve anything of some momentum and forever held back by a 'conspiracy of subhumans' – the 'confederacy of dunces' in the epigraph – Ignatius transcends the status of a grotesque jester, fills with resignation, and derives his sole sense of motivation from the pleasure afforded by ridiculing the others, while as a prophetic trickster he offers a revelation of plenitude. Reminding us that 'the satiric vision can border dangerously on profound and helpless despair' (McNeil, 1984-1985, 47), the ending of *Confederacy of Dunces*, beyond the salvific and celebratory nature of the comic justice it revels in, singles out the protagonist as the apt alter ego of his creator, as well as the discomfiting, non sequitur dimension of the human condition.

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CARTOGRAFIIND AMERICA: JOCURILE VIDEO
OPEN WORLD ÎNTRE ESCAPISM ŞI SUBVERSIUNE

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Abstract: Just like any other product of media culture, video games are vessels for cultural and social meaning. Despite their seeming gratuity, these texts make a political statement on what truly matters in today's society. Video games are a space of liberty and subversion which challenges mainstream discourse while offering alternative readings of reality.

Grand Theft Auto IV, Liberty City is a game about social relations within a Darwinian world of free initiative, an ironic replica of Neoliberal America where the strongest and the most intrepid have the upper hand. It follows the story of Niko Bellic, a self made man, as he strives to pursue the American Dream. The hero goes deep into the obscure criminal underworld, making his way to the top of the social ladder by illegal means.

The game is a complex allegory based on consistent allusions to social relations that structure reality.

Keywords: *open world* video games, pleasure, subversion, frontiers, America

Ca orice produs al culturii media, jocurile video sunt purtătoare ale unor înţelesuri culturale şi sociale: în ciuda aparentei lor gratuităţi, aceste texte fac o declaraţie politică despre ceea ce contează cu adevărat în societatea în care trăim.

Fiind forme de sublimare a realităţii, aceste materializări ale culturii populare pot fi interpretate ca poveşti mitologice[1] prin intermediul cărora cultura contemporană, răsfrântă autotelic, explică a serie de aspecte esenţiale ale mecanismului său de funcţionare. Pe de o parte, ele servesc validării, întăririi culturii dominante, îndeplinind o funcţie pedagogică: aceea de a ne învăţa care sunt cele mai importante valori, care este limita dintre bine şi rău, care sunt

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[1] Interpretăm mitul dintr-o perspectivă apropiată utilizării date de Roland Barthes în *Mitologii*, acolo unde acest concept e folosit pentru a descrie procesul prin care „orice obiect din lume trece de la o existenţă închisă, mută, la o stare orală, deschisă aproprierii societăţii". (n.n.)

comportamentele acceptabile şi care este structura relaţiilor de putere în societatea capitalistă patriarhală.

Pe de altă parte, în contrast cu funcţia lor propedeutică, jocurile video sunt şi un spaţiu al libertăţii şi subversiunii, care contestă discursul dominant şi oferă lecturi alternative ale realităţii.

Dualitatea lor decurge din statutul ambiguu al culturii populare a căror expresie sunt şi din ambivalenţa recunoscută a jocului ca formă culturală, care e, în acelaşi timp, un laborator pentru socializarea individului, dar şi un spaţiu al gratuităţii, libertăţii şi chiar al contestării normelor.

Grand Theft Auto IV, Liberty City este un joc despre socializare într-o lume darwiniană a liberei iniţiative, care este o replică ironică a Americii neoliberale în care primează dreptul celui mai puternic şi intrepid. Scopul esenţial al acestui joc video este acumularea de capital, prin orice mijloace, care să asigure eroului accesul la bunuri, la servicii şi la un statut social superior.

E povestea care îl are în centru pe Niko Bellic, un imigrant est-european proaspăt debarcat din cala unei nave în tărâmul făgăduinţei, un *self made man* cu un trecut încărcat, portretizat în acţiunea sa de îndeplinire a visului american. Vindecându-se de orice iluzie care îl însoţise în *Lumea nouă*, eroul se orientează rapid, după ce lucrează o vreme ca şofer de taxi la firma vărului său, şi se aventurează cu abilitate prin hăţişul obscur al criminalităţii organizate din Liberty City.

Deşi butaforie, înscenare îngroşată adesea până la caricatură, *GTA IV* are ca principal reper America şi valorile sale, iar Liberty City este o replică ficţională metonimică destul de transparentă a New-York-ului contemporan. Descriind traseul infracţional al eroului, autorii jocului oferă în sinopsis-ul de pe ultima copertă a discului o primă definiţie a *visului american*: „Bine ai venit în Liberty City! Ce mai înseamnă visul american astăzi? Pentru Niko Bellic, abia venit din Europa, este speranţa de a scăpa de propriul trecut. Pentru vărul său, Roman, este viziunea că împreună se vor îmbogăţi în Liberty City, poarta către tărâmul tuturor oportunităţilor. Cum se afundă în datorii şi sunt atraşi în subteranele lumii criminale de o serie de persoane fără scrupule, hoţi şi sociopaţi, ei descoperă că realitatea este foarte diferită de vis într-un oraş care idolatrizează banii şi statutul şi care este raiul pentru cei ce au şi un coşmar pentru cei care nu au."[2]

Jocul este, în esenţă, povestea romanţată despre cum individul lipsit de resurse economice şi culturale, trăitor într-o lume care glorifică posesia de bunuri şi un stil de viaţă opulent, găseşte mijloace alternative pentru a-şi satisface dorinţele, croindu-şi drum cu inventivitate infracţională spre vârful piramidei sociale.

Mediul experienţei ludice devine realitatea cu mii de feţe a spaţiului citadin care îşi găseşte ca emblemă metafora *labirintului* şi care înseamnă, printre altele, şi o anatomizare a cotidianului: spaţiul e trupul care trebuie cucerit, posedat, domesticit. Asemănător oarecum *Lolitei* lui Vladimir Nabokov,

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[2] www.rockstargames.com/iv

în care o nimfă aparent naivă se lasă sedusă de o Europă experimentată şi perversă, *GTA IV* este istoria simbolică şi răsturnată a cuceririi *Lumii noi*: America, de această dată o matroană versată şi fanată, îl iniţiază pe tânărul imigrant candid. În decorul de beton, asfalt şi sticlă al Liberty City, traversând periferiile mizere şi ajungând până în centrul financiar de lumini şi ispite, se scrie bilgdunsroman-ul, povestea uceniciei alter ego-ului nostru intradiegetic.

Obiect al controverselor şi al dezbaterilor multiple, cauzate mai ales de limbajul explicit, de atitudinea sexistă şi de caracterul profund violent şi antisocial al acţiunilor pe care eroul trebuie să le întreprindă pentru a avansa în joc (furturi de autoturisme, tâlhării, asasinate la comandă, omoruri întâmplătoare sau jafuri armate), *GTA IV* intră, cam din aceleaşi motive, în atenţia cercetătorilor de orientări diferite, de la sociologi interesaţi de efectele violenţei mass-media asupra consumatorilor tineri, la antropologi ai cotidianului, ludologi preocupaţi de aplicarea teoriei jocului, culturologi de factură neomarxistă sau feministe îngrijorate de perpetuarea stereotipurilor de gen.

Jocurile *open-world*, din categoria cărora face parte şi *GTA IV*, sunt seducătoare graţie simulării extrem de convingătoare şi datorită unei structuri narative ramificate, complexe, nelineare. Ele sunt reuşite simulări în trompe-l'oeil ale realităţii, oferind, în limitele închise ale narativei artificiale pe care o configurează, iluzia alegerii libere. Succesul planetar al *GTA IV, Liberty City* se datorează atât caracterului său de univers compensatoriu, reparator al unor frustrări acumulate în lumea reală, cât şi verosimilităţii sale cultivate până la cele mai mici detalii în raport cu realitatea obiectivă.

Realismul şi aluziile permanente la relaţiile care structurează lumea în care trăim fac din *GTA IV* un joc problematic, periculos, pentru că el refuză să îşi traseze net frontierele, păstrând elemente de contact cu lumea reală. Relaţia deranjată dintre „realitate" şi „naraţiunile despre realitate", susţinută prin mijloace retorice variate, amorsează potenţialul exploziv şi contestatar al jocului în discuţie, atribuindu-i o funcţie de critică socială. Jocul proiectează pe retina ecranului veritabile diorame himerice, concurând complexitatea infinitezimală a lumii şi mijlocind reflecţii pe marginea semnificaţiei morale sau existenţiale a lumii de referinţă.

Esenţiale pentru procesul de generare a sensului unei culturi sunt, conform antropologului francez Claude Lévi-Strauss[3], operaţiile structurale pe care el le denumeşte *opoziţii binare*. Aceste opoziţii binare extrem de clare sunt categorii culturale de profunzime prin care oamenii ordonează realitatea, atribuindu-i înţeles şi logică, făcând posibilă trecerea de la haos la ordine, de la inform la formă, de la natură la cultură. Opoziţii naturale, familiare, de genul crud-gătit, uscat-apă, jos-sus organizează metaforic realitatea, fiind folosite prin extrapolare şi generalizare pentru a lămuri, pe baza unor relaţii de analogie, nefamiliarul sau o serie de

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[3] Lévi-Strauss, C., *Mitologice I. Crud şi gătit*, Traducere şi prefaţă de Ion Pânzaru, Editura Babel, Bucureşti, 1995.

concepte abstracte: domestic-sălbatic viaţă-moarte, sacru-profan, masculin-feminin, bine-rău. Aceste categorii trebuie înţelese ca expresii ale lumii sociale care permit interpretarea formelor sociale generale. Pe baza unui transfer de sens de la concret la abstract pe care Lévi-Strauss îl numeşte *logica concretului*, elemente din cea de-a doua categorie, aparţinând culturii, acolo unde operează principiul arbitrarului, al convenţiei umane, sunt făcute să pară naturale şi inevitabile. Cu toate acestea, o serie de categorii ambivalente scapă efortului uman de raţionalizare, dovedind caracteristici care aparţin ambelor categorii opuse binar. Supraîncărcate de semnificaţie, aceste categorii ambigue vor trebui civilizate cumva, prin instituirea unui control, a unor interdicţii sau tabuuri.

Nici ficţiune pe deplin dezangajată, dar nici realitate, nici discurs hegemonic, dar nici act de rezistenţă contra-hegemonică făţişă, jocurile *open-world* din seria *GTA* sunt un tip particular de sistem simbolic care pune sub semnul întrebării claritatea distincţiilor cu care este obişnuită să opereze societatea occidentală. Asemenea şarpelui în cultura iudeo-creştină, porcului la musulmani, sexualităţii în societatea patriarhală, entităţi anomalice considerate impure şi de aceea respinse, *GTA IV* ameninţă, printr-o serie de caracteristici intrinseci pe care le vom enunţa mai jos, sistemul de valori al societăţii contemporane, distincţia dintre bine şi rău, săraci şi bogaţi şi, din acest motiv, este obiectul unei gândiri tabuizante: jocul este interzis minorilor, posedă un sistem de setare care permite edulcorarea unor caracteristici violente ale jocului, cum ar fi sângele victimelor, iar în unele state nord-europene s-a discutat chiar posibilitatea interzicerii sale totale, fapt ce a alimentat controversele indisolubile legate de cenzură şi libertatea de alegere.

Unul dintre conceptele cel mai des invocate în teoria jocului este acela de *cerc magic*. Sintagma i se datorează lui Johan Huizinga[4] şi se referă la caracterul de spaţiu special, separat de lumea reală, al activităţii ludice. Înclinăm să cădem de acord că jocul este altceva decât lumea obişnuită: experienţă simulată a nedeterminării, el reprezintă acţiunea liberă care se desfăşoară în graniţe spaţiale şi temporare proprii, conform unor reguli asumate de toţi jucătorii.

Conceptul de *cerc magic* pare să se aplice cu uşurinţă şi în cazul majorităţii jocurilor video. Există însă, o serie de jocuri „problematice"[5], din categoria cărora face parte şi *GTA IV*, care fac excepţie, neîncadrându-se decât parţial în definiţia clasică a genului, din cauza dificultăţii delimitării lor: „Care sunt

[4] Huizinga, Johan, *Homo ludens. Încercare de determinare a elementului ludic al culturii*, Traducere din olandeză de H. R. Radian, Cuvânt înainte de Gabriel Liiceanu, Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2003.

[5] Pargman, Daniel and Jakobsson, Peter, *Do you believe in magic? Computer games in everyday life*, în „European Journal of Cultural Studies", Sage Publications, vol. 11, no. 2, 2008, pp. 225 – 244, disponibil la http://ecs.sagepub.com/content/11/2/225.full.pdf+html, accesat la 19. 12. 2012. Traducerea tuturor citatelor din bibliografia în limba engleză ne aparţine.

aceste jocuri? Cele care ne vin automat în minte sunt diferitele tipuri de jocuri de rol (RPGs) […]. Mai general, orice tip de joc în progres devine problematic. Aceste jocuri care utilizează oraşul ca pe o tablă de joc, devin acut problematice pentru că ele contestă ideea de frontiere clare care definesc un joc în timp şi spaţiu".[6]

Afirmând că *cercul magic* e inoperabil, vom accepta şi faptul că jocurile *open-world* au puterea intelectuală, pedagogică şi politică de a restructura cadrul nostru de interpretare şi rutină existenţială. Caracterul de univers deschis, cu graniţe laxe, nedeterminate, al textului cultural care este *GTA IV* este întreţinut prin câteva procedee de bază care au asigurat caracterul memorabil al jocului.

Un prim procedeu notabil este construirea jocului ca *hiperrealitate*, prin utilizarea unei „interfeţe hipermediate".[7] În cazul nostru, hipermedierea semnifică fenomenul de reprezentare în joc a altor media, fenomen care contribuie la verosimilitatea universului artificial, la sentimentul de imersiune şi la generarea unui mediu cultural stratificat în profunzime.

Jocul, în funcţia sa de simulacru, e definit ca autoreprezentare şi reprezentare, într-o figură a cărei semnificaţie depăşeşte mimesisul ca simplă repetiţie, pentru a deveni re-cunoaştere esenţială a lumii. În *Simulacre şi simulări*, Jean Baudrillard avertizează că realitatea mai este posibilă doar în limitele permise de paradisurile artificiale pe care omul le construieşte: „Simularea încetează să mai fie aceea a unui teritoriu, a unei realităţi referenţiale ori a unei substanţe. Avem de-a face cu producerea unor modele ale realului care nu au origine, nici realitate: ele sunt o hiperrealitate. Teritoriul nu mai precede propria sa hartă şi nici nu-i supravieţuieşte. De acum înainte, harta va fi aceea care va precede teritoriul – harta va fi aceea care să dea naştere teritoriului."[8]

Atunci când nu îndeplineşte misiunile principale, jucătorul are posibilitatea să facă toate acele gesturi mărunte şi reflexe ale cotidianului care în lumea reală au devenit obişnuinţă, descriind relaţia noastră complicată de dragoste şi ură cu lumea tehnologiei, cum ar fi să navigheze pe internet, să piardă vremea în faţa televizorului, să asculte muzică şi dezbateri radiofonice, alegând dintr-o ofertă destul de variată, să folosească telefonul pentru conversaţii şi mesaje text, sau chiar să încerce jocurile arcade instalate în locuri publice ca baruri şi restaurante.

Internetul din *GTA IV* e populat de legături diverse, de pornografie, de mesaje electronice nesolicitate de natură comercială, pentru produse şi servicii dintre cele mai dubioase şi oferă posibilitatea mult mai interesantă de a stabili întâlniri amoroase prin intermediul unor pagini de matrimoniale.

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[6] Pargman, Daniel and Jakobsson, Peter, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

[7] Osborne, Patrick, *Evaluating the Presence of Social Strain in Rockstar Games Grand Theft Auto IV*, în „Studies in Popular Culture", Fall 2011, vol. 34, Issue 1, 2009, p. 117, disponibil la http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/essays/69583943/evaluating-presence-social-strain-rockstar-games-grand-theft-auto-iv, accesat la 19.12.2012.

[8] Baudrillard, Jean, apud Petrescu, Liviu, *Poetica postmodernismului*, Paralela 45, 1998, p. 108.

Telefonul mobil e un accesoriu indispensabil în lumea din Liberty City. El e un important mijloc de socializare în joc, permiţând eroului să păstreze legătura cu prietenii şi clienţii, dar este şi un instrument prin care jucătorul controlează ficţiunea, el putând solicita din agenda telefonică o misiune plătită. Această inovaţie revoluţionează percepţia despre consumatorii produselor culturale. Aceştia încetează să mai fie nişte receptori pasivi, captivi în labirintul unui scenariu predefinit, ei participă prin deciziile lor în mod liber la construirea lumii jocului şi a semnificaţiei acesteia, devenind astfel coautori.

Această libertate face posibilă cristalizarea în *GTA IV* a unor rudimente de moralitate. Jucătorul are posibilitatea să refuze unele misiuni, să decidă dacă să asasineze o ţintă sau să-i permită să dispară din oraş, să aleagă între două misiuni concurente, pe principiul terţului exclus, fiecare opţiune având consecinţe în configuraţia ulterioară a jocului. Mai mult, datorită arhitecturii sale narative ramificate, *GTA IV* oferă un final deschis, cu două variante posibile.

Printr-un mecanism voit grosolan de punere în abis, funcţia radioului, televiziunii şi muzicii în *GTA IV* poate fi şi aceea de a cultiva „maniera în care jucătorii înţeleg locuri din lumea reală, în care se raportează la evenimente politice şi istorice"[9]. Staţiile de televiziune locale furnizează un flux neîntrerupt de reclame care recomandă achiziţionarea unor produse costisitoare, filme care abordează cu umor vulgar probleme ale actualităţii ca imperialismul cultural şi militar american, homosexualitatea, eugenia. O emisiune cu titlul „Sunt bogat!", construită ca un testimonial al celor care au reuşit în viaţă, promovează cu ostentaţie valorile materialismului. Fantasme strălucitoare ale societăţii de consum, maşini sport, bărci de mare viteză, case impozante, femei trofeu defilează hipnotic pe ecran ca semne elocvente ale confirmării sociale şi virilităţii împlinite.

La fel ca televiziunea, radioul inundă spaţiul sonor al jocului cu producţii muzicale redundante ale culturii maselor şi cu publicitate agresivă, ce parodiază campaniile unor firme consacrate. Spre exemplu, FLEECA, o companie de credit din Liberty City, vinde cu mândrie servicii financiare sub sloganul ultimativ: „FLEECA. E timpul să plăteşti!".

Numele autoturismelor care defilează ispititor pe străzile Liberty City, ca nişte imense turme de rumegătoare, fac aluzie la mărci consacrate în lumea reală: Feroci, Coquette, Perennial. Automobilul are o certă valoare simbolică: el ocupă un loc aparte în mitologia Americii, conotând victoria asupra spaţiului, o dimensiune de putere, aventură şi transcendenţă.

Construirea jocului ca hipertext complex „prin reprezentarea spaţiului material în spaţiul virtual (sau invers), modifică metafora culturală a frontierei în aşa măsură încât spaţiile *digital* şi *material* încetează să mai fie distincte, influenţându-se reciproc până la dizolvare. Consecinţa acestei disoluţii este

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[9] Osborne, Patrick, *op. cit.,* p. 124.

pericolul ca jocurile video să influenţeze acţiunile din lumea reală [...]".[10] Entitate hibridă şi anomalică, *GTA IV* poate fi interpretat ca text opoziţional care pune în discuţie caracterul artificial şi injust al raporturilor de putere în societatea occidentală, acolo unde *a fi* tinde să fie înlocuit complet de *a poseda.*

Un alt procedeu, prin care *GTA IV* suspendă distanţa dintre ficţiune şi lumea concretă, se referă la caracterul realist, extrem de coerent al culturii pe care jocul o generează. De la primele secvenţe ale aventurii sale, jucătorul se mişcă şi respiră într-o atmosferă culturală: pietonii îşi scot umbrelele atunci când plouă, diferitele mărci de maşini au performanţe inegale, cartierele mărginaşe sunt inundate de resturi şi au străzile peticite, oamenii periferiilor îşi omoară vremea strânşi în grupuri pe scările exterioare ale vreunui imobil, în timp ce locuitorii din centru fac jogging în parcuri aerisite şi vizitează magazine scumpe.

Se ridică întrebarea dacă *GTA IV, Liberty City* posedă cu adevărat o cultură. Un grup de cercetători afiliaţi Universităţii din Dallas sunt de părere că da, putem vorbi în cazul acesta de o lume vie cu o cultură: „Ca principală strategie a jocului, utilizatorul petrece timp învăţând cultura locală a oraşului. Cultura poate fi definită ca informaţie transmisă social care dirijează şi reglează comportamentul uman astfel încât individul să poată supravieţui şi să se poată reproduce (...) Deşi e ficţional, universul din *GTA IV* este foarte asemănător lumii reale. În viaţa reală, când vizitatorii intră într-o cultură străină, ei explorează. Interacţionează cu locuitorii. Aproximează cine le poate servi îndeplinirii unui scop, cum funcţionează interacţiunile umane şi care sunt consecinţele unor acţiuni."[11]

De la gesturi banale ca evitarea maşinilor în trafic, folosirea trenului şi a metroului, ocolirea pietonilor, cumpărarea alimentelor, plata taxei la bariera de pe autostradă şi până la învăţarea ideologiei mai complexe a acestei lumi şi la înţelegerea valorilor şi relaţiilor care-i structurează microuniversul, *GTA IV* spune istoria unei socializări: a avatarului, dar şi a jucătorului, care trăieşte prin procură experienţa altfel inaccesibilă a imersiunii într-un mediu cultural realist. Se poate spune şi că activitatea ludică în spaţiul virtual e o formă de bovarism. Călătoria în lumea generată artificial a jocului e un surogat mai ieftin al turismului autentic, care, la rândul său, era varianta desacralizată a pelerinajelor religioase din Evul Mediu.

Socializarea cu prietenii din joc reprezintă o activitate necesară, chiar dacă mare consumatoare de timp. Ieşirile la bowling, biliard, restaurant sau spectacole diverse reprezintă liantul care cimentează relaţiile sociale şi îţi garantează un sprijin în momentele cruciale ale jocului. În funcţie de disponibilitatea de a răspunde solicitărilor, primeşti aprecieri sau, dimpotrivă, îţi

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[10] *Idem*, pp. 123-124.

[11] Marjorie A. Zielke et al., *Serious Games for Immersive Cultural Training: Creating a Living World*, în „IEEE Computer Society", IEEE Computer Society Press, Los Alamitos, CA, USA, March/April 2009, pp. 49-51, disponibil la http://www.computer.org/csdl/mags/cg/2009/02/mcg2009020049-abs.html, accesat la 19. 12. 2012.

degradezi statutul prieteniei. Întâlnirile cu prietenele recompun ritualul curtării, în care fiecare detaliu, de la hainele pe care le porţi, la maşina pe care o conduci şi la locul în care le scoţi în oraş e decisiv în evoluţia relaţiei.

Când jocul este conectat la actualitate prin atâtea strategii de retorică intertextuală, jucătorul tinde să considere jocul ca aparţinând mai degrabă lumii obiective decât universului ficţional. Efectul de real întreţinut prin contaminarea lumii fanteziei şi a lumii existenţei cotidiene are drept consecinţă circulaţia facilă a *regulilor jocului* între cele două universuri. Geografia celor două lumi se suprapune parţial, iar jucătorul are misiunea suplimentară de a trasa, pe baza aluziilor culturale permanente pe care i le furnizează jocul şi conform propriei experienţe, harta acestor concordanţe.

De altfel, jocul conţine permanent într-un colţ al ecranului o hartă a oraşului care serveşte orientării şi pe care sunt trecute repere de interes sub travestiul onomastic al cărora jucătorul avizat este invitat să recunoască obiectivele iconice ale New-York-ul zilelor noastre: Middle Park, Statue of Happiness, National Union of Contemporary Art. Supralicitând parcă această retorică a corespondenţelor, lumea jocului se întinde tentacular, ca una dintre fiinţele imaginare ale lui Jorge Luis Borges, materializându-se şi luând în posesie realitatea: jocul vine către jucător însoţit de o hartă fizică a oraşului şi de o hartă a traseelor metroului, ultima emisă chiar de Autoritatea de Transport din Liberty City.

Desfăşurarea jocului poate să sugereze un univers cuprins de anomie, în care fărădelegea pare să primeze. De fapt, în pofida complexităţii şi design-ului său de „ladă de nisip", care oferă jucătorului independenţa de a se plimba pe unde doreşte şi de a ucide pe cine doreşte, narativa artificială care este jocul *GTA IV* e un univers mult mai coerent, mai rotund şi mai funcţional decât lumea din care noi înşine facem parte. Regulile care garantează succesul jucătorului sunt simple: să furi, jefuieşti, asasinezi cu suficientă abilitate încât să nu te prindă forţele de ordine sau să nu fii ucis în schimbul de focuri. Eroul nu trăieşte drama alegerilor dificile, nu se frământă ce meserie să profeseze, devine în mod natural asasin la comandă, pentru că jocul nu-i oferă altă posibilitate. Toate acţiunile şi replicile sunt semnificative putând fi interpretate folosind codul ficţiunii. Pe de altă parte, sensul narativei naturale care este viaţa noastră, ne scapă de cele mai multe ori, copleşindu-ne de anxietate.

Tema fundamentală a *GTA IV* este, în mod neaşteptat, realul, mai exact America. Activează în joc aceleaşi resorturi care pun în mişcare discursul cotidianului, textul purtând în profunzime o dimensiune politică şi socială. Şi până la urmă ce mai reprezintă, în mod concret, America şi *visul american*?

Pentru Roman, vărul ratat al eroului, America reprezintă o viziune exaltată: „Două femei! Tărâmul oportunităţilor!", dezumflată aproape imediat de constatarea amară: „În America ai nevoie de bani să faci orice!" (*GTA IV*). Pentru acelaşi personaj, caracter slab care trece cu foarte mare uşurinţă de la cea mai neagră deznădejde la optimismul contagios, America înseamnă „fast-food,

combustibil ieftin, sâni falşi" şi credinţa mistică potrivit căreia „există o scurtătură pentru orice aici, doar că trebuie să o găseşti. Aici orice este posibil. Cred că au pus ceva în apă, omule, pentru că tot ce simt este doar optimism pur!" (*GTA IV*). Pentru Boby, un personaj episodic, „Visul american e un basm. Nu a fost luat niciodată literal." (*GTA IV*) Pentru Niko Bellic, convertit la cinism, „America reală e reprezentată de hipermagazine şi obezitatea clinică." „Totul este fals aici. Sânii nu sunt adevăraţi şi oportunităţile nu sunt oportunităţi. Dacă le urmăreşti, sfârşeşti într-o datorie atât de mare încât vei fi un sclav pentru tot restul vieţii." (*GTA IV*)

Funcţia ludică poate fi interpretată din cel puţin două perspective, care oricât de diferite ar fi, sunt perfect compatibile în contextul aglutinant al culturii populare pe care o exprimă: *joaca* gratuită devine *joc* angajat, care e fie act pedagogic de socializare, căci jucându-se, individul intră în rol, participă la construirea sinelui sub forma unui divertisment, fie act de revoltă, promisiune a unei eliberări.

În prima sa interpretare, jocul poate fi văzut ca reflectare a culturii dominante, care e rezervorul de simboluri, mituri, coduri, imagini, figuri care alimentează mentalităţi, comportamente sociale, opinii politice. Această cultură este responsabilă de crearea tiparelor de gen, de rasă, de clasă, contribuind la modelarea viziunii generale despre lume. Tot ea încurajează individualismul. Pune semnul egalităţii între virilitate şi reuşita socială şi exonerează societatea de responsabilitatea nereuşitei personale, învăţându-ne că cea mai mare libertate a persoanei e aceea de a acumula capital.

Realitatea restricţionează însă, pentru cea mai mare parte a populaţiei, accesul la stilul de viaţă pe care discursul dominant îl promovează. De aceea, în a doua interpretare, jocul devine discurs alternativ prin intermediul căruia oamenii subordonaţi şi privaţi de resurse îşi construiesc propriile înţelesuri ale realităţii sociale. Din această perspectivă, violenţa jocurilor devine o formă perfect justificată de obţinere a bunurilor pe care viaţa reală nu ţi le oferă.

Potrivit profesorului australian John Fiske, cultura populară oferă mijloace de evadare de sub controlul social fiind „produsă în relaţie cu structurile de dominare. Această relaţie poate lua două forme: aceea a rezistenţei şi aceea a evaziunii."[12]

E posibil ca atitudinea frecventă de îngrijorare legată de proliferarea comportamentelor antisociale şi chiar dispreţ care înconjoară considerarea jocurilor video să fie generată de sentimentul că această practică ameninţă nucleul valorilor în care credem.

Jocurile video contravin valorilor sociale circumscrise eticii protestante a muncii, „sunt o pierdere de timp şi bani, distrag de la învăţătură şi muncă, creează dependenţă", sunt practici care slăbesc discursul dominant, pentru că timpul petrecut pentru plăcerea proprie este, din acest punct de vedere, „prost cheltuit".[13]

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[12] Fiske, John, *Reading the popular*, Routledge, London and New York, 2005, p. 2.
[13] Fiske, John, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

Violenţa omniprezentă şi ironia corozivă din *GTA IV* pun la îndoială caracterul natural al sistemului de clasificări al societăţii contemporane, dovedind cât de dificilă e ştergerea diferenţelor şi câştigarea consensului hegemonic într-o lume în care experienţa de viaţă a indivizilor contrazice constant versiunea oficială despre adevăr: „Pentru subordonaţi, de obicei tineri utilizatori, jocurile oferă oportunitatea de a rezista controlului social şi prin abordarea unui comportament cultural alternativ. Dezaprobarea societăţii este o parte esenţială a înţelesului acestei atitudini şi a plăcerii pe care ea o oferă."[14]

Înainte ca acţiunea să se sfârşească, jucătorul primeşte pe telefon un text enigmatic, ca din partea colectivului *GTA IV*, care cristalizează cu emfază căutată filosofia acestui univers: „Călătorule, Lărgeşte-ţi orizonturile… călătoreşte pe calea ascunsă care-ţi va permite să-ţi descătuşezi spiritul şi să cunoşti întregul potenţial al splendorii pământene care este dreptul tău! Aceste secrete îţi vor permite să citeşti printre rândurile fizice şi logice ale societăţii. Omul încearcă să te ţintuiască jos. A construit lumea ca pe o închisoare. Eliberează-te! Ţi-am arătat calea, păşeşte pe ea! Simte adevărul! Trăieşte libertatea" (*GTA IV*).

Sub aparenta dezangajare ludică, jocul analizat pune în circulaţie comentarii sociale pe care nu le mai poate expune decât în registru *jos*, al satirei, în sensul că atât lumii imaginare, dar şi conştiinţei jucătorului le lipseşte acea candoare aurorală, care acum nu mai poate fi acoperită decât de simulacre.

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[14] *Ibidem*.

'THE EVENING REDNESS IN THE WEST,' IN THE EAST, AND WHEREVER NECESSARY

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Abstract: Cormac McCarthy's novel, *Blood Meridian*, appears to have more in common with classical Gothic fiction than with classical Westerns. The baffling violence as well as the undecided border between the abused and the abuser, the moral and the immoral, good and evil, death and life, etc. are as many reasons for reading the novel violently, for extracting meaning at all costs, no matter how far-fetched the conclusions and how disparate the arguments. We impose on the text an interpretation that fits our own desire and draw a parallel with Stoker's equally traumatizing *Dracula*. Such a reading is but a replica of the random and senseless violence of the text, a violence that is not attached to logic and is not regulated by method.

Keywords: Cormac McCarthy, *Blood Meridian*, borderlands, frontier, Western, imperialism, Gothic, *Dracula*, violence, capital spread

> '… the sky is reddening in the east and the dawn is close.
> We must work tomorrow!'
> (*Dracula* by Bram Stoker)

Though difficult to be integrated within a definite category of prose writers, Cormac McCarthy is unanimously viewed today as one of the most significant contemporary American authors, if not the greatest of them all, as Harold Bloom and many other important critics depict him enthusiastically. Stephen Shaviro, for instance, hails him as the 'greatest [American] living author: nomadic wanderer, lucid cartographer of an inescapable delirium' (2009, 11) while Alan Bourassa describes *Blood Meridian* as 'the most powerful American novel of the second half of the twentieth century.' (2009, 117) The fact is that McCarthy has managed to do what only great writers do,

that is to divide his readers into two equally fanatic parties: those who go into raptures over his writings and those who detest them neurotically. The polarization of his audience is furthermore stimulated by his atypical artistic status and self-imposed social exile, which was almost complete until recently, when, to his devotees' horror, he has accepted the invitation to one of Oprah's shows. For a couple of decades the writer's name has been associated with that of the Santa Fe Institute and his affiliation with a unconventional scientific think tank made up of brilliant sociologists, mathematicians, physicists, chemists, etc. has added some more mistiness to his aura of a postmodernist hermit and eccentric sage. He has constantly declined literary awards or simply refused to collect them and preferred to keep himself 'as invisible as some desert prophet living among burning, barren latitudes of the Southwest.' (Graham, 2011, 116) Both extremist appreciation and loathing are for the most part due to his work's similarity, in terms of style, focus, and atmosphere, to those of the greatest North-American writers, such as Poe, Twain, Melville, Hemingway or Faulkner. Harold Bloom declares that 'no other living American novelist, not even Pynchon, has given us a book as strong and memorable as *Blood Meridian* … The fulfilled renown of *Moby Dick* and *As I Lay Dying* is augmented by *Blood Meridian* since McCarthy is the worthy disciple of both Melville and Faulkner. *Blood Meridian* is the ultimate Western not to be surpassed.' (2009, 1)

In a similar tone, Richard Gray compares the reading experience of McCarthy's novels with a stroll through a museum of English prose styles: with, say, sentences imitating Hemingway's gift for simple words and connectives modulating into recollection of the old, ineradicable rhythms of Faulknerian speech. There are echoes of Melville and Eliot here, but also of Erskine Caldwell and the rough-and-ready folktales of the frontier. The great tradition of Greek tragedy is present, in shadows, but so too is the fiction of Zane Gray. (2004, 619)

Once more, readers tend to view such correlations as either factual or blasphemous. Apart from his correspondence with some of the greatest American writers, there is something conceivably universal in relation to his prose style, something that makes his writings straightforward, therefore gratifying without delay, yet fiercely unfathomable. One possible explanation for this paradox may be found in the complexity and hybridity of McCarthy's work that can be 'simultaneously funny, brutal, and gruesomely violent, often within the same novel, chapter, or passage. (Walsh, 2009, xxi)

The literary province that McCarthy colonizes in his first novels – *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973) and *Suttree* (1979) – largely overlaps the literal geographical areas surrounding Maryville, Tennessee, in the Southeastern United States and in the neighbourhood of

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Knoxville, where he spent most of his childhood. The writer later settled in El Paso, Texas, then in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and so did the setting of his fiction. *Blood Meridian* (1985) is the novel that marks McCarthy's departure from the South and his staggering meanders in the region of the Western frontier. The novel 'shifts the focus from the South to the West, a change of territory flagged not just by this refocusing of locations, but of genre, too.' (Graulund, 2010, 58) This restless exploration will be continued in his 'Border Trilogy' consisting of *All the Pretty Horses* (1992), *The Crossing* (1994), and *Cities of the Plain* (1998).

Blood Meridian or The Evening Redness in the West is thus placed at a certain border within McCarthy's fiction writing, indicating a turning point in his literary career and a repositioning of his prose writing at the border of American Frontier fiction. It is anything but a traditional Western story with its characters who show no interest whatsoever in rescuing the innocents, in the restitution of rights, redemption, and restoration of order. Unlike the traditional Western, which depicts the West as a 'prelapsarian garden and space of retreat for the American hero' (Kollin, 2001, 562), *Blood Meridian* is a postmodernist account of the grotesquely violent conquest of America, a meta-Western that deflates the classic quest of the lone rider only to parodically reinstate the myth of masculinity and the supremacy of the white race. The frontier theme is but an opportunity to debate such alarms of Western postmodernity as terrorism and the return to tribalism. The western territory is desacralized to such an extent as to make the Western itself a long-forgotten legend. As Forrest Robinson emphasizes, 'geography alone doth not a Western novel make.' (2001, 168) Contaminated by the style of other 'Southern' writers, such as Peter Taylor, Harry Crews, Robert Olen Butler or Barry Hannah, McCarthy's novel overflows the set boundaries of the Western and simultaneously displaces the Southern novel through its nightmarish amalgamation of gothic mood, sanguinary masculinity, and historical accuracy. *Blood Meridian* is a text about borders and a border text that 'seems more concerned with what lies beyond boundaries than with what is contained by them.' (Søfting, 1999, 15) That is why many readers who have attempted to decode its message failed while trying to reduce it to one interpretation only or to make it work within logical frames of meaning production. Georg Guillemin remarks: 'there is no way to retell the novels of Cormac McCarthy in a way that would make them more accessible, less multifaceted.' (2004, 142)

McCarthy's novel is based on rigorous investigation of both historical archives and collective memory and tells the story of a gang of scalp hunters led by John Glanton, a recurrent character in many stories of the Southwest. The gang includes a variety of people from all walks of life and all ethnicities of the region: a former priest, a judge, a black man and a white man bearing the same name, John Jackson, soldiers and farmers, Anglos, Indians, Mexicans, etc. The

historical background is that of the late 1840s, immediately after the Mexican War, when the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua decided to put an end to the numerous Indian raids and hired gangs of Anglos and peon guerilla bands for the horrid job of killing and scalping the 'invaders'. Scalps were used as proof of killing the enemy, as ghastly receipts for carnage. 'In the absence of instantaneous electronic communication, in the absence of a photographic craft streamlined enough to travel with the band of hunters, *evidence* of the death of an Indian rested on a hunter's producing a scalp.' (Arnold and Luce, 1999, 125) The frequent clashes within the frontier area did not engage Indians and Indian hunters only. 'The conflict existing in and among the states of Texas, Chihuahua, New Mexico, and Arizona in 1849 and 1850 involved many peoples: Mexicans, both peon and military; US Army troops; Texans, both Ranger and civilian; Comanches and Apaches; and Anglo gold-rush travelers on the Gila Trail.' (Sepich, 1999, 14) The universal hostility, the sense that everybody is everybody else's enemy, is one of the few stable characteristics of this ever-changing borderland.

Most of the historical details that McCarthy has exploited in his novel are derived from the Union Army general Samuel Chamberlain's memoirs that were discovered in 1956 and serialized in *Life* during the same summer. *My Confession: Recollections of a Rogue* was immediately published in book form and the stories told by the onetime member of the real-life Glanton gang caused a shockwave in literary and cultural studies. It was here that McCarthy discovered some references to the enigmatically omnipresent and omnipotent figure of Judge Holden, also to some other characters and events described in his novel. As Kenneth Lincoln underlines, apart from Chamberlain's chronicle, McCarthy most certainly explored John Woodhouse Audubon's journal dealing with the same period of time as well as Cpt. Thomas Mayne Reid's *The Scalp-Hunters* (1851). (2009, 79) Other sources include Douglas Martin's *Yuma Crossing*, Arthur Woodward's *Feud on the Colorado*, John Russell Bartlett's narrative of the borders, etc. Thus, the plot of *Blood Meridian* 'hangs on history' (Ellis, 2006, 87), with the Glanton gang historically attested as 'indiscriminate in whom they scalped (their victims often included mestizo peasants), yet who were part of the official attempt to eradicate Native American Indians for the sake of Mexican townships.' (Ibid.)

The novel is a topsy-turvy Bildungsroman that documents the "evolution" of the main character, the Kid, a runaway boy from Tennessee who joins the Glanton gang of scalpers after he has reached the border zone between Mexico and Texas. He thus enters a world of unimaginable bloodshed, getting involved in territorial combats among Anglos, Mexicans and various Native American tribes, in 'cattle drives and horse thefts, conflicting land claims, gratuitous violence, and the destruction of the native population.' (Slethaug, 2000, 131) The novel follows the

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protagonist along with the scalp hunters into their turbulent and gory adventure in this undecided territory of the frontier until the moment when the Glanton gang is massacred by the Yuma Indians after they have been tracked down by the Mexican forces and cornered in a fort. Few of the gang survive; among them Toadvine, the Judge, and the Kid. *Blood Meridian* concludes with the Kid's baffling assassination by Judge Holden in the winter of 1878.

The way in which the Kid is killed some twenty years after the massacre at the Yuma ferry underlines for one last time the idea that human life is inconsequential when compared to the larger context of humankind and its daring effort to survive and prosper. The undignified and doubtful way in which he is eliminated paradoxically clarifies the long series of atrocities the Kid has witnessed or taken part in. What actually seems to matter is the territory under dispute and not its provisional owners, inhabitants, and claimants for the reason that McCarthy's prose enacts what Shaviro names 'an erotics of landscape' (2009, 24), with the borderland as the actual protagonist of the story. The scenery of wilderness and unpredictability is associated with femininity and woman's body. McCarthy's characters 'cross and recross the landscape, dissolving and reconfiguring what might once seemed a series of static oppositions: civilized and savage, past and present, South and west, town and wilderness ...' (Gray, 2004, 619) Count Dracula gives Jonathan Harker a similar description of his own land – a land that is defined in the Gothic novel as 'the whirlpool of European races' (Stoker, 2011, 34), placed at the crossroads of imperialist desires, also of persistent violence:

It is a wonder that we were a conquering race; that we were proud; that when the Magyar, the Lombard, the Avar, the Bulgar, or the Turk poured his thousands on our frontiers, we drove them back? (…) who, when he was beaten back, came again, and again, and again, though he had to come alone from the bloody field where his troops were being slaughtered? (Stoker, 2011, 34-5)

Stoker makes the abhorrent figure of the vampire stand for the so-called "Eastern Question", mainly through the manipulation of history. The apprehension that Count Dracula creates in late-Victorian England reflects the anxieties of an Empire to which the author belonged. East Europeans are depicted as "primitive", in definite need of restrictive government, of either Ottoman or Austrian nature. In fact, the invading vampire is but a metaphor for Britain's dread of "reverse colonization", of their own borders being erased by the recently liberated Balkan peoples. Yet, desire and greed lurk in the ending of the Gothic novel where we can see several Westerners correcting a deviant Easterner, wiping out his identity in an anticlimactic manner. There is no greatness in their deed since this is a cold-blooded murder, one of the many that are meant to fix imperfections and level asperities.

The borderland that McCarthy's novel portrays has nothing of the greatness of Frederick Jackson Turner's idealistic depiction of 1893. If Turner's speech – "The Significance of the American Frontier in American History" - delivered at Chicago's Columbian Exposition, demonstrates that the 'series of shifts westwards had taught Americans how to find themselves and claim their country' (Jones, 2009, 39), here, in McCarthy's novel, the borderland is not such an epic and spectacular area of national identification, nor is the plot a rewritten myth of creation for the American nation. In Turner's traditional view, the conquest of the American West gave life to the American 'dominant individualism' and democracy (1921, 37). New Western historians speak instead of barbarism and mass murder that have been cloaked by historians and cultural critics in such paradigms as "emancipation", "Americanization", the consolidation of the "American character," and so on. (Ibid.) As a rule, the writers and movie-makers of Westerns have participated in the aestheticizing of what Bill Brown names 'the genocidal foundation of the nation.' (1997, 31) Cormac McCarthy does not join this enterprise of myth-making as he does not send his white protagonist to the borderland and does not make him pass through a series of brutal yet revealing confrontations in the wilderness only to bring him back "home", that is into some orderly community, as a new-American. On the contrary, what he infers in *Blood Meridian* surpasses even the conclusions of contemporary Western academia that no longer grant authority to Turner's theory. More specifically, the novel does not deal with the new nation's westward expansion on the American continent as the West is for McCarthy rather a fictional and symbolic landscape of imperialist expansion on the whole.

The Frontier that McCarthy describes is both American and universal. So is violence. Mark Bubsy refers to this allegorical dimension of the novel when he writes that the border is 'a metaphor for a complex and oxymoronic melding of nihilism and optimism, good and evil, illusion and reality,' also mentioning the ongoing dialectics of 'the forces of life and death, end and beginning.' (2000, 227) Undeniably, the borderland is an ambivalent place of inbetwenness, a location where differences are dislocated, where even the most impossible amalgamation is made possible, where races and nationalities intermingle, and languages fuse in a terrible cacophony of violence. Susan Kollin remarks:

In *Blood Meridian*, McCarthy produced his own brand of regional hybridity, showing the Western as deeply dependent on the contributions and concerns of southern literature. Bringing elements of Southern grotesque to bear on Western themes and conventions, McCarthy added a grimmer, bleaker vision to the genre, providing what appeared to be the definitive statement on manifest Destiny. (2001, 558)

The generic bleakness and structural indecision make *Blood Meridian* akin to classical Gothic fiction, too, and especially to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

This, and blood. Blood defies order and logic in both novels. In McCarthy's novel, a character wonders in his broken English at the sickening carnage, which Harold Bloom considers to be neither 'gratuitous, [nor] redundant' as it 'belonged to the Mexico-Texas borderlands in 1849-1850' (2009, 2):

This country is give much blood. This Mexico. This is thirsty country. The blood of a thousand Christs. (1987, 102)

The Kid, just like Jonathan Harker in *Dracula*, is poised in between 'two cultures or in that nether region in which a border is caught between existence and obliteration… There are other borders that the book seems to be blurring: the line between life and death, past and present, waking and dream worlds.' (Hage, 2010, 51) If in *Dracula* the protagonist goes east, in *Blood Meridian* the Kid goes west. Yet, geographical direction is not of utmost importance in such writings that do not meditate on the history of a certain region, but on the writing of the history of such a region and, above all, on the writing of history in general. Both protagonists go in the direction of capital circulation; they represent the embryos of capitalism implanted in areas that are ideologically depicted as unruly and degenerate. Thus vilified, the territory is prepared to be corrected, in actual fact assimilated. Each and every act of imperial expansion is rehearsed in ideological battles and symbolic attacks against the contested territory and its inhabitants. As William Robbins writes in *Colony and Empire* (1994), 'success and failure in the American West, after all, were components of larger processes in the expansion and development of capitalism.' (13-4)

The borderland as a space of liminality is a quarantine of bloodshed and bloodletting that are meant to ensure the transfusion of the values of the dominant culture. The mélange of languages, which is accurately reproduced in the texture of McCarthy's novel (dialogues in Spanish or fragments in any other language are not provided translation so as to make the reader immerse directly in that linguistic disorder), paves the way for the incorporation of ethnic diversity because, as Žižek points out, linguistic distinctiveness, what he names the 'wall of language', is that 'which forever separates me from the abyss of another subject.' (2008, 73) That is why Count Dracula tries hard to gain knowledge of the language of England through 'a vast number of English books and volumes of magazines and newspapers (…) of the most varied kind – history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law.' (Stoker, 2011, 23) Linguistic competence is of chief importance because once the claimed territory capitulates, the border turns from a place of conflict into one of cultural and commercial exchange, from a line of separation into a line of communication. This is what happens in *Dracula* and this is what we are made to believe is going to happen in *Blood Meridian*. Once Dracula, the vampire, is killed in a non-heroic struggle which resembles more a gang vendetta and less a

sacred crusade, Transylvania is no longer a territory under dispute but an object of cartography. Similarly, the Kid as an eyewitness and agent of change is dispensable in the end of the novel. He is killed in an outside toilet in ways that cannot be described (or they do not deserve to be described anymore). Alan Bourassa comments on the traumatic nature of violence in McCarthy's masterpiece, which he however describes as a natural component and accompaniment in the making of a new world. The critic exposes the Kid as a deficiency in this new-fangled social organization, the one who perhaps knows more than he ought to know, whose testimony would not fit the already written history of the new world. He therefore 'functions at this traumatic point, that which will neither be translated into the terms of the world, nor given a place within it. It is only Judge Holden who recognizes the Kid as the flaw in the fabric of smooth space, this catch in the velocity of the war machine.' (2009, 131) His annihilation is illustrative of what Žižek describes as 'the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism' (2008, 12), which is 'no longer attributable to concrete individuals and their *evil* intentions, but is purely *objective*, systemic, anonymous.' (Ibid.) That is why, Žižek goes on, one perceives the massacre caused by capitalist globalization as 'a result of an *objective* process, which nobody planned and executed…' (2008, 14)

Interpreting *Blood Meridian* through metaphorical lens as a story about universal violence, greed and indispensable sacrifice is nonetheless a violent reading. Yet McCarthy himself draws our attention on the fact that his novel is not about the specific history of a well-defined border - the one between the American West and the Mexican North - when he includes among the novel's epigraphs an item from the *Yuma Daily Sun* debating anthropological evidence of human scalping in what is now Ethiopia and which took place some 300,000 years ago. It is clear that the writer takes up the tropes of scalping and of the US - Mexican border to meditate on the savagery of history and on 'the bloody core of civilizations.' (Hage, 2010, 167) Readers are thus invited to read the novel violently as they are not allowed to 'remain completely aloof from the violence that overwhelms its world.' (Ciuba, 2007, 187) This type of epidermal reading, in which awesome violence and the dread it causes turn readers into reading bodies that palpitate under the vicious whipping of the text, is specific to Gothic fiction, too. The rape, assault, shooting, hanging, slaying, stoning, scalping that the reader witnesses convert him into a voyeur who is no longer innocent and no longer in the position to give verdicts and keep a moral balance. Anyway, Judge Holden, the sadistic philosopher, has already smashed the border between morality and immorality:

Moral law is an invention of the mankind for the disenfranchisement of the powerful in favour of the weak. Historical law subverts it at every turn. (McCarthy, 1985, 250)

As for the Kid, he is similar to the reader or *he is the reader*, at least this is what McCarthy appears to suggest from the very beginning when he describes him as 'a child of God, much like yourself perhaps.' (4) The Gothic text is what Girard would name a 'persecuting text', one that tries to justify abuse, excess, and brutality (1987, 126). *Blood Meridian* takes the same narrative stance as it adopts the perspective of the cruel and the murderous.

Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* appears to have more in common with classical Gothic fiction than with classical Westerns. The baffling violence or 'the lust for blood' (Stoker, 2011, 62) as well as the undecided border between the abused and the abuser, the moral and the immoral, good and evil, death and life, etc. are as many reasons for reading the novel violently, for extracting meaning at all costs, no matter how far-fetched the conclusions and how disparate the arguments. Such a reading is but a replica of the random and senseless violence of the text, a violence that is not attached to logic and is not regulated by method. The reader of *Blood Meridian* turns into a Gothic victim: lured in the blood-stained architecture of the narrative, he 'experiences a collapse of time and space so that only the ceaseless repetition of violence remains foregrounded, enacted in a kind of no-place of desolation.' (Brewton, 2004, 131) The only solution out of this repetitive pattern of violence is through violent reading. This is *lex talioni* of fiction reading.

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II. EXEGEZE

THE ROMANIAN SURREALISM BEFORE THE WAR

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Abstract: This text presents the main aspects of the Romanian surrealism before the Second World War, when it was not yet a homogenous movement with a coherent theoretical doctrine following the pattern imposed by the French leader André Breton. Thus, neither the group formed around the review *unu* ("one") in the late twenties, nor the group formed around the review *Alge* ("Algae") in the early thirties were not called "surrealist", although the texts published by their members were doubtlessly of surrealist inspiration. Therefore, this first stage of the Romanian surrealism can be called "intuitive" in the sense that Maurice Nadeau gave the term in 1964. Also following the model of their French fellows, these first Romanian surrealists became politically engaged after 1933, when they openly sustained the proletarian revolution (the artistic and political revolution became inseparable).

Keywords: surrealism, revolution, poetry

As we know, surrealism was an avant-garde movement born in the late twenties in France under the strict guidance of André Breton (also called "the Pope of surrealism"), and rapidly internationalized. Nevertheless, a common place is the fact that surrealism was much influenced by Dadaism, a radical avant-garde movement in which a major role was played by the Romanian poet Tristan Tzara (who otherwise was to join the future French surrealists Breton, Aragon and Soupault in 1919, and also was to write surrealist poetry after 1929, the most famous example being the poem *L'Homme approximatif* ("The Vague Man", 1931). Meanwhile, Tzara remained in touch with the Romanian avant-garde, which considered him one of its major models. Here it is an extract from *The Vague Man* (our translation)*:*

je parle de qui parle qui parle je suis seul
je ne suis qu'un petit bruit j'ai plusieurs bruits
en moi
un bruit glacé froissé au carrefour jeté sur le
trottoir humide
aux pieds des hommes pressés courant avec
leurs morts

I speak about who speaks who speaks I am alone
I am nothing but a little noise I have several noises in me
a ruffled noise frozen with the crossroads thrown on the wet pavement
at the feet of the people in a hurry running

autour de la mort qui étend ses bras	*with their dead*
sur le cadran de l'heure seule vivante au	*around death which extends its arms*
soleil.	*on the dial of the only hour alive under the*
	sun

In Romania, surrealism began to flourish after 1928, when the first surrealist group coagulated around the review *unu* ("one") directed by the poet Saşa Pană (among the most important contributors were the poets Ilarie Voronca, Geo Bogza, Stephane Roll, Gherasim Luca, the painters Victor Brauner and Jacques Hérold, who were to join the Parisian group of André Breton soon after 1930, Max Hermann Maxy, and also the painter Jules Perahim, who came to settle in Paris long after the war, in 1969). Let us notice that the review was not called "surrealist", but "of literary avant-garde", and, although its director was in permanent contact with Breton and other French surrealists, whom he translated into Romanian and considered as models to a certain extent, his intention was not to copy them, but to create an independent and original movement within the general stylistic framework of the international surrealism. Otherwise, unlike Breton, Saşa Pană had no theoretical ambition, no intention to impose a doctrine in an authoritarian manner, he only tried to set a typical vanguardist *modus vivendi*, which meant total emancipation of the spirit from all social constraints. Of course, this *modus vivendi* also implied the observance of a severe moral code that excluded any compromise with the ethics and values of the bourgeois society. This is how one can explain the "excommunications" of those who were found guilty of having aspired to official consecration, to literary glory, a famous case being the exclusion of the poet Ilarie Voronca from the surrealist group, in 1931. The reason of this radical gesture was, as the poet Stephane Roll (Gheorghe Dinu) pointed out in an article, the fact that Voronca had published "the last treasure of his song" (the volume *Incantations*) "for 40 lei at a bloated and mercenary publishing house"[1] (the "National Culture" Publishing House), an inexcusable mistake to which the endeavors made by the poet to be accepted in the Society of Romanian Writers were added. (Of course, the model of this exclusion were the famous excommunications dictated by Breton, see for example the case of Dali, nicknamed with the ironical anagram "Avida Dollars".) Therefore, this first stage of the Romanian surrealism can be called "intuitive" in the sense that Maurice Nadeau gave the term (see *The History of Surrealism*, 1964).

One of the first things we can notice in the case of surrealist poetry is the existence of an irreducible antinomy between *poetry* and *literature*[2], as the first was considered to be the pure expression of the being, while the second was perceived as an institutionalized (conventional) form, with no ontological value. Inspired by

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[1] Gheorghe Dinu, "Obrazul de cretă" ("The Chalk Face"), in *unu*, Bucharest, no. 40, November 1931.

[2] "Poetry is the opposite of literature", say Breton and Éluard in the collective essay *Notes sur la poésie* (1926).

Verlaine's famous verse: "Et tout le reste est littérature", Paul Valéry had baptized in 1919 the review published by the future surrealists Aragon, Breton and Éluard *Littérature*, exactly with the opposite meaning of *anti-literature*. From that very moment, for surrealists there was but a single gender – lyric – and a single form of literary expression – poetry –, and this lead to the configuration of a unique heterogeneous discourse that mingled the literary species in an amorphous continuum, expression of pure subjectivity. No matter if they produced poetry or criticism, if they wrote in verses or in prose, the surrealists expressed themselves in the same (poetical) manner, and their writing generally kept unchanged its fundamental rhetorical coordinates. The poetic discourse is made entirely of a series of strange images based on involuntary associations between distant, sometimes incongruous realities; therefore, it can be "watched" like a surrealist movie, as it has a visual, a pictorial character, perfect illustration of the principle "ut pictura poesis" (otherwise, it is notorious in the case of surrealism the close relation between poetry and painting, so that many poets illustrated their volumes of poetry with related drawings or paintings).

Perhaps the most gifted poet of this first surrealist generation, Ilarie Voronca wrote a visual poetry based exclusively on luxuriant images coagulated at random, also called for this reason "imagist poetry". Otherwise, Voronca had invented in 1924, together with the painter Victor Brauner, the so-called "painting-poetry", a mixture between poetry and painting following the pattern of the Dadaist collage. His poetic images are born one from another without premeditation, almost automatically, depending exclusively on the poet's momentary state of mind, like in the following example taken from the volume *Nights Bracelet* (1929):

Ilarie Voronca – *Nights Bracelet*

I threw the seine to catch the fish of the colors
The voice is transparent like an egg on the horizon
The box of thought hides in the bushes of the brain
The beaters of the destiny banish it
And memory flows like the blood of a wounded deer
The jaws of the sky clenched on the pastry of light
And how white the ribald blouse of the seas is.

I capture all the images of the world under the crystal of my eyelid
I shake in my hands the spyglass of the moment
The continents wave in my look like the bandages of the nights
With my back towards the forehead of my chin
I gather the necklaces of the air from the unseen the snails of the sounds
I change my heart litmus in the test tube of the verse.

In 1933, Voronca decided to emigrate to France, following Brauner and Hérold's example, who had left for Paris in 1930. Let us notice the fact that

Voronca, like Victor Brauner, Jacques Herold, Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun, Dolfi Trost, and others, was a Jew, and the political context in Romania at that time was not favorable to the Jews at all. In France, Voronca continued to write in French and became quite famous (during the war he was a member of the French Resistance), but soon after the war, in 1946, troubled by a sentimental crisis, he committed suicide after a short trip to Romania. Ironically, at that time he was writing a *Handbook of Perfect Happiness*.

The most extravagant member of the first surrealist group was Geo Bogza, a proletarian poet who published in the early thirties 2 scandalous volumes of poetry, *Sex Diary* (1929), and *The Invective Poem* (1933), for which he was arrested and eventually sentenced to prison on grounds of obscenity. Bogza was one of the first poets who cultivated the "poem-reportage", a prosaic poetry meant to contradict the bourgeois ethics, like in the following example taken from *The Invective Poem*:

Geo Bogza - *Outrageous Poem*

One of my nights I made love with a maid
All happened unexpectedly – and almost without my will
It was somewhere in a filthy provincial town
I was living at my old friend of childhood.

One evening I wandered alone on the streets – and when I returned,
The maid was making the bed in my room
She was a young blackish maid
She said everybody in the house had gone for a walk
She smiled
And she passed by me countless times.

I was broken that night and I had no desire to make love
But the maid was young
I think she wasn't older than sixteen
And as she was standing near the bed, as if waiting,
I approached with a smile and asked her about her name.

She told me some name, Mary, I think
I said it was beautiful, she pretended to be ashamed,
I think it was close to midnight
Through the open windows the mixed noise of the town was seeping in
There, somewhere, there were theatres, cinemas, splendid women and cars
Here there were only me and the maid;
She didn't say anything, she only closed her eyes.

She was a short maid, almost squad
And she smelled of sweat very bad.

Oh, maid to whom I made love in a filthy provincial town
When I was broken and your masters were not at home
Maid whom I've never seen again
Maid with the thighs with two red stripes made by the garters
Maid with the belly smelling of onion and parsley
Maid with the sex like an Eggplant food
I write this poem about you
To drive the bourgeois girls mad
And scandalize their honorable parents
Because although I have slept with them countless times
I don't want to sing for them
And I urinate in their powder boxes
In their underclothes
In their pianos
And in all the other accessories that form their beauty.

After 1933, Geo Bogza pleaded for an engaged literature, and, like the majority of the surrealists, became a member of the Romanian Communist Party. As a contributor to important left-wing reviews, he published reportages about the miserable life conditions of the workers in the Romanian industry, and, as a correspondent of the newspaper *Romanian World*, he went to Spain in 1937 in order to write about the atrocities of the civil war. For this reason he was watched by the police after he had returned in Romania, and prevented from sustaining a conference on this topic in Bucharest, on the 1st of August 1937. Instead of the conference, Bogza published a series of articles called *The Tragedy of the Basque People*, in which he harshly criticized the cynical massacre of the civil population in Bilbao and Guernica, as in the following fragment:

Geo Bogza – *The Tragedy of the Basque People*

He was a child of a few palms only. Someone had taken him, had washed him, had given him a piece of bread. He was eating it, calmly answering the questions:
- *Where are you from?*
- *From Guernica.*
- *Where is your mother?*
- *Dead.*
- *And your father?*
- *Dead.*
- *Don't you have an elder brother?*
- *Dead.*
Was it a dialogue? Was it an interrogatory? No. It was a page of the present history of Spain, fallen into the hands of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler.

Another important surrealist review was *Alge* ("Algae"), which appeared in 2 series, in 1930 and 1933, with the contribution of the poets Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun, Aureliu Baranga, Sesto Pals, and of the painter Jules Perahim. Neither this publication was called "surrealist", but "review of modern art", although the manner of the poems published here had numerous common points with surrealism, such as the incongruous associations, the shocking images, the rebellious spirit meant to vex the bourgeois, and also the so-called "pure psychic automatism", which was searched in the speech of the retarded children, considered to be "visionary". Out of the same rebellious spirit, the editors of *Alge* published in 1931 and 1932 two ephemeral reviews with scandalous titles, namely *Pulă* ("Dick") and *Muci* ("Snots"), which were sent to some important personalities of the time, such as Nicolae Iorga, who was the most notorious apostle of nationalism in Romania. In response, Iorga called the police to arrest "the gang of the spoilers of writing", and indeed they were immediately arrested and imprisoned for several days on the accusation of "attempt against the good manners".

1933 was a crucial point in the evolution of the Romanian avant-garde, as the political context became increasingly hostile due to the rapid ascent of the extreme right. All surrealist reviews ceased to appear, and their contributors were thus forced to adopt a militant position in their articles published in the (also ephemeral) communist reviews *Viaţa imediată* (" Immediate Life"), *Cuvântul liber* („Free Word"), *Tânăra generaţie* („Young Generation"), *Umanitatea* („Humanity"), *Reporter*, „Era nouă" („New Era"), *Fapta* („Action")*, Meridian,* etc. Nevertheless, the political engagement of almost all the Romanian surrealists must be viewed as closely related to the surrealist project of radically changing the way of life in a future society. Breton himself sustained, in *Position politique du surréalisme* (1935), that "the authentic art of the moment" had to be closely related to the "social revolutionary activity", as its goal had to be the "ruin and destruction of the capitalist society", and a propagandistic art was perfectly justified in a period of crisis, a model being the Russian poet Maiakovsky. Following the example of their French fellows, the Romanian surrealists openly sustained the proletarian revolution, and many of them even joined the Communist Party at a moment when its activity was declared officially illegal. Socially frustrated because of class and racial discriminations (most of them were of Jewish origin or from proletarian families), their political option was probably perfectly justified at that moment, as the idea of an egalitarian society must have been, from their point of view, extremely seductive. In the articles published during the fourth decade in the left-wing reviews already mentioned, the Romanian surrealists vehemently denounced the exploitation of the proletariat, the officially encouraged anti-Semitism, the fascist danger, and the increasingly threatening specter of war, meanwhile sustaining the idea of an "engaged" (or "revolutionary") literature. Out of this project, a series of specific genres emerged, such as the "proletarian poetry", the "proletarian novel", and the "reportage poem", but one may say that the idea of revolution animated the majority of the literary creations published at that time by Geo Bogza, Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun, Gellu Naum, Virgil Teodorescu, Stephane

Roll, etc. No wonder that the avant-garde was perceived from the very beginning as a dangerous enemy situated, according to Eugene Ionesco's definition, inside the very citadel which, with the aid of occult external forces, it was mightily striving to demolish. This was the reason why the attacks against it were not confined to benign literary polemics, so that Geo Bogza, Gherasim Luca, Gellu Naum, Victor Brauner, Jules Perahim, Gheorghe Dinu, Saşa Pană, and others were being watched, and sometimes even arrested for supposed subversive activities under the direct guidance of the Romanian Communist Party.

The problem of the writer's political engagement was issued for the first time in a manifesto entitled "The poetry we would like to write", published by Geo Bogza, Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun and Jules Perahim in the unique number of the review *Viaţa imediată* (December 1933). In their opinion, poetry had to thoroughly reflect the daily life, as its condition was "the opposition against oppression", in other words, the social revolt. The new poetry had to be simple and aggressive, since it was addressed to the masses, whose class consciousness it was thriving to awake. The theorist of this poetry, called "proletarian", was Gherasim Luca in a series of articles published in 1935 in the left-wing review *Cuvântul liber*. In his opinion, tributary to the Marxist ideology, the proletarian poetry (which was opposed to the "pure" poetry, considered to be in the service of the dominant class) had to reflect the deep contradictions within the bourgeois society, in other words, its motor had to be the class struggle. The poems published by Gherasim Luca and Paul Păun between 1933 and 1937 were a perfect illustration of this program, through their deliberate anti-aestheticism expressed by the most ostentatious prosaism, shocking gestures and violence of speech. The poet appears here in the hypostasis of the proletarian who hates the bourgeois society; the main theme of the poems is, therefore, the class struggle, as the poem is built on an antithesis between the exploited and the exploiters, like in the following example:

Gherasim Luca – *The Poem of the Gentle People*

I know at last the infamy of the gentle people
I know those people with wet and round hands, ready to caress everybody
I know also their thin and smiling lips that always have one or two words of pity, of caress
oh, thin and infamous lips, against which I should write all my poems
thin lips, smiling lips, made for touching the forehead, for saying a prayer
lips which kiss with piety the loaf of bread fallen from the table, and put it aside for the servants from the kitchen
lips which kiss with a wet and noisy pity the cheeks like cloth for wiping boards of our children from schools, from orphanages
lips which kiss the body of Christ on the cross, the thin and fine fingers of a miss, of a lady
their thin and expensive fingers like checks, like wars
your lips that declare wars, that preach love, philanthropy

lips with features of a rod, of a sword, of a rope

lips from which our liberty and our snatch from the hot process of production hang like from a rope

I confess here in front of the people and of your god

that I am ready to bear with resignation and serenity all the infamies, all the crimes

if you accept to remove from the vast repertory of your lips

the smile – oh, your smile which intoxicates, which disarms my brothers

my good and confident brothers

beware, comrades, of the gentle people's godlike smile

beware of them like of a disease that gets under your skin without seeing it

beware of them like of an enemy who strikes you on your back

beware of them like of a priest who speaks of happiness in the other world, of love for the neighbor

they are gentle because they are full

and full as they are they have all the time to feel pity also for those who have nothing to eat

but still they are full

and you still have nothing to eat

comrades,

the robbers who break in the house at night to steal

are just as dangerous, either masked or with uncovered faces

their masks, their smiles, their words of priest and god

must be once for good unmasked

Gherasim Luca also published in 1937, in the same manner, a "proletarian" novel entitled *Fata morgana* ("Mirage"), whose protagonist is a communist from Moldavia who performs conspiratorial actions under the guidance of the communist party (officially forbidden in Romania in 1924). The stake of the book was obviously not aesthetic but political, since it is almost unreadable: the plot is badly constructed, the action is incoherent, and the style can be considered anti-literary par excellence. Otherwise, the police opened the author a file tracking in which the novel was described as a guide for the clandestine activity of the communists, and therefore its sale was immediately prohibited.

Another surrealist poet who initially linked his literary work with the communist activity was Gellu Naum. Together with Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun and Virgil Teodorescu, Naum published in 1935, under the guidance of the communist party, a review called *Tânăra generaţie* ("Young Generation"), which was forbidden after only 2 appearances. The same year he was arrested because one night he wrote communist slogans on a wall. In 1936 he published his first volume of poetry, entitled *The Incendiary Traveler*, which he pretended to have been inspired by Victor Brauner's paintings. The poems combine the surrealist technique of the "automatic speech" with a subversive political content, as the protagonist is a

typical anarchist who performs absurd actions in the spirit of the second surrealist manifesto, as in the following fragment:

Gellu Naum – *A Centaur Raping the Trees of the Poem*

It's a high school of art
to pick your brain like a nose
and drag from its depths the sad snots of the poem
it's a high philosophy to know
how to mix the eye plates with the sunset
this can't be learned in a single day
and each pen is a voice.

But what are all these beside
the belly watching the bread with the purest love
beside the eye touching the silk thighs of the woman who refuses you
beside the tongue munching like a sparrow longing for a soup?
Comrades poets that's enough
enough have we tickled the belly of the earth
it belly dances with the moon
listening the bones of the coins like castanets
its nifty sex has charged the Mediterranean waters
on the Pacific tress iron lice are flowing
people say: Kultur or hunger
burning in blue fires Heine's brain
from the sun like from a riddled curtain hangs
the hymen of humanity
enough have we admired in great pictures
Mr. Ford's ass washed by the most suave perfumes
enough have we bashfully smelled the roses
wearing the soft boots of classical poetry
your love songs sound false
and under the powdered skin the hideous wrinkles of the old age appear

Enough! These are not the words of a head left with its amazement on the window
I alone will know to touch like Thomas the unreal wounds
of the Christs
I will be a centaur raping the trees of the poem
I will know to confuse the gentlest sex
with a sprinkler
and if necessary I will know to
light my tress from their ashes

Let us notice though that the surrealist group founded by Gherasim Luca and Gellu Naum in 1940 refused to endorse the new "device of root-striking" (see Guy Scarpetta, *A Praise to Cosmopolitism*, 1981), as it detached itself from Stalinism and from the "socialist realism" imposed after 1947 as the only aesthetic formula officially accepted, and that was the reason why the group was forced to dissolve shortly after the establishment of the communist regime, in 1947. Otherwise, the texts published by its members during that period, many of them in French, were entirely apolitical at a moment when not to be politically engaged was considered, from the official point of view, an inexcusable heresy.

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THE MIRRORS IN THE TEXT: ANGELA CARTER'S "TIS PITY SHE'S A WHORE'

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Abstract: The paper examines the way in which Angela Carter's story takes its shape in an intertextual theatre in which the problem of its own identity is dramatised, showing that heterogeneity and fragmentariness appear to keep the text in a kind of 'mirror stage'. The central argument is that the specular devices (both textual and thematic) by means of which the narrative is articulated illustrate the return of the Baroque sensibility in the postmodern age.
Keywords: Baroque, postmodernism, intertextuality, narcissism, mirror stage, western

The affinities between the postmodern and the spirit of the early modern Baroque in terms of aesthetics, cultural tropes and philosophical modes have received considerable critical and theoretical attention (e.g. Lambert, 2004; Dimakoupoulos, 2006; Eggington, 2009). The revival of the Baroque, argues William Eggington, 'has nothing to do with the recycling of culture,' but has to be understood as 'the aesthetic counterpart to a problem of thought that is coterminus with that time in the West we have learned to call modernity, stretching form the sixteenth century to the present' (2009, 1). This 'problem of thought', affecting in a fundamental way all cultural, artistic, social and political expressions, concerns 'the relation of appearances to the world they ostensibly represent' (*ibidem*).

The problem becomes more complicated in a technologically mediated, image-dominated culture, in which the possibilities of manipulating visuality create new ways of experiencing, of defining and of representing the 'real.' In this steady questioning and testing of the visible, postmodern literature participates with its own inventory of means and devices in the revelation of the instability and vulnerability of the 'hard-edged world' (to use Angela Carter's

phrase from *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffmann*), undermining our complacent perceptions and confounding our certainties.

As an existential – not only aesthetic – category, the essence of the Baroque lies in the feeling of uncertainty and precariousness, of menacing disintegration and of defenselessness, which compels a compensatory intimidating reaction. The Baroque sensibility characterises periods of crisis and favours the appearance of coping mechanisms that may look like displays of power. As such, it can be identified beyond the sphere of culture: Edgar Papu, for instance, in his remarkable synthesis of cultural stylistics *Barocul ca tip de existenţă* , sees this category as highly inclusive, extending it to the world of elements and to the natural cycle: the decline phases of the latter and their paradoxical splendour may, according to him, be described as 'Baroque' (Papu, 1977, 273ff). By the same token, the aggressive exquisiteness with which nature endows the appearance of some weaker organisms and which has the function of a defense weapon may also be interpreted in the light of the category of the Baroque.

In postmodern literature, the sophistication, the breaking down of category and genre, the flaunting of the artifice, the concern with ideas of 'originality' and strategies of textual seductiveness represent markers of the Baroque, indicating perhaps the attempt to dissimulate a certain anxiety, a depression associated with a process of extinction (if we think of the insistently heralded 'death of literature'), the realization of the moment of its crisis.

The postmodern taste for pastiche, for example, might be seen as corresponding to processes of multiplication and reduplication as resources for survival – the weaker organisms tend to reproduce themselves more abundantly. The same would hold for literary theory and criticism: the proliferation of schools, of reading models, their increasing sophistication occur, after all, in parallel with prophecies about the 'end of theory' and with anxieties about the future of literary studies.

Metafictional strategies can also be associated with the spirit of the Baroque: they rely on the simultaneous creation and exposure of illusion, they help problematize the relation reality–fiction/illusion, and they often resort to 'mise-en-abîme' effects – a special case of specularity. The mirror, as a classic instrument of manipulating and exploring the relationship between truth and appearance, has, both in the architectural arrangement of Baroque interiors and in the textual mechanism of the 'text-within-the-text', the same function of denaturalizing the act of representation: 'In duplicating, the mirror deforms and thus it reveals how its representation, apparently natural, is in fact a projection using specific modeling language' (Yuri Lotman, qtd. in Lambert, 2004, 102).

Analogous effects are perceivable in what Jonathan Culler has described as characteristic of many contemporary critical readings: the tendency to treat the literary text as an allegory of a particular critical concern. What happens in such an approach is a 'shift to another level of analysis where a theoretical discourse that

makes claims about the fundamental organization of language and experience attempts to provide insights into the structure and meaning of texts, whatever their ostensible themes' (1983, 207-8). It is no less true that postmodern writers are highly theory-conscious themselves and that literary texts are often made to 'hold a mirror' to critical issues, turning, as it were, theory into fiction.

My reading of Angela Carter's ''Tis Pity She's a Whore' starts from this latter assumption (she clearly seems to be writing with a 'psychoanalytic/feminist mind') and aims at showing how the themes she tackles and the discursive strategies she deploys make this text a typical instance of postmodern Baroque.

In Carter's story, Lacan's theory of the mirror stage as formative of the 'I' through the process of identification with an image (cf. Lacan, 1988) is recognizably 'staged' into a story of incest and death taking place in the silent immensity of the North American heartland – a story which duplicates that of John Ford's Caroline play with the same title – a classic Baroque tragedy (1633). Carter even uses one of the main pieces in the Lacanian theoretical property – the mirror, the only source of images for the motherless children of the prairie. Literally and symbolically, the mirror becomes the prime 'mediator', enabling the brother and sister to find in each other extensions of their own selves.

The fragmented mirror is actually a principle which underlies the organization of the text at all levels. The most immediate issue that specularity raises is that of identity. Carter's text is, allegedly, the result of a specular relationship between the works – one real, one imagined – of the two John Fords. The story is carried through a sort of collage of narrative and descriptive fragments, quotations from John Ford's tragedy, and bits of a scenario that 20th century John Ford would have imagined for a western movie which should transpose the disturbing Caroline drama onto celluloid tape – the mirror in which 'America will look at itself' (cf. Carter, 1994, 187). The text is a typically postmodernist trans- and intertextual project, which is also to say, Baroque in nature.

The sameness of the two invoked authors' names (alluding perhaps to the duplication in the American space of many Old World names) actually rests on an illusory identification. Proper names are markers of difference and their function is to identify; they connect tightly and unambiguously with their referent, they are anchored in time and space. Authors' names, by contrast, are not proper names like the rest; as Michel Foucault remarks, they serve 'to characterize a certain mode of being of discourse', they have a 'classificatory function', permitting a number of texts to be grouped together, to be differentiated and contrasted (Foucault, 1988, 201).

The Old World John Ford stands for a group of sensationalist tragedies, associated with Caroline decadence; they are 'the real thing', illustrating the Baroque spirit and form as the distinctive and dominant cultural mark of the age. Disturbing moral questionings – what Unamuno called the painful confrontation

between 'rational scepticism' and 'sentimental exasperation,' extremeness of passions, violence, spectacularity, the precarious balance between the sublime and the repulsive, the shocking – all these are part of the Baroque formula. The revival, in stage productions, of Jacobean and Caroline drama in a Europe shattered by two world wars and their atrocities (cf. Wymer, 1995, 1) constitutes a proof of the persistence of the Baroque spirit: in a period of crisis, the need was felt for the resurrection of a theatre that should not be outpaced by the anguish, instability and catastrophe of the time, and whose therapeutic mission was to be accomplished by destroying the complacent consistency of all our representations – as Antonin Artaud was urging (cf. 1958, 84; 122).

In the opening footnote, Carter quotes a brief statement of the American director, meant, as it were, to confirm identity: 'I am John Ford. I make westerns' (Carter, 1994, 180). The apparent duplication proves to be a travesti: John Ford is the pseudonym for Sean Aloysius O'Feeney; on the other hand, westerns are indeed made, fabricated, they are nothing but celluloid tapes onto which the mystifying power of the camera eye returns a constructed image. The dramatic situation and the world in the movie are both the result of artifice, of illusion. *Theatricality*, in more than one sense, is a prominent feature of the Baroque, and it is interesting to notice how Carter's story has no narrator in the conventional sense, but a 'voice' that sets the scene ('Imagine an orchestra behind them...' – *ibidem*, 182) and directs the movements of the 'camera', or that, at other times, functions as a spectator, making conjectures – speculating ('What did the girl think?'; 'It is the boy that is most mysterious to me. I imagine him mute or well-nigh mute', etc. – *ibidem*, 184). Apart from the fact that here the text seems to be reading itself, trying to make sense of the representations that it constructs, this confusion of narrative vehicles, the experimental recounting of the story in the form of a movie script, constitutes another aspect of the Baroque nature of Carter's postmodern narrative. What underlies her experiment is the 'principle of hybridity,' by virtue of which 'the structure of one medium is applied analogically to organize another' (Lambert, 2004, 105), creating thus a characteristically heterogeneous perspective.

Carter has the original and the imagined text mirror into each other, but, technically, a mirror image is an inverted and inconsistent one, so the apparent identity and continuity is betrayed, as in the case of the failure of Lacan's subject to attain maturation if haunted too persistently by the primary narcissic image that had conferred it an imaginary/fictional identity in the mirror stage.

The undecided, problematic generic status of Carter's text, its manifest discontinuity, is thus an enactment of the drama of literature unable to detach itself from its own reflection, constantly turning in upon itself. Postmodern 'narcissistic narrative' always courts the danger of excessive mirroring.

The myth of Narcissus is a favourite one with the Baroque, since it subsumes the issues of identity, of the problematic demarcation between reality

and illusion, and of the integrity of the self. To these might also be added the themes of speech and silence, also present in Carter's text.

The narcissist drive to identify with the object of desire in order to preserve the identity of the self is moving the characters in both Ford's tragedy and the imagined script (where they are, in fact, only reflections, or rather adapted versions of literary characters – so the representational illusion is at two removes from reality), but the implications diverge.

In the Caroline play, incest represents a *transgression*, a declaration of war against received values and the established norms of a mature (one might even say 'old') civilization. In the Americanized version, it represents a *regression* into the 'mirror stage'. With 17th century John Ford, the tragedy is in part caused by a breaking of vows – the characters display a strong awareness of the importance of language. The Baroque aspect of their hubris, in this respect, would lie in their excessive pursuit of 'originality' – their 'symbolic order' is too personal, practically disconnected from the societal structure, and therefore shocking. In Carter's imagined script, the background of the events is the 'enormous silence of the empty land' which 'echoes a vast margin around the sermons of the preacher' in the neighboring town (Carter, 1994, 181). The children's insertion into the world of language, of the symbolic, of the Law/the Father, is made impossible by the 'unimaginable freedom' (*ibidem*) in which they live and, on the other hand, by the absence of adequate models (i.e. images) with which they might identify in order to pass from the unorganized, 'natural' state to that of 'civilization', the space of culture, the realm of organizing speech (cf. 'sermon'). Claude Lévi-Strauss had established an analogy between effective communication and exogamy: the exchange of women, together with the straightforward, undeceiving use of speech, constitutes the foundation of societies, and marks the insertion in the cultural space (1972, 550). In Carter, Johnny and Annie-Belle's tragedy is caused by a confusion of family roles, by the boy's failure to identify with an 'other', and by his mute panic at seeing his 'mirror image', the anchor of his self – his sister –, alienated from him and betraying their little Eden and their illusion of being the origin of a world, rejecting the threefold role of sister, wife and mother (it was Annie-Belle that fed the two men).

The multiple hypostases of femininity that Annie-Belle is called to fulfill constitute a mirror for the anthropomorphic image of space itself. 'At the time of this story,' America appears as 'a woman with an hour-glass waist [...]. America, with your child-bearing hips and your crotch of jungle, your swelling bosom of a nursing mother and your cold head, your cold head. Its central paradox resides in this: that the top half doesn't know what the bottom half is doing' (Carter, 1994, 180-1). America itself is presented as a fragmented space, a body in which the parts do not communicate, whose self is not integrated.

The America reflected in 20th century John Ford's westerns has also feminine attributes: it is always an object of desire and of conquest, a challenging, unpredictable space, over which men are invariably shown to be victorious. Carter imagines an inverted scenario, in which the hostile geography is not so easily subdued, in which Indians, commonly presented as part of the natural threat, are no longer completely annihilated but return insidiously into the present, in the shape of Death, to haunt the incestuous lovers' bed, and in which the socialized, culturalized, civilized space fails to impose order on the unformed environment. Her story rejects the idealized, male-centred version of the domestication of America and counterposes the image of the American land as a cruel mother, 'beloved, unkind' (Carter, 1994, 197) – desired but at the same time alienating, nursing her children but never letting herself be fully possessed again. At a far remove from Wordsworth's romantic image of the foster-mother Earth who 'fills his lap with pleasures of her own' in order to compensate man's sense of loss of the 'original' home, Carter's American heartland often crushed people under the weight of its immense solitude. It is a fact that, sometimes, the pioneering families settling in a new land retained the sense of being cut off from 'home' (cf. Luedtke, 1987, 86); setting up a community was not always a smooth business; the opposite pulls of *communality* as a defense against an unpredictable nature on the one hand, and *individualism* and the desire for absolute freedom (signified by incest in this story) on the other often resulted in an irredeemable sense of alienation and sometimes in tragic events.

The privileging of the feminine (also a Baroque trait – cf. Papu, 1977, 251 ff), intended as a rectification of the privileging of the masculine in Ford's westerns, acquires emphasis in the difference in the 'mirror story' of the brother and the sister, respectively. It is not to be overlooked that in both Ford's tragedy and Carter's story it is the woman who reaches the awareness that incest is morally and socially unacceptable. It is the woman that manages to free herself from the fictional image of her own self built during the 'mirror stage' – of which incest is a hyperbolic literalization. Narcissus was, after all, unaware that the image he had fallen in love with represented himself, and his tragic end is to be linked with his unconscious aspiration toward an impossible androgynism, or perhaps with his incomplete feminization, the mirror being part of the feminized complex of the Baroque (*ibidem*), connoting vulnerability and weakness, but also, one might add, self-knowledge, heightened awareness. Echo, at least, was aware of the otherness of the object of her desire. Annie-Belle is, in the beginning, 'the object of her own desire' (Carter, 1994, 192); then she finds in her brother an extension of her own self, but upon entering an exogamic relationship she has the revelation that in her husband 'she saw not herself, but someone who might, in time, grow even more precious' (*ibidem*). In her case, what Lacan calls the 'cultural mediation' in her sexual maturation has operated successfully. Only that, since she and her brother had once been, in Giovanni's

words, 'one soul, one flesh, one love, one heart, one all' (Ford, qtd. in Wymer, 1995, 126), the division can only lead to tragedy – the definitively split ego cannot survive, and the technical outcome, in Carter's story, is a catastrophe, at once a pastiche and an inversion of western endings: murder/suicide by shotgun, the death of all protagonists. Preserving the analogy, Echo's tragedy lies in her exclusion from the circuit of socially-gendered exchange, figuratively signified by her linguistic deficiency).

The fragmented, discontinuous, heterogenous aspect of Carter's text confers it the role of an echo to Ford's western stories, which suppress and repress issues. Her text is also a specular device that looks two ways: to the past, at John Ford's tragedy – the already said, the tradition, and to the imaginary, the unsaid, trying to build a bridge between them. It is an illustration of the fact that problems of intertextuality and transtextuality are more than matters of technique or aesthetic relationship; they become ontological categories for postmodern literature.

The mirrors of postmodern fiction offer no longer the classical reassuring correspondence between reality and reflected image, nor are they the Romantic 'wave's intenser day,' giving a sharpness and intensity to the reflected image that rendered reality pale by comparison. They are more like the complicated catoptric installations and metamorphic cabinets which delighted the 17th century, the century of the Baroque, with their universes of illusion and their unstable, ambiguous worlds – mechanisms in a textual laboratory where tradition and the 'real' become enigmatic shapes and spaces.

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RETHINKING THE POLITICS OF
POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

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Abstract: Postcolonial Studies has become one of the most contested fields of study in this increasingly globalised academic world. Ever since its inception in the academic world in 1989 with the work of Ashcroft, *et al*, this field of study has undergone many radical changes. Yet what remains unattended in this study is the mistreatment meted out to minor communities and their cultures. The present paper aims to focus on this serious gap inherent in the field of postcolonial studies. It argues that the lack of attention and withdrawal from migratory communities at places which supposedly claim to be the centre of multiculturalism and transnationalism is an outcome of authorial deliberations of postcolonial critics.
Keywords: Postcolonial studies, globalization, transnationalism, migration & other

Postcolonial theory began as an intellectual project to address and overcome the vexed issues of the once-colonized nations. It started with urgent assertions on freedom, justice and equality either through peaceful means, as in the case of Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for India's freedom, or by practicing a rhetoric of violence, as advocated by Jean Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon in case of Algerian Independence, because that remained for them the only option available. Ever since the publication of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, which provided a foundation for this theory, much has been written about postcolonial theory over the decades. The warm reception given to this theory, especially in the Western countries, as a way to approach the study of formerly colonized cultures and societies can be seen as one of the reasons for the sustained interest in this field of study. Indeed, it is not an exaggeration to assert that postcolonial theory has been institutionalized in the Western academia, and concomitantly, there has been a 'marvelous crowdedness' of postcolonial texts across the world.

Despite, or perhaps because of, all of the attention to postcolonial studies as a new discipline, the relevance of postcolonial studies has been a highly polemical issue ever since its inception. It is based on differences of various kinds – social, political, economical, and most importantly cultural, existing between the First World and the Third world. Postcolonial studies, according to the cultural critic Stuart Hall, is the 'the bearer of such powerful unconscious investments – a sign of desire for some, and equally for others, a signifier of danger' (Hall, 1986, 242). Postcolonial theory has been framed as an 'exhaustive paradigm' in the 2006 MLA roundtable discussion 'The End of Postcolonial Theory'. There is substantial merit in viewing postcolonial studies as exhaustive because such studies convincingly position and magnify the dominant stature of the West and its solipsistic discourse against the 'Orients.' In setting out to map a revolutionary change in the erstwhile colonized countries as its moralistic mission through postcolonial discourse, postcolonial studies has ended up in distancing the East from the West, as issues of racism, human rights, homelessness, nationalism among many others, continue to re-emerge, and, as such, are yet to be diminished or effaced. In a similar vein, Brenan registers his concerns about the relevance of postcolonial studies when he writes, 'As the world is being redrawn after 1989, postcolonial studies has done little to keep pace with the changing forms of imperialism as an actual set of strategies and developments' (Brenan, 2007, 107). One needs to rethink assumptions about the nature of postcolonial theory because it has been shaped by the institutionalization of postcolonial studies. It is this rethinking over the politics of postcolonial studies and its attendant problems that the present article proposes to investigate by acknowledging newer forms of colonialism operating in this increasingly globalised world. It sets out to recognize the complexities and culpability of postcolonial politics plaguing this exponential globalised world, and then, accordingly, intervenes by trying to fill the gaps that exist at theoretical levels in the discourses on postcolonial studies, by a plausible reconsideration and reconceptualization of the vexed issues. In so doing, it proposes a number of cogent alternatives underpinned and anchored by an unfailing plea for solidarity among postcolonial nations by exacerbating any existing binaries or differences. After all, it is the difference that is most clearly visible in this world.

Initially, the term 'postcolonial' referred to 'all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day' (Ashcroft, *et. al*, 1989, 2). Such an expansive yet a structuralist view was always going to be polemical, and, concomitantly, it spawned a number of pertinent questions, the most central of which may be whether different cultures sharing different histories can even be thought of converging and being examined under a single term. And the intuitive answer would seem to be, of course not. And yet that is essentially what has occurred. Even on the best

usage of postcolonialim, it only emerges as a periodizing term with no greater historical or political implications.

The failure to institutionalize postcolonial studies in Departments other than English is something that also needs to be examined and reconsidered. This deficiency marking postcolonial studies has received flak from Ania Loomba, as she appropriately questions the approach and roles of scholars from other fields towards postcolonial studies: 'political theorists and economists rarely enter the picture, either in the western academy or in other parts of the world' (Loomba, 98, 40). How can one tend to neglect or ignore such an uncharted academic attitude? If postcolonialism is to be equated with development, then this development can only be feasible if it widens its ambit for a thorough and systematic investigation through different subjects that appear under the envelope of 'Humanities'. Even Asif Dirlik and Terry Eagleton are dismissive of 'postcolonial thought' and 'postcolonialism' due to its unconvincing and refractory engagement with economic issues. This coherently puts a big question mark over the efficacy of postcolonialism in its dealing with economic issues and cultural inequalities. Surely, postcolonialism needs to be rerouted and such a rerouting can only be made feasible when there is an amelioration of knowledge production – knowledge to make postcolonialism a powerful tool in the hands of people so that they can unite and impose a fervent resistance against the globalization of exploitation which has emerged as the new enemy at the present moment. Surely, the structure of colonialism and its ensuing exploitations has changed; instead of operating in specific countries, it is now exploiting in invisible forms. It has now become relatively hard to locate and strike against the enemy. That is why it has become increasingly important to adequately theorize the newer versions of global powers and exploiters, because once viably projected through a plausible theory, it will provide a platform for combating these complicit super-powers.

Another problematic issue that clouds postcolonial studies is its unprecedented reliance on multiple or hybrid identities and multicultural nations. Such a celebratory notion is appreciative provided the intentions are not complicit. But by engendering and sedimenting these practices of multiculturalism or transnationalism through their conceptual alignment with capitalist-based globalization (which, clearly, has emerged as a newer form of colonialism), the very notions that were central to decolonization – such as identity, culture, and, most importantly, history – are (un)willingly obfuscated and dismantled. We are all cognizant of the fact that postcolonial theorists and elites, especially those from the 'Third World' who have settled in Europe and the US, resolutely and cavalierly promote such capitalist-based thoughts in order to sustain and justify the sacrosanctity of globalization, because once predicating and compellingly demonstrating that globalizing tendencies are

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beneficial will   inevitably foster the positionality of capitalist-based globalization and concomitantly warrant unethical moves in the name of its development. It is in this regard that Simon Gikandi argues that 'postcolonial elites are, by virtue of their class, position, or education, the major beneficiary of the project of decolonization' (Gikandi, 2010, 29). Ostensibly, postcolonial theory exacerbates and dismantles any sort of binarism in the supposed celebration of multiculturalism. But one must wonder at the general silence of postcolonial theorists and commentators at critical moments such as when American President George W. Bush spectacularly reduced the world to a binary opposition between supporting an ever-expanding 'war on terrorism' and being a terrorist. In effect, any Muslim who did not accede to devastating invasions of Muslim nations was choosing to be categorized as the 'Other'. It thus projects that the commitment to the marginalized has, at critical times, been witheringly dismissive. San Juan contemptuously comments on the decisive deafness of these elite critics:

"Where were the postcolonial gurus during the Gulf War? What is their stand on political prisoners like Mumia Abu Jamal, Elizam Escobar, Leonard Peltier, and many others languishing in the US jails? … How does postcolonial theory… explain the plight of millions of 'overseas contract workers' – women domestics, 'hospitality girls', and mail-order brides comprise this large, horizontally mobile cohort – all over the world?" (Juan, 1998, 13)

This disturbing silence by the critics who have often projected themselves as apostles of revolution and reforms is appallingly serious, and which needs be urgently worked out, as demonstrated by Neil Lazarus in one of his articles which he wrote after the US attack on Iraq in the wake of 9/11 terror attack, where he unmasks the veil from the face of 'US globalism' by incriminating the propensity of globalization. Here is what Lazarus says: 'the veil has slipped from the face of the juggernaut usually called 'globalization' to reveal the unmistakable, and unmistakably brutal, face of US globalism: the power of the American state, now frankly projected and bent on world domination' (Lazarus, 2006, 11). The same activism has been also exhorted by Pramod Nayar, in what appears to be one of the best introductory books written on Postcolonial theory, wherein he demarcates and heightens the deep concerns for the recognition of the marginalized members of the world. Likewise, Nayar's pleads for mutual recognition by acknowledging 'the suffering of the Other and work to fight institutional forms of suffering everywhere' which ethically involves 'a recognition of and response to the suffering of Others' (Nayar, 2010, 204). It is this kind of activism as projected in the brave revelation of Lazarus, and the cogent alternative proposed by Nayar, that can be counted as real postcolonial moments, because in so doing, it unites and concomitantly effaces the palpable differences that have been the root cause of major problems.

One more instance of such a sudden emergence of monsters within a country can be cogently witnessed in the case of Kashmir in India, which has been central to many fierce (un)official battles between India and Pakistan. The appearance and reappearance of Muslim at successive intervals during critical times have always been a vexed issue. Sadly, this community has been at the receiving end due to the demonic and barbaric acts of followers of Hindu Rights. India's designed enemy in Kashmir is the Other – the Muslim which must be expunged at any cost. In one of his novels, *Shalimar the Clown* (2005), Salman Rushdie exposes the beastly acts of Indian soldiers in Kashmir:

"The methodology of crackdown could be expressed technically as cordon-and-search. Curfews would be imposed and soldiers would go house to house. […] Town by town, hamlet by hamlet, every part of the valley would be visited by his wrath, by men who had taken their gloves off, his warriors, his storm troopers, his fists. He would see how much these people loved their insurgency then, when they had the Indian army fucking them in the crack". (Rushdie, 2005, 292)

According to certain data, since 1989, 70,000 people in Kashmir have died, over 8,000 have disappeared, and 250,000 have been displaced. These data have exposed India's frail democracy and also the failure of postcolonial Indian nationalism, which continues to breed the idea of communal differences. No postcolonial theorist can justify this tellingly exclusionary and reductive dangerous nature of the US and India. But the fact remains that such acts of barbarity and inhumanity continue to magnify and proliferate due to the failure of postcolonial theorists over these sensitive and grave issues. Postcolonial theory urgently demands an ethically motivated revisionism to overcome the moralistic disproportion that currently dots this theory, in order to (re)formulate a responsible stance towards the marginalized Other.

Quite clearly, postcolonial theory in the 21st century, instead of resisting and challenging structures of exploitation, has instead, interestingly, aligned itself with the capitalist model of globalization, which Hardt and Negri identify as the new 'Empire' because its emergence once again demarcates the world into a center-periphery model. By doing so, postcolonial theory has become almost an extension of globalization, and hence postcolonial theorists do not seize opportunities for proving themselves as agents of counter-globalization. It is this positionality that makes it untenable to label them as 'postcolonial critics,' because many of them act as compradors turning their backs on the real victims of racism and capitalism. The political activism and consistent struggle that were supposedly quintessential in this theory, in order to become decolonized, is now absurdly missing. One needs to look up at the incisive suggestions by Robert J.C. Young whereby he calls for a revision and reconsideration of the roles of academics, by urging them 'to make academic

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work accountable and to foreground that accountability by forging links with the lived politics of the social world, recovering histories, and creating possibilities for new dynamics of cultural and political practice' (Young, 1999, 29). It was in this context that S.V. Gallagher pointed out, a long time back, that 'the postcolonial is never a specific moment but an ongoing struggle, a continual emergence' (Gallagher, 1997, 377). It is the exploitation by neo-imperialism in it various forms that has seriously problematised the living conditions of postcolonial nations.

At the moment, we are facing a strange impasse in postcolonial theory, which prevents any utopian hope. Ostensibly, postcolonial theory constitutes an irony, because all it does is to position the 'Third World' in an asymmetrical power relation with the West due to its failure to represent the history of struggle and exploitation of the once-colonized evocatively. Manoeuvred skilfully by capitalist-based globalization, it has come to work against its origins, the very reasons for its being, as the concepts of national and cultural identity continue to get obfuscated and exacerbated. The failure in encountering newer forms of grave dangers that lace globalization and which eventually operate as neo-colonial oppressive and exploitative power can be subdued only by demarcating and identifying the marginalizing tendencies of neo-colonialism. It requires a truly transnational democratic openness by postcolonial studies which prioritizes and restores the so far ignored rights of the subalterns. As further argued by Francoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih in connection with the urgency to reroute the specificities of transnationalism, it is necessary to adopt a more focused approach on the hitherto ignored 'minor perspective' because the present discourse 'troubles the prevalent notions of transnationalism as a homogenizing force' (Lionnet and Shih, 2005, 5).

In a recent brilliant article, titled 'What postcolonial theory doesn't say', Neil Lazarus ferociously attacks the giddy tendencies of the unmoored critics of postcolonialism by aiming at the core problem that lies at the very heart of postcolonial theory. Lazarus is contemptuous of the fact that postcolonial critics have been resolutely blind, as they have remarkably failed to situate colonialism within the wider context of 'capitalist development'. This is an effectual complaint, and Lazarus himself goes on to expose this drawback very pertinently. I quote him at length as this passage remarkably points to the gap that lies within postcolonial theory, and which scholars must try to ponder over if postcolonial theory has to be authoritatively rerouted:

"Colonialism as an historical process involved the forced integration of hitherto uncapitalised societies, or societies in which the capitalist mode of production was not hegemonic, into a capitalist world system. Over the course of a couple of centuries in some territories, mere decades in other, generalised commodity production was imposed: production for exchange rather than use;

monetization; private ownership; the development of specifically capitalist markets. … Along the way, existing social relations and modes of existence were undermined, destroyed, reconfigured; new social relations and modes of existence were brought into being…. Peasantries were destroyed, along with subsistence, tributary and market economies (some of them vast and elaborate) to be replaced by capitalized agriculture in one location, proletarianization in another, with waves of migratory labor (more or less regulated, sometimes not at all) in between. Ruling elites were made, unmade and remade, the basis of their power thoroughly transformed". (Lazarus, 2011, 11)

One cannot but agree with Lazarus's incisive analysis of the characteristic of colonialism. The appropriation of social relations based on capitalism in its heightened form has inevitably turned out to be characteristically disastrous, bent upon destroying rather than preserving the very human world. Capital has been, and continues to be, the only reason that lies at the roots of separatism and concomitant construction of oppositional binarism such as West and rest, north/south, we/them, master/servant, developed/underdeveloped.   In this regard, Lazarus's views are vital because they point to the real enemy against whom postcolonial theorists need to rebel.

If postcolonial studies have to persuasively ameliorate its discourses it must do away with its present strictures, by including the excluded migrants, exile and refugees who have become a characteristic feature of this increasingly globalised porous world – a world which emphatically claims to be a multicultural or transnational one, but which concurrently happens to be an inherently flawed one, as the marauding evil pops out in the form of the demarcation between victims/victimizers, exploiter/exploited. Rightly does Benita Parry argue that:

"the time has come for postcolonial studies to promote empirical investigations of these unsettled diasporas, and undertake the dissemination of the experiences spoken by scattered, impoverished, and despised populations stranded in temporary and exploited employment as contract workers, casual laborers, or domestic servants in Europe, North America, and the Gulf States". (Parry, 2002, 72)

These suggestions are highly valid and applicable, if one meticulously examines the magnitude of the problem of this mobilized world. Parry's urgency in advocating the cause of 'unsettled diaspora' is understandable and justifiable as it rightly demands for a coherent development of a new vocabulary within postcolonial studies for investigating these unheard and marginalized voices which lie at the very heart of this seemingly transnational world supposedly celebrating plurivocality, but, in actuality, permitting only a singular voice of gargantuan power to operate, concomitantly dislocating and disrupting the settled diaspora and refugees.

Migratory communities everywhere continue to be ghettoized and enmeshed. Their lives can be considered disciplined only in so far as they are willing to be suppressed and silent. They are world citizens only so long as they unconditionally succumb to the overriding unethical demands of economical and political elites. The moment they raise their voice, or put forth any demand, their seductive worldliness is reduced to a ghastly nothingness simply because the worldliness continues to be defined within the cavalier parameters set up by biased political institutions and self-promoting economic structures. This ostensibly is the paradoxicality of worldliness or cosmopolitanism. They seem to be offering so much, but even a cursory look at their propensities will, at once, reveal their real nature and complicit motifs. This, then, concomitantly confirms the reductive nature of human rights and privileges. They *are* desired and celebrated universally, but granted *only* selectively. In the same vein, Greg A. Mullins tellingly poses a few serious questions about the very nature of 'rights': 'Do human rights indeed belong to all human beings? Or do human rights only belong to those who are socially and politically positioned to own them' (Mullins, 2012, 121). Seen from this angle, one cannot but agree with Parry's and Mullin's incisive and coherent demand for a reconsideration of the rights of the minor diaspora scattered throughout the world.

Sivanandan rightly finds a commonality underpinning both the war on terror and the fear of refugees in the present multicultural world, and in so doing, he expresses his concern for the figure of the Muslim which has appeared as a fearful and threatening one:

"the war on asylum and the war on terror […] have converged to produce a racism which cannot tell a settler from an immigrant, an immigrant from an asylum seeker, an asylum seeker from a Muslim, a Muslim from a terrorist". (Sivanandan, 2006, 2)

What we ostensibly witness in the above-mentioned passage is a terrible problem that has been plaguing postcolonial theory for a long time due to the negligence of its propounders. In the present globalised world dotted with imperial force, minor communities have no other alternative but to bow before the dominant structures of capitalist-based neo-imperialism. In the case of a disavowal of neo-imperialism by minor communities, they are treated with intense hatred and concomitantly looked upon as terrorists – a seemingly dangerous threat to the society, which must be removed if the society is to live in peace. These biased propagandas position and structure the Other in negative shades, thus producing and reproducing patterns of repetition and difference – one of the major drawbacks of postcolonial theory – which ever since its inception has cavalierly thrived upon the Hegelian notion of social differences.

It is on the backdrop of these highly sensitive and ignored issues that Crystal Bartolovich eloquently poses a series of thought-provoking questions, which need to be given a serious thought. Here is what Bratolovich asks:

"What about diaspora? When 'national' populations are dispersed, what 'form' does struggle take? Can there be 'transnational' sites of resistance? What would they look like? What 'form' furthers most effectively 'globalization from below' – the formation of transnational alliances among unions and other groups resisting corporate globalization?" (Bratolovich, 2000, 148)

What we witness in the above passage is an increasing recognition of the need to identify some common grounds and affiliations by a reconsideration of diaspora, refugees, and their attendant problems. The need of the hour is to provide 'transnational sites of resistance' from where political actions and political solidarity can be effectuated by engaging the local and the global as active participants. Such solidarity, we can say, would be an 'affective transnationalism' whose entire attention would be against a common enemy of exploitation, and which will eventually dismantle the painful strictures of the social set up, and its inherent systematic flaws, and, as such, it can be highly influential and plausible to check the roots of separatism and effectuate the ignored human rights.

To conclude, one can say that it is the ignored or condoned rights of marginalized individuals, appallingly enmeshed in the seductive appearance of globalization, that have undoubtedly emerged as one of the problematic issues of postcolonial studies and that must be readdressed ethically and willingly. The time has come for postcolonial theorists to start rethinking over the complicit motif of capitalist-based globalization which treats minor communities as commodities. It *promises* them economic emancipation and global citizenship *only* to reduce them to the condition of proletariat. It promises triumph of plurality over singularity everywhere, but differences continue to tellingly and woefully exist, and concomitantly *ethne* and economy become the defining criteria of global citizenship, thus exposing the real exploitative face of globalization and transnationalism. The appalling silence of postcolonial studies over these critical issues needs to be readdressed because to invoke postcoloniality in a truer sense would mean to be a citizen of many cultures and nations, and this is feasible only by effacing problematic differences that underpin the world order. After all, it was these various differences troubling the peace of world that postcolonial theory had sought to obfuscate and disrupt since its very inception.

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CROSSING THE NATIONAL BORDERS INTO… INTERCULTURALITY – PETER MAYLE WRITING ON *L'ART DE VIVRE EN PROVENCE*

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Résumé: Dans un monde en perpétuel mouvement et interaction, le succès garantissant une communication interpersonnelle et transnationale réussie se trouve en étroite interdépendance avec la compétence interculturelle. Acquérir les savoirs, les savoir-faire et les savoir-être relatifs à un autre espace, c'est s'assurer la détention des savoir-vivre. Ceux-ci permettront l'harmonisation de perspectives différentes sur le même aspect de la réalité par le biais de l'analyse critique réalisée dans un esprit d'ouverture aux autres.

Cet article se propose d'identifier les étapes parcourues dans le développement de la compétence interculturelle par un auteur de souche britannique ayant quitté son pays natal et menant son existence au sud de la France. Devenue terre d'accueil pour lui et sa famille, la Provence devient également le territoire où les frontières renfermant l'identité nationale deviennent brouillées, s'entremêlant à celles censées renfermer l'identité d'«étranger», pour finalement donner lieu à une altérité équilibrée, cohérente et intelligible.

Mots clés: compétence interculturelle, frontières, intelligence culturelle, parallélisme, emblèmes nationaux

I. When First Hand Experience Lays the Foundations for Intercultural Competency

We live in an increasingly interactive world where intercultural references are common occurrence in everyday life. Hence, when a British writer, former creative director working in the advertising industry -constantly commuting between the UK and the US-, leaves this way of living and settles down in southern France, the travel writings bearing his signature can but abound in comparative views on the different outlooks on life.

Peter Mayle[1]'s novels and memoirs portray, above all, the cultural traits of a national and, within it, a regional way of living – the one practised in France, and more precisely in Provence. Many of Mayle's writings tackle either overtly or indirectly the engaging challenges posed by living in a cultural environment different from the one of one's upbringing. His analysis of the Provençal habits and customs is delivered to his readership in several modes, spanning a wide literary taxonomy. It may take the form of accounts given by the author himself of his first-hand experience, as it is the case with *A Year in Provence* (1989), *Toujours Provence* (1991), *Encore Provence: New Adventures in the South of France* (1999)*, French Lessons*: *Adventures with Knife, Fork and Corkscrew* (2001). It may also be done vicariously, by means of American or British characters populating the world of novels whose plots unfold on French territory, such as in *Hotel Pastis: A Novel of Provence* (1993)*, Anything Considered* (1997)*, Chasing Cézanne* (1998)*, A Good Year* (2004)*, The Vintage Caper* (2009)*, The Marseille Caper* (2012). Finally, it may take the form of over 200 entries relative to a raft of aspects of the Provençal life gathered within a guide meant to enlighten its readers on the secrets of understanding life in southern France: *Provence A-Z* (2006).

In any of these writings, regardless of the chosen genre and sceneography, the depiction of the French is ultimately done as seen by a British expatriate -the author-, in a context where the French are the dominant group. The British narrator, as well as his British or American characters, engages in a coherent cross-cultural communication with the French he interacts with. This is how the travel memoirs and the novels will comprise observations relative both to the national and the regional way of living, for Mayle's interculturality is thriving upon his gradually becoming aware of both the traits the Provençal population share with the French and the ones peculiar to the Provençals alone.

At the same time, we must presently take note of the fact that the very fact of setting his novels in the French décor with British and American characters automatically drives Peter Mayle to reflect upon his own culture. Imagining characters and intricate narrative threads actually becomes an opportunity to engage in in-depth exploration of self. For Mayle, writing about the French way of living is inherently tantamount to writing about the way of

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[1] The trajectory of Petre Mayle's residence places reunites locations in Southern England, Southern France, New York, Barbados and Bahamas, which recommend his formation as a writer immersed in various cultures. After achieving a career in the advertising industry, he resolves to relocate from Devon, UK, to Lubéron, France. His success being immense, in order to shun sightseers and fans constantly paying his visits at his house, he relocates to Long Island, in south-eastern New York, only to be back to Provence later on, in Lourmarin.

living in his country of birth; this is how we may speak about a built-in intercultural dimension to his work.

The novels portraying Anglo-Saxon characters show the journey abroad as a liberation from routine, the characters having an overall positive (while at times ironical) attitude towards the otherness they find in the foreigners embodied by the French people. Consequently, through its actors' gaining cultural knowledge, the universe in Mayle's novels exhales a positive participation in the cultural diversity.

In what follows we shall present the author's openness towards interculturality[2], as it comes out from the portraiture of the Provençals done in the book that brought Peter Mayle the title of "travel writer of the year" at the British Book Awards in 1989, *A Year in Provence*. This is a memoir written on French territory, telling the author and his wife's experience when they first moved from the U.K. to the South of France, to Ménerbes, in the département de Vaucluse, in search of sunnier climes and gentler life.

II. Undertaking a Journey of Self-Discovery through Cultural Intelligence

As any other society, the French one promotes and fosters a way of belonging and a cultural identity acknowledged in Mayle's literary universe. At the same time, mention must be made that this universe is pervaded with Mayle's own subjective perception of this national and regional environment different from the one he was brought up and educated in.

As the recollections unfold in front of the readers' eyes, the relationships arising from the contact of individuals pertaining to different nationalities surface, in their turn, showing both the complexity that defines them and the harmony they can end in. The book is divided in twelve chapters corresponding to the twelve months of a one-year experience, each chapter containing cultural representations mainly on the French and the British way of living. There are recurrent national images, symbols, emblems, stereotypes brought under discussion in each chapter. With each mention, they take on newer dimensions, having either the former view on them accentuated or being

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[2] The writer himself bears witness to the circulation of intercultural values his universe is seeped in. His efforts put into promoting *la francophonie and la coopération* were acknowledged by the French Government in 2002, when, by the *Décret du 29 mars 2002 portant élévation, promotion et nomination*, he was made *Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur*. This is the highest national French decoration established after the French Revolution. It was created in 1802 by the first counsellor Bonaparte, future emperor Napoléon Ier, awarded by the President of the Republic in person, rewarding "the outstanding merits of citizens in all walks of life, regardless of social, economic or hereditary backgrounds" (*Grande Chancellerie de la Légion d'Honneur*, official site*)*.

attributed new connotations. The textual progression develops internally, taking up already presented facts and analysing them in new contexts, but also by extension, new themes being added from one chapter to another in an attempt at depicting *le savoir-vivre à la française*. There are passages responding to each other, creating thus a network of cultural references which establish a dialogue all throughout the novel.

The author's gradual acknowledgement of the French social identity implies the phenomenon of cultural awareness. This very book is yet another proof that the latter is a long-term process learned by means of the experience which deepens the understanding. It entails a willingness to stand back from one's own way of doing things and becoming aware of one's own beliefs, values, perceptions, ways of responding and reacting to social aspects, subsequently looking from a different angle at one's set way of doing things. We see here that Mayle's cultural awareness is underlain by the construct of "cultural intelligence", a construct that has both "process and content features" (Earley, 2003). As understood by Christopher Early, the "cultural intelligence", CQ, means "focusing on understanding an individual's capacity to adapt to varying cultural settings based on facets of cognitive and meta-cognitive processing, motivational mechanisms and behavioural adaptation." (Earley, 2006). It consequently supposes "abandonment of the value-based typology of culture" by embracing the idea of cultural differences and the mission relative to their continuous exploration.

The comparative view taken by the Englishman on the French people in this travel memoir is not done from the perspective of someone discovering the area for the first time, but from the viewpoint of someone having nurtured an ardent desire to be living in this milieu, having thus already fallen under its spell: "We had been here often before as tourists, desperate for our annual ration of two or three weeks of true heat and sharp light." (Mayle, 1989, 2). From the beginning of the recollections starting the first chapter of the book, the author's family, while still in the U.K., appears to be emotionally engaged, motivated and ready at any point to revel in the pleasures of Provence with its coastal sunshine and delectable food: "Always when we left, with peeling noses and regret, we promised ourselves that one day we would live here. We had talked about it during the long grey winters and the grey damp summers, looked with an addict's longing at photographs of village markets and vineyards, dreamed of being woken up by the sun slanting thorough the bedroom window." (Mayle, 1989, 2).

The constant parallelism between the British and the French stems from the status voluntarily assumed by the author's family (composed of his wife and himself), when, from British tourists in Provence, they eventually decide to take on the status of foreign residents by permanently moving to the French region. After years of dithering, prompted by an eighteenth century old

solid *mas*, they act presently upon the aforementioned decision: "And now, somewhat to our surprise, we had done it. We had committed ourselves. We had bought a house, taken French lessons, said our goodbyes, shipped over our two dogs and become foreigners. In the end, it happened quickly – almost impulsively – because of the house. We saw it one afternoon and had mentally moved in by dinner." (Mayle, 1989, 2). This first motive having driven the British family to take on the status of foreigners and become inhabitants of the French province is one of the cultural representations the British people cherish regarding life in Provence. Reading on, we find out that the author shares otherwise a nationwide cultural representation on Provence, which is ironically understated when he mentions their British acquaintances' sudden desire to see them and pay them visits during the holidays: "With the gloom of January behind them, people in London were making holiday plans, and it was astonishing how many of those plans included Provence. With increasing regularity, the phone would ring as we were sitting down to dinner (…) and the breezy, half-remembered voice of a distant acquaintance would ask if we were swimming yet" (Mayle, 1989, 33). The author cannot fail to notice the temporal pattern in the urge felt by all these acquaintances who seem to be mostly overwhelmed by the longing for his family's company once winter gives way to spring and Provence is said to be host to glorious weather.

And yet, although they have not settled down in southern France without having spent time here before, the British family will pass through various experiences, at one point or another going through each of the five stages comprised in the model developed by professors David C. Thomas and Kerr C. Inkson (2004) relative to the enhancement of the cultural intelligence. In the first one, "reactivity to external stimuli", when one "mindlessly follows one's own cultural rules and norms" (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, 66), we find the author and his wife overconfident in their experience of English having dealt with the dreadful gales of the English channel, who could not possibly take fright at the French Mistral. As a result of their reactivity in this particular instance, they fall prey to the stereotype regarding the Gallic habit of exaggerating things: "We had heard stories about the Mistral. It drove people, and animals, mad. It was an extenuating circumstance in crimes of violence. It blew for fifteen days on end, uprooting trees, overturning cars, smashing windows, tossing old ladies into the gutter, splintering telegraph poles, moaning through houses like a cold and baleful ghost, causing *la grippe*, domestic squabbles, absenteeism from work, toothache, migraine – every problem in Provence that couldn't be blamed on the politicians was the fault of the *sâcré* vent which the Provençaux spoke about with a kind of masochistic pride. Typical Gallic exaggeration, we thought. If they had to put up with the gales that come off the English Channel and bend the rain so that it hits you in the face almost horizontally, then they might know what a real wind was like. We

listened to their stories and, to humour the tellers, pretended to be impressed. And so we were poorly prepared when the first Mistral of the year came howling down the Rhône valley, turned left and smacked into the west side of the house with enough force to skim roof tiles into the swimming pool and rip a window that had carelessly been left open off its hinges. The temperature dropped 20 degrees in twenty-four hours.(…) My wife was cooking in an overcoat. I was trying to type in gloves (…). " (Mayle, 1989, 7). The shift in narrative perspective, from free indirect speech to first-person narrative is indicative of the life lesson learnt the hard way by not taking the locals' warnings against the forceful Mistral seriously and acting accordingly. By not replacing in due time the "Côte d'Azur plumbing" (as Monsieur Meniccuci, the plumber, puts it) with a solid one, more appropriate to the region of Lubéron, the protagonists must endure the baleful effects they could have so easily dodged. The two views expressed on the Mistral, before and after experiencing it, become an illustration of the proverb "forewarned is forearmed", which is fully understood by the author's family only after experience shows them that they need to leave aside stereotypical thinking samples like "typical Gallic exaggeration" and judge the novel situation they are in by local parameters.

III. Reconstructing the World Around through Cultural Representations

This "remembrance of things past" constitutes an opportunity for the author to pinpoint a series of elements making up the French identity in the mind of the French themselves, of the British and even of a few other nations. This specific identity spans numerous cultural icons traditionally attached to the ideas of France or Provence, among which we glean the above-mentioned serenity in a land of sun, the gastronomy and all the habits connected to it (a particularly wide range of home-cooked dishes, bread, croissant, truffles, wine, going to the market on Sundays, keeping strict rituals relative to different meals, food-related hospitality) and the peculiar greeting habits (like the omnipresent kissing on the cheek).

Approaching all the above-mentioned emblems implies, on the part of the foreign commentator, a perceptive nature, aware of the importance to avert the dangers of projected similarity. When confronted with situational issues in which his nationally-induced way of seeing things differs from the one the local denizens respond to the situation at hand, the author discards what would be his first natural impulse, willing to penetrate what at first seems to be the mystery of a "strange" way of judging things by. This is what enables him to be perfectly capable of refraining from imposing onto others the perspective he has been accustomed to, keeping his mind open and ready to absorb the new way of doing things. In doing so, he neutralises a potentially high source of misunderstanding. In fact, this openness to take a step back and present two facets of the same reality, two ways of

evaluating how it is appropriate to act in a situation and how not is what allows the author to constantly draw parallels between two national customs.

Tackling the fox-related habits in France and in England, he narrates the following conversation with a Provençal: "I (…) asked him if he really ate fox. He seemed surprised at such a stupid question, and looked at me for a moment or two without replying, as though he suspected me of making fun of him. "One doesn't eat fox in England?" I had visions of the members of the Belvoir Hunt writing to *The Times* and having a collective heart attack at such an unsporting and typically foreign idea. "No, one doesn't eat fox in England. One dresses up in a red coat and one chases after it on horseback with several dogs, and then one cuts off its tail" He cocked his head, astonished. "*Ils sont bizarres, les Anglais*. And then, with great gusto and some hideously explicit gestures, he described what civilised people did with a fox" (Mayle, 1989, 16). This passage is indicative of the way the book progresses from one chapter to the other. We see here two sides, two parties, two representatives, of the English and of the French, each of them acting in a peculiar way relative to the same situation: what is customarily to do with the wild animal called "fox"? The actual attitudes show that each party dismisses the other's way of acting, comprising all their disapproval in the reciprocally-applied scornful designations of "foreigners" and "bizarre", while they themselves remain "civilised". We infer thus that the words used by the two opposing parties to name the precisely opposite way of doing a particular thing are the same; and yet, from one linguistic code to the other, they become stripped off of their initial connotations only to be assigned totally contrary ones. In a fox-related context, in the British version "civilised" means dressing up in a red coat, chasing after the fox on horseback with several dogs, and then cutting off its tail; in the French version, it is about simply eating the animal up.

The constant parallelism between the two national perspectives on various facts of life, is practised with sound distance and amusement. A robust sense of humour, jollity and gentle irony is what makes the enterprise of seizing discrepancies avoid the danger of actually reaffirming and reinforcing stereotypes or being judgemental. These elements are also adjuvants to his know-how to become increasingly culturally fluent in his adoptive country. Befriending the local inhabitants, the author will revel in the experience of engaging in interpersonal interaction.

Triggered by the observation of French ways of doing things, the comparative views articulated all throughout the book carry as a reference point the British way of doing things, as a result of the author's first identity: "We wiped our plates with bread and tried to guess what a treat like this would cost in London, and came to the conclusion that we had just eaten a bargain. Comparison with London is a sure way of justifying any minor extravagance in Provence" (Mayle, 1989, 57); "Where else in the world, our (English) friends wondered,

could you eat so well in such unfussy and relaxed surroundings? Italy, perhaps, but very few other places. They were used to London, with its overdecorated restaurants, its theme food and its grotesque prices. (…) Full of easy after-lunch wisdom, we came to the conclusion that the English eat out less often than the French, and when they do they want to be impressed as well as fed; they want bottles of wine in baskets, and finger bowls, and menus the length of a short novel, and bills they can boast about." (Mayle, 1989, 90).

Retaining the positive side of things different from the ones one is accustomed to due to one's upbringing and learnt behaviour is part of the overall intercultural competency. The definition of the term "competency", as retained in the paper *Definition and Selection of Key Competencies* published within the *DeSeCo – Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations* project, reads as follows: "(it) is more than just knowledge and skills. It involves the ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in particular context. For example, the ability to communicate effectively is a competency that may draw on an individual's knowledge of language, practical IT skills and attitudes towards those with whom he or she is communicating." (DeSeCo Project, 2005,4).

We see here that culture-related knowledge is only one component ensuring the attainment of the intercultural competency. Attitude - savoir-être, is another one. The latter supposes openness towards self-examination, willingness and eagerness to grasp the differences in the outlooks on life specific to different places in different countries, embracing the novelty, avoiding the clash through (self)irony, ultimately knowing how to keep the balance between one has been used to and what one is growing aware of. This will reflect in the ability to create a synthesis between cultures: "We found the everyday curiosities of French rural life amusing and interesting. We were enjoying the gradual process of changing the house around so that it suited the way we lived. There was the garden to be designed and planted, a *boules* court to be built, a new language to be learned, villages and vineyards and markets to be discovered – the days went quickly enough without any other distractions, and there were always plenty of those." (Mayle, 1989, 73). To sum it up, the model Thomas and Inkson (2004) proposes three factors most likely to increase cultural intelligence: integrity, openness and hardiness. Integrity implies "having a well-developed sense of self and understanding how one's own belief system motivates behaviour"; openness means "showing deferential respect and a willingness to learn from others'; hardiness is "robustness, courage, intrepidness, and capability of surviving unfavourable conditions" (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, 65).

The second stage of the development of the cultural intelligence (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, 66) is the "recognition of other cultural norms and motivation to learn more about them." This is what happens in the case of one

of the most commonly acknowledged leitmotifs in terms of cultural representations on the region of Provence, the culinary habits. Once having noticed that "gourmets are thick on the ground in Provence, and pearls of wisdom have sometimes come from the most unlikely sources. We were getting used to the fact that the French are as passionate about food as other nationalities are about sport and politics" (Mayle, 1989, 14), the English pay close attention to the locals' gastronomic eating habits. The very first page of the first-person account *A Year in Provence* describes in minute detail what the author calls as "the observance of France's favourite ritual" (Mayle, 1989, 1). Similar depictions of food-related topics are scattered in each and every chapter of the book. By way of consequence, the reader is given a thorough instruction in the French dishes (their description, recipes and preparation modes), in the thoughtful care taken to best accord the dishes with the bread, the cheese[3] and the wine, in the tightly-knit connection between good food and the idea of celebrating an event, in the habit of devoting to meal-having all the due time it requires, sparing no second to any other activity meanwhile (and the list goes further on): "It was a meal that we shall never forget; more accurately it was several meals we shall never forget, because it went beyond the gastronomic frontiers of anything we had ever experienced, both in quantity and in quality." (...) That night, we ate for England." (Mayle, 1989, 11); "Butchers, for instance, are not content merely to sell you meat. They will tell you, at great length, while the queue backs up behind you, how to cook it, how to serve it and what to eat and drink with it. (Mayle, 1989, 13); "(…) to celebrate Sunday as it should always be celebrated in France, with a long and carefully judged lunch" (Mayle, 1989, 35); "All good Sundays include a trip to the market (…) We walked slowly along the rows of trestle tables, admiring the merciless French housewife at work. Unlike us, she is not content merely to look at the produce before buying. She gets to grips with it – squeezing aubergines, sniffing tomatoes, snapping the match-stick-thin *haricots verts* between her fingers, poking suspiciously into the damp green hearts of lettuces, tasting cheeses and olives – and, if they don't come up to her private standards, she will glare at the stallholder as if she has been betrayed before taking her custom elsewhere." (Mayle, 1989, 65-66).

The British family are actually in the position of two English people who, having never paid particular attention to food, discover a new way of looking at it, entering the third stage of development in their level of CQ, the

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[3] "Avec le pain et le vin, le fromage constitue le troisième côté du «triangle sacré» de la gastronomie française, considérée dans son aspect le plus élémentaire. On peut en effet concevoir en France un excellent déjeuner composé uniquement de ces trois éléments, avec peut-être en plus quelques olives noires et une salade verte bien assaisonnée.» (MEYER, D., 2010: 22)

accommodation stage. This is the time when the others' norms and rules seem "comprehensible and even reasonable in their context" (Thomas & Inkson, 2004, 67). By May the cultural representation on food wears on. Thus, when making the previously-mentioned comparisons between the French and the English outlooks on a particular aspect of life, the author's views will slightly come to adhere to the French ones. Hence the revelation that he has adopted for instance the social rites entailed by the French "obsession with food", as is the case with what is considered as adequate in terms of calling hours: "It is a rule of life that, when the phone rings between noon and three on a Sunday, the caller is English; a Frenchman wouldn't dream of interrupting the most relaxed meal of the week." (Mayle, 1989, 68). The indirect free speech bears witness to the fact that "the most relaxed meal of the week" apprehends the author's opinion, not only the French one. This foreign experience is an inherent urge to reconsider one's life so far, to see what should be absorbed from the new one and what should be dismissed. Little by little, the author's family accept, find it totally natural and then adopt the elevation of the eating habits to the rank of high social rites lying at the core of human existence. Stage four, assimilation, is soon entered, when they no longer regard food as a way to fulfil a biological need by assuaging hunger, heading for stage five, the one when they become proactive: "We have found that there is nothing like a good lunch to give us an appetite for dinner. It's alarming. It must have something to do with the novelty of living in the middle of such an abundance of good things to eat, and among men and women whose interest in food verges an obsession." (Mayle, 1989, 13); "We realised we were becoming as obsessive about food as the French, and went back indoors to attend to some unfinished business with a goat's cheese." (Mayle, 1989, 80). In this final stage, at first the author's family grow to be even more Provençal in their gourmandise than the Provençals themselves: "Even by Provençal standards, it had not been an everyday meal. The people who work on the land are more likely to eat well at noon and sparingly in the evening, a habit which is healthy and sensible and, for us, quite impossible." (Mayle, 1989, 13). The absorption of the novelty of the new way of living prompts the British characters towards living this novelty at its fullest.

Another prominent aspect of the perception on food as a local landmark is the art of the speech presenting the meal components; the discourse seems to entwine the actual food, heightening its flavours. The book is interspersed with such accurate extensive presentations of courses, being indicative of the French habit of taking all the time needed to talk about one of the elements considered to lie at the basis of life interaction. Gradually, this diary written retrospectively becomes a guide to French cuisine, a cuisine understood as "une question de culture dans le sens le plus profond de ce terme, qui vient du latin *colere*, «cultiver». Cultiver la terre, mais aussi l'éducation des être humains" (Toscano, 2009, 42).

This is why the recollections gathered in this travel memoir start from the outset with a description of a New Year's menu at a restaurant in a Provençal village, nearby the author's house, a eulogy given by the proprietor of the premises, a French cook or chef illustrating the stereotype image of a French *cuistot*: "His moustache, sleek with pomade, quivered with enthusiasm as he rhapsodised over the menu: foie gras, lobster mousse, beef *en croûte*, salads dressed in virgin oil, hand-picked cheeses, desserts of miraculous lightness, *digestif*. It was a gastronomic aria which he performed at each table, kissing the tips of his fingers so often that he must have blistered his lips." (Mayle, 1989, 2). Mayle takes the stereotype and with a touch of humour and irony transforms it into an agreeable and appealing image of the foreign way of being. The gastronomy topic often gives way to music metaphors, having a meal and then giving its account coming close to listening to a symphony: "It was fascinating. He told me the precise part of the vineyard that each of the wines had come from, and why certain slopes produced lighter or heavier wines. Each wine we tasted was accompanied by an imaginary menu, described with much lipsmacking and raising of the eyes to the gastronomic heaven. We mentally consumed *écrevisses*, salmon cooked with sorrel, rosemary-flavoured chicken from Bresse, roasted baby lamb with a creamy garlic sauce, an *estouffade* of beef and olives, a *daube*, loin of pork spiked with slivers of truffle. The wines tasted progressively better and became progressively more expensive; I was being traded up by an expert, and there was nothing to be done except sit back and enjoy it." (Mayle, 1989, 152). "It was another step in my French education. Not only did it introduce me to breads I had never heard before, it told me with great firmness and precision what I should be eating with them. With my *apéritif*, I could choose between the tiny squares called *toasts*, a *pain surprise* which might be flavoured with finely chopped bacon, or the savoury *feuillets sales*. That was simple. The decisions became more complicated when the meal itself was being chosen. Supposing, for example, I wanted to start with crudités. There were four possible accompaniments: onion bread, garlic bread, olive bread or Roquefort bread. Too difficult? In that case, I could have seafood, because the gospel according the Auzet authorised only one bread to eat with seafood, and that was thinly-sliced rye. And so it went on, listing with uncompromising brevity what I should eat with *charcuterie*, foie gras, soup, red and white meat, game with feathers and game with fur, smoked meats, mixed salads (not to be confused with the separately listed green salalds) and three different consistencies of cheese. I counted eighteen varieties of bread, from thyme to pepper, from nuts to bran. In a fog of indecision, I went inside the shop and consulted Madame. What would she recommend with calves' liver? She set off on a short tour of shelves, and then selected a stubby brown *banette*. While she was counting out my change, she told me about a restaurant where the chef serves a different bread with each of the five courses on the menu.

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There's a man who understands bread, she said. Not like some. I was beginning to understand it, just as I was beginning to understand mushrooms. It had been an instructive morning."(Mayle, 1989, 160). The lengthy passages that may go on for pages on end in presenting food-related topics stand for the French extreme accuracy in considering their eating habits.

The readiness to acquire the locals' codes is an essential condition to a successful adjustment in a new milieu, and the author's family is far from short of this committed willingness: "We learned also to interpret the hand language that accompanies any discussion of deadlines. When a Provençal looks you in the eye and tells you that he will be hammering on your door ready to start work next Tuesday for certain, the behaviour of his hands is all-important. If they are still, or patting you reassuringly on the arm, you can expect him on Tuesday. If one hand is held out at waist height, palm downwards, and begins to rock from side to side, adjust the timetable to Wednesday or Thursday. If the rocking develops into an agitated waggle, he's really talking about next week or God knows when, depending on circumstances beyond his control. These unspoken disclaimers, which seem to be instinctive and therefore more revealing than speech, are occasionally reinforced by the magic word *normalement*." (Mayle, 1989, 41). Interacting with the French, the characters build up new interpersonal skills.

In this line of thought, a consequential part of interpersonal interaction is the greeting which on the French territory translates into *faire la bise*. In this respect, the author reveals to be greatly conditioned by his British upbringing: "It had taken me some months to get used to the Provençal delight in physical contact. Like anyone brought up in England, I had absorbed certain social mannerisms. I had learned to keep my distance, to offer a nod instead of a handshake, to ration kissing to female relatives and to confine any public demonstrations of affection to dogs. To be engulfed by a Provençal welcome, as thorough and searching as being frisked by airport security guards, was, at first, a startling experience. Now I enjoyed it, and I was fascinated by the niceties of the social ritual, and the sign language which is an essential part of any Provençal encounter." (Mayle, 1989, 94). The stark contrast between the two national ways of apprehending the social rite of acknowledging the other's presence is likewisely pinpointed by another Englishman, Charles Timoney, in his book *A Certain ... Je Ne Sais Quoi* where he emphasized the difference in apprehending reality once conditions by your upbringing "between introduction and retirement, no handshakes were expected at work unless you found yourself in a state of affectionate inebriation at a colleague's wedding. (…) this was something that only happened to me once in three years. (…) Kissing on the cheeks, apart from with family or extremely close friends, was almost unheard of at that time. Thinking back, the most surprising thing is that I thought it quite normal in any kind of social situation to walk into a room full of people and make no greeting beyond a vague, collective "Hi". This sort of behaviour would

not go down well in France where handshaking and cheek-kissing are an essential part of daily life." (Timoney, 2009, 21). After having crossed the fourth stage from the model " Thomas & Inkson, the cultural appropriateness demanding physical contact becomes the familiar one, discarding the previously-cherished idea of keeping one's distance.

Little by little, the British embrace the saying "When in Rome do as the Romans do": "we made a conscious effort to become more philosophical in our attitude to time, to treat days and weeks of delays in the Provençal fashion – that is, to enjoy the sunshine and to stop thinking like city people. This month, next month, what's the difference? Have a pastis and relax." (Mayle, 1989, 40). The gradual awareness of what the French otherness is makes the author's family not mere survivors, but *des bons viveurs* who have been successful in their attempt to overcome whatever cultural boundary and know how to relish in the joys of another way of living: "Provence is such a shock to the Northern system; everything is full-blooded. Temperatures are extreme, ranging from over a hundred degrees down to minus twenties. Rain, when it comes, falls with such abandon that it washes roads away and closes the *autoroute*. The Mistral is a brutal, exhausting wind, bitter in winter and harsh and dry in summer. The food is full of strong, earthly flavours that can overwhelm a digestion used to a less assertive diet. The wine is young and deceptive, easy to drink but sometimes higher in alcoholic content than older wines that are treated with more caution. The combined effects of the food and climate, so different from England, take time to get used to. There is nothing bland about Provence, and it can poleaxe people as it had poleaxed Susan." (Mayle, 1989, 106). And yet, Provence agrees with the witty uber-expatriate family.

Conclusion

Peter Mayle's writings on *l'art de vivre en Provence* are suffused with culture specific knowledge relative to the French milieu, as perceived by a British expatriate. The intercultural elements present in the widely-acclaimed book *A Year in Provence* inherently reveal not only the Provençal habits and customs, as advertised by the title, but also the English ones. Hence the innumerable comparisons drawn between the British and the French sprinkled all throughout the account and representing as many steps taken towards the development of an intercultural competency. The cultural-related topics minutely presented in passages which constitute as many entertaining threads interwoven in the framework of this travel memoir are food for thought for the armchair traveller.

By stepping outside their own cultural boundaries and engaging permanent interactions with the otherness of a foreign culture, Peter Mayle's writings are an urge launched to his readers to embark upon the same exciting experience of self-discovery.

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MAKING OF *I* WITH *YOU.* CELAN'S POETRY AND GADAMER'S HERMENEUTICS

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Abstract: The importance of Paul Celan's lyrics to hermeneutic philosophy is concisely emphasized by a short essay of Hans-Georg Gadamer (afterwards turned into a book), that was written shortly after the poet's death. *Who Am I and Who Are You?,* by rotation of emitent / receptor stances, seems to acknowledge Gadamer's concept of fusion of horizons that is the fundament of his hermeneutics.

Keywords: Celan, Gadamer, hermetic poetry, hermeneutics, dialogue, fusion of horizons

The number of thinkers of hermeneutic formation drawn by Paul Celan's poetry is remarkable and this is not a casual remark. We cannot omit to recognize contributions such as the ones of Gadamer, Lacoue-Labarthe, Derrida, Szondi, Steiner or Levinas. Can this attraction be explained by the "optimism" of tamed hermeneutics which, in Gadamer's case for example, "weakens" Heidegger's philosophy, by anchoring it into pragmatic ground? Is it possible for the post-Heidegger theorists to have seen in the "success" of meaning re-actualization [1] in Celan's lyrics a role model for their own "completion" of hermeneutic endeavor? We shall further on try to discern among these issues, on the basis of Gadamer's writing about Paul Celan. Precisely: ten years after his consideration of *philosophic hermeneutics* in *Wahrheit und Methode* [*Truth and Method*], Hans-Georg Gadamer published on April 26th, 1970, shortly after Celan's suicide, his essay *Wer bin Ich und wer bist Du*? [*Who Am I and Who Are You?*, in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* as of May 17th, 1970], that shall later (1973) turn into a book of studies on the poet's last

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[1] According to my interpretation in *Reactualizarea sensului. Paul Celan şi avangardismul românesc*, Pontica, 2007.

posthumous printed volume (*Atemwende*/Breathturn[2]), and especially on the series of *Atemkristall* (*Breathcrystal*), included in the above.

Gadamer relied on the thought that, for his last books, Celan's lyrics moved closer *to the absolute silence of muteness, to cryptic words*[3] (which characterizes the poet's period of creation maturity, as known). The short poem, a very cryptic one, that enticed the philosopher to write his essay, would not be interpreted even by its affiliation to the collection where it belongs, since this is *hermetic* as well. Nonetheless, Gadamer saw relatively surprised that *each of the poems that form this series constitutes in itself a stable enough structure in terms of meaning, even if this is not transparent and clear from a first glance, the structure is not completely hidden or randomly significant.* This impression of ambiguity of a fully built yet escaping message of the "German translation", seemed to be for Gadamer one of the characteristics of the poetry of Celan that escapes its meaning simply because we do not have a share in it and we take to the biography or secondary literature to explain it. Even if the poet, under certain circumstances (that are obvious in his case) confessed about his private and occasional reasons, he seemed to only be doing it to postpone the unveiling of something above the personal and the casual. *A poem,* as Gadamer reflected further on, *that escapes and rejects a clarity of its own seems more meaningful than the plain forward clarity generated by a poet's confession,* because here the poet spoke, especially in the hermetic texts, about the *unknown* and possibly *the unlived* that transcends personal experiences and invites us to share along. In other words, such poem is in itself an invitation to the reader that is excluded only from the perspective of a direct relationship, of full *understanding* or *void clarity* that the reader expects from the text. [In this respect, in the preface of his book of studies on *Atemkristall*, Gadamer firmly stated from the beginning that his studies do not consider such readers.] Eventually, the entire equation includes an *I* (the emitent) that addresses a *You* (the receptor) and essentially these two do not have unilateral driven relationships, (even though sometimes they are present) of the subject – object type, so that the communication act and the constitution of significance are possible.

The issue here concerns the I and You of Celan's poems and it is not the author that needs to clarify this. As Gadamer went on, this issue can be explained by using the means of comparative literature, conditioned, of course, of *the existence of comparable texts*, which is not the case here. However, *he who understands a lyrical poem, will always know who is the I here. And it's not just the typical approach i.e. the poet expresses himself without any help*

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[2] As translated by Pierre Joris, in Paul Celan, *Breathturn*. Los Angeles: Sun and Moon, 1995.

[3] For stylistic reasons I turned to my own translation of Gadamer's texts. In comparison, there is available a translation by Richard Heinemann and Bruce Krajewski, in *Who Am I and Who Are You? and Other Essays*, State University of New York Press, 1997.

from any of the characters he imagines. He knows a lot more that is who is the emient I. The I showing in a lyrical poem is in relationship with both the I of the poet and most likely with the one of the reader, when the latter is reading and expressing it. Even when the I is well hidden behind hermeneutical phrasing, the reader can hide there too, if he co-participates, adding his share to the reading process. These "clarifications" of Gadamer necessarily lead further on to another question, the one addressing You, especially as concerns the *Atemkristall* series, where most texts directly approach the You. *But is there a meaning in this question? Does it have an answer as if in someone close, possibly the closest one? Or he may be the closest and the farthest one altogether: God? Thus, the identity of this You cannot be known, since it is not settled. The lyrical discourse addresses someone without setting an object – just as if the discourse grows into shape only proportional to its response.* It is practically the answer back that creates the You and consequently the lyrical discourse – it only exists under the condition of expected answer, that is when one fills in the void You, though only by assuming by reading process, the I condition as well. In other words, Gadamer himself concluded: *The You is so much and so little an I just as the I is the I itself.* Thus, we can distinguish a double process here: with a participation to the reading and the hermeneutical adventure of unveiling *the unknown* and *the unlived* (an adventure that shall sum *the known* and *the lived)*, the receptor plays the part of the I (as a means to glide through the surface layers of the text or the so-called cryptic ones present in Celan's poems) thus, the receptor finds himself in the middle of a paradox situation of addressing a You that is both receptor and emient. *In the shape of the emient I*, as Gadamer stated, *comes voluntarily each receptor I and they both naturally fill in the shape of the You as well.* This process of transmutation of discourse roles is applicable to the initial I, the emient – the text only exists because the initial I can persuade its receptor to address itself, or, simply put, when it turns into receptor. Consequently, we have a listening text that can listen to, instead of it being listened and that is why any "direct" approach makes it look cryptic or, at its most, it has that *void clarity* Gadamer wrote about. [This "exchange of roles" is prefigured by Celan himself in his essay in 1948 *Der Traum vom Traume* / Dream of a dream[4]] In any case, as Gadamer drew to close, *we don't know before or after any depthless look which one of the I-s or You-s is involved and neither which one is designated by the emient I, itself or another. We need to learn about this.* In suggestion of the appropriate type of learning, Gadamer selected a very short quintet stanza, with no title, from the series of *Breathcrystal:*

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[4] Translated and interpreted by myself in *Reactualizarea sensului. Paul Celan şi avangardismul românesc*, Pontica, 2007.

IN DEN FLÜSSEN nördlich der Zukunft
werf ich das Netz aus, das du
zögernd beschwerst
mit von Steinem geschriebenen
Schatten.

[IN THE RIVERS north of the future
I cast the net, which you
hesitantly weight
with shadows stones
wrote.][5]

From the very beginning, some acute obscurity strikes us while reading and forces us into casual decoding of syntagms such as "the Nordic rivers" where a quasi-biographical interpretation can be strained, following Otto Pöggeler in explanation of phrasing *Am Rande des Abends* [*on the edges of evening* – of the poem "In Gestalt eines Ebers" / *In the Shape of a Boar* – where the evening was interpreted as the sunset, that is the Western decadent culture, subject to reification, affected by lack of communication[6] – and with such decoding, *the Nordic rivers of the future* might signify in the same casual manner, the future of the European culture after totalitarian drawbacks, especially for the Aryan or "Nordic" one.] One more biographic "deciphering" might lead to Celan's suicide in the river of Seine, taking into account that the poem had been written only a few months before his death. Such interpretations, obviously unilateral, advance only to the *void clarity* or, in Adorno's terms, it drains the significance of its "rest", it sieves the significance in a sieve that's too large. But this short poem presents at least two words that resist such "clear" decoding and they function as "semantic ballast" or "rest". The first is the *rock*, a recurrent motive in Celan's lyrics that appears, for example, at the beginning of a well-known poem *Radix, Matrix* (a model of poetics of the root matrix, specific to the poet's work, and analyzed by myself in my *Re-actualization of the meaning*): 'As one speaks to stone, as / you, / to me from the abyss, from / a homeland con- / sanguined, up- / hurled, you, / you of old to me, / you to me in the nix of a night / you in Yet-Night en- / countered, you / Yet-You -:'[7] (Of course that the frequency of bivalent addressing to a You is obvious here.) It seems that in the poem referenced by Gadamer, the *rocks* (that used to be the *audience* in *Radix Matrix) can write* and thus they mark the *shadows* (a proceeding that repeats in *Stretto)*, functioning as ballast in the *net* to be cast. A second term that makes a unilateral interpretation

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[5] Translation by Pierre Joris, in *Paul Celan – Selections*, University of California Press, 2005.

[6] Otto Pöggeller – *Lyrik als Sprache unserer Zeit? Paul Celans Gedichtbände*, 1998.

[7] Paul Celan, *Selected Poems and Prose*. Translated by John Felstiner; W.W. Norton, 2001.

impossible is the *shadow* that, not accidentally, closes the poem and makes it look cryptic. Gadamer himself remarks the frequency of these "cut" finals in the last period of Celan's lyrics through words *that fall in so heavy, as heavy their importance is.* But this shadow does not *fall in* (although, by falling in the final part of the poem, it appears to close the text) as the evening "falls in", but, on the contrary, it is *cast* at the same time the *net* and the *rocks that can write* are cast, leaving marks behind. In other words, we cannot agree in this case with the theories of absent/negative poetry, a deduction of surface interpretations (especially the biographic ones), because the text appears to open positively if we cross over the *shadows* and the *rocks* that are cast by our own participative passing when reading the poem. Only then, together with the shadow's diving in the depth of the rivers (be they Nordic or else), the things become visible and the light shines through the waters. However, the *net* to be cast can be interpreted, according to Gadamer, as the gesture of the fisherman or, more likely, here we have two fishermen, where one casts the net and the other one gathers it (and, not incidentally, the two of them bear the names of transmutable stances, *I* and *You*). Additionally, this operation is present in *Radix, Matrix,* with the lyrics 'as / you / with my hands thrust / there and into nothingness'[8] (if we think that the verb *greifen* can take a handful of meanings in translation, i.e. to grasp, to fish and so on). Who is then the one that *casts the net* and the one that *gathers* it? The answer is the same as to the question *who am I and who are you,* in the title of Gadamer's essay. If the net (that is the textual connection between the emitent and the receptor) were not to be cast (in other words, if the receptor would not turn himself into an emitent *I*), it would not be at all (that is the emitent would not turn into the receptor to gather the net and lift it). Basically, the journey of this short poem, once we cross over the surface layers of the text, by diving into it and assuming the transmutable role of *I,* is the same of the entire hermetic work of Celan, in which a hermeneutic dialogue *agreement* is settled, by which the emitent subject transforms into a receptor of the invocation he is addressed – and from now on, with the textual net in place to connect the *poles* of the meridian journey, we can only expect the constitution of significance and its probation within some ontologically revalorized area.

Finally, the successful re-actualization of the meaning, by a fusion of the horizons is specific to Gadamer's hermeneutic endeavor, where he sees his impossible *plurivocal* vocation being fulfilled, that is to have a methodology of truth. The reading of Celan's lyrics had to have given Gadamer the feeling that they confirm his hermeneutic system of *Truth and Method*, thus paradoxically *strengthening* his theory of *weakening* and pragmatic optimization of Heidegger's philosophy.

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[8] In translation by J. Felstiner.

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LA PRESSE LITTERAIRE
AUX FRONTIERES DES SIECLES

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to present a global image of the Romanian press closely related to the development of the society, in order to demonstrate the fact that the discourse of the print media is a point of reference for the intercultural representations. The journals submitted to analysis are the literary journals published at the boundary between ages. We presented these journals by order of the significant part they played in the development of the Romanian literary press in the long run. Our presentation also took into account the thematic affinities and the literary orientations they proposed to their readers.

Keywords: literary press, literary orientations, intercultural representations, discourse, social development

Par rapport aux pays occidentaux ayant une riche histoire culturelle, la presse littéraire fait son apparition dans l'espace écrit roumain à partir du XIXe siècle. À cause de la longue domination étrangère et de son isolation dans un espace géographique tout à fait particulier et, en même temps, à cause du développement assez lent de la bourgeoisie, l'apparition de la presse littéraire roumaine est née aux frontières des siècles dans une époque marquée par le désir de modernisation de la culture et de la civilisation roumaines par le biais des moyens classiques de communication.

I. Perspectives littéraires et sociales sur la presse de l'époque.

Pour avoir accès aux événements et aux informations des pays occidentaux, l'aristocratie roumaine de l'époque était complétement passionnée de la presse de Paris, Vienne, Leipzig, d'où elle se procurait des publications périodiques, telles: le *Journal littéraire*, le *Journal encyclopédique*, *Mercure de France*, *Wiener Zeitung* etc. Cette orientation visible des lecteurs roumains dénotait l'intérêt de la société roumaine et de ses personnalités de culture de

partager la manifestation de tout mouvement culturel à l'époque. Il existait, sans doute, une curiosité intellectuelle évidente de transgresser les horizons géographiques et les frontières limitées de l'espace est-européen.

Le commencement du XIXe siècle marque un point de référence pour les centres de culture roumains grâce à une meilleure correspondance entre les jeunes roumains qui étudiaient à l'étranger et leurs collègues intellectuels. Les productions scientifiques et culturelles devenaient de plus en plus répandues dans l'espace roumain et la société roumaine manifestait des efforts visibles pour tenir tête aux événements européens et aux nouvelles tendances culturelles d'un espace si généreux.

Ainsi, la presse littéraire semblait devenir un bon moyen pour illustrer des représentations sociales et historiques, par le biais de laquelle la culture et la civilisation roumaines se dévoilaient dans des témoignages privilégiés de l'évolution sociale et culturelle de toute la collectivité intellectuelle de Roumanie. Miroir de la société aux frontières des siècles, la presse littéraire communiquait des significations sociales et historiques tout à fait liées aux destins collectifs roumains par son orientation vers la langue et la littérature roumaines à l'aube de leur modernisation.

La période mentionnée se situait sous le signe du changement social et culturel et les grandes personnalités intellectuelles roumaines se rendaient compte de plus en plus de leur rôle fondamental pour l'évolution de la littérature roumaine et, pourquoi pas, de toute la société roumaine. C'était le moment de transformer la conscience nationale et de former une nouvelle culture assez solide pour qu'elle puisse rejoindre les autres cultures européennes. Le poids de cette perspective globale sur la société explique les conceptions et les visions qui donnaient des nouvelles représentations sur la sensibilité collective et le champ vaste de la réalité sociale immédiate.

Les exigences d'ordre social et politique représentaient une réalité *sine qua non* de l'époque et, dans ces conditions, la presse littéraire allait expérimenter plusieurs étapes lentes dans son évolution, liées également aux écoles littéraires qui apparaissaient dans l'espace intellectuel roumain et à la lutte des idées issues sous l'impact des nouveaux éléments sociaux et politiques.

II. Les principales publications littéraires entre les époques.

Les dernières décennies de la période soumise à notre investigation étaient marquées par une étape de modernisation de la littérature roumaine, démarche commencée par les poètes Văcăreşti. À ce sens, il faut préciser que les années 1880-1900 représentaient une période de transition qui préfigurait les tendances modernes qui allaient apparaître dans l'évolution de la langue et de la littérature roumaines. Ces orientations innovatrices sont nées comme une nécessité naturelle, comme le résultat presque évident de l'aspiration intellectuelle roumaine à trouver et à imposer des nouvelles modalités d'expression artistique.

Le territoire des publications littéraires entre les époques a été profondément marqué par toute une série de personnalités intellectuelles dont les idées fondamentales ont prouvé un évident intérêt pour le développement de la culture roumaine dans la direction des espaces européens. Mais l'originalité roumaine reste un point de repère car, selon la perspective de Romul Munteanu, «Nos revues littéraires, dans tout ce qu'elles possèdent de plus significatif et de plus digne à être retenu, ne sont pas caractérisées par un mimétisme stérile ou par des adaptations synchroniques superficielles, mais par la sélection et l'assimilation critiques des idées majeures de l'époque, conformément à l'évolution générale de la civilisation et de la culture de notre peuple» (1980: 81, n.t.).

Dans la littérature de spécialité, la problématique de l'impact des revues littéraires entre les siècles a été investiguée par des spécialistes tels Alexandru Andriescu (1979), Adriana Iliescu (1968, 1972), Mariana Costinescu (1979), Romul Munteanu (1980), des chercheurs qui ont réalisé leurs études sur un large corpus d'analyse pour en découper des aspects littéraires et, également, des aspects linguistiques. Nous apprécions que les revues *Convorbiri literare, Contemporanul, Literatorul, Revista literară, Revista critică-literară, Moftul român, Moş Teacă, Familia, Albina, Vatra, Tribuna, Telegraful Român* représentent les principales revues littéraires qui ont contribué d'une manière décisive à l'évolution des mentalités et de la culture roumaine.

Nous allons focaliser notre attention sur ces publications, tout en suivant un ordre que nous considérons être important pour le développement de la presse littéraire roumaine en diachronie. Nous allons les présenter également selon les affinités thématiques et les orientations littéraires que ces revues ont proposées aux lecteurs.

L'une des plus importantes revues de l'époque a été, sans aucun doute, la revue *Convorbiri literare*, fondée par la Société „Junimea" à Iaşi, en 1867. Soutenue par Titu Maiorescu, sous la direction de I. Negruzzi, I. Bogdan, S. Mehedinţi etc., la revue a eu une longue apparition bimensuelle et mensuelle, tout en publiant des noms tels V. Alecsandri, I. Negruzzi, I. Creangă, M. Eminescu, D. Zamfirescu, I. Slavici, N. Beldiceanu etc. Ses articles dénotaient une oscillation évidente entre deux courants littéraires majeurs, le romantisme et le classicisme. La revue *Convorbiri literare* constituait la première revue roumaine importante qui offrait des nouvelles perspectives sur le phénomène esthétique et culturel et qui véhiculait les plus solides valeurs de la culture roumaine. Dans ses pages, Titu Maiorescu publiait ses opinions contre l'immixtion de la politique dans l'art, tout en mettant l'accent sur la présentation d'un monde compatible avec l'évolution impersonnelle. Il ouvrait le chemin vers l'apparition des nouveaux courants poétiques par le choix d'aborder la structuration des images littéraires non seulement d'une perspective énonciative, mais d'une perspective normative, puisque l'originalité des créations devrait être recherchée dans le plan de l'expression.

L'orientation de Maiorescu vers l'analyse de tous les aspects de l'époque ne s'est manifestée pas pleinement car il a ignoré délibérément des noms importants tels I.H. Rădulescu, B.P. Hasdeu ou Al. Macedonski, ce qui dénotait que la méthodologie exposée dans ses écrits ne connaissait pas nécessairement une applicabilité concrète dans les œuvres investiguées à l'époque et, par conséquent, elle ne pouvait pas offrir une image tout à fait crédible du développement de la société roumaine.

En 1893, l'existence des revues littéraires a été marquée par l'apparition, à Bucarest, de la revue *Moftul român* (deux fois par semaine, puis une fois, entre 1893-1902, avec quelques courtes périodes de pause dans l'apparition), sous la direction d'I.L. Caragiale et Anton Bacalbaşa. Ayant un sous-titre suggestif – *Revistă spiritistă naţională. Organ bi-ebdomadar pentru răspândirea ştiinţelor oculte în Dacia-Traiană* – sous-titre abandonné à partir du no 9/1893 – cette publication offrait à Caragiale un espace généreux pour manifester son expressivité littéraire avec laquelle il illustrait le monde d'une manière satyrique qui visait directement tous les problèmes de la société roumaine.

Par son caractère ironique et polémique, cette revue privilégiait des confrontations intellectuelles assez sérieuses entre Caragiale et les autres personnalités de l'époque, tels C. Al. Ionescu-Caion, Al.Cazaban, E. Gârleanu, I. Al. Brătescu-Voineşti etc., confrontations qui sont devenues des fragments d'histoire littéraire.

Dans la même direction thématique imposée par la revue de Caragiale se situait aussi la revue *Moş Teacă. Jurnal ţivil şi cazon* (avec une apparition mensuelle entre 1895-1901), sous la direction d'Anton Bacalbaşa et George Ranetti. „Moş Teacă" est considéré le symbole de la stupidité, de l'arrogance exagérée et de l'autorité qui dépassait les frontières de l'armée et qui visait aussi les «tortures» de la sphère littéraire et linguistique. Puisque la revue discutait d'une certaine «torture» intellectuelle, les seuls moyens de combat recommandés ont été ses attaques, tout en respectant les limites de l'esthétique et de la bonne conduite. Ayant comme point de repère le dicton *Castigat ridendo mores*, dicton que l'auteur a utilisé sans réserve, les articles de cette revue ont représenté un véritable combat porté contre les mœurs de l'époque.

Un titre important pour les publications littéraires a été *Contemporanul. Revistă ştiinţifică şi literară*. Publiée à Iaşi, en 1881, sous la direction de I. Nădejde şi V.C. Morţun, son théoricien a été le critique Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. Durant une dizaine d'années d'apparition, cette revue a milité d'une part pour la visibilité des problèmes et des aspects liés à la vie économique, sociale, politique, scientifique et, d'autre part, pour la promotion des valeurs de la langue et de la culture roumaines, tout en soutenant l'existence d'une littérature démocratique qui vise l'art à tendance.

De point de vue social et historique, *Contemporanul* était publié le moment où le mouvement des ouvriers construisait sa propre vision sur la

problématique sociale; cette vision a été alimentée par le socialisme scientifique, mouvement coagulé autour d'autres revues, telles: *Socialistul* (1877), *România junâ* (1889) et *România viitoare* (1881).

La littérature était considérée un produit du milieu social, le résultat du social, Gherea mettant l'accent sur les rapports qui existaient entre l'éthique et l'esthétique et, implicitement, entre le contenu et la forme. Selon lui, l'esthétique devrait être mise en relation avec la sociologie, la psychologie et l'économie politique. Les intellectuels qui s'attachaient à la culture étaient le produit des circonstances sociales et cette réalité était évidente dans leur manière à écrire.

Cette perspective est présente dans les pages de l'*Eveniment literar* où publiaient G. Ibrăileanu, C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Sofia et Ioan Nădejde, C. Mille, N. Beldiceanu, C. Stere etc. La revue continuait les idées de la publication *Contemporanul*, accentuant la finalité de l'art et son caractère social. Les mêmes perspectives apparaissaient en *Fântâna Blanduziei* (1888) et en *Vatra* (1894).

La revue *Vatra. Foaie ilustrată pentru familie* avec une apparition bimensuelle de janvier 1894 jusqu'en août 1896, sous la direction de I. Slavici, I.L. Caragiale et G. Coşbuc, a promu une nouvelle perspective sur la langue et la littérature roumaines. *Vatra* a été considérée une publication culturelle et littéraire à orientation traditionnaliste, ayant des collaborateurs tels S. Puşcariu, Tr. Demetrescu, P. Dulfu, V.D. Păun, R. D. Rosetti, S. Florea Marian, des linguistes, des folkloristes, des écrivains qui ont publié des pages de référence pour la culture roumaine.

Afin d'orienter la littérature vers les valeurs communes du „foyer ancestral roumain" et de contribuer à l'unité culturelle de tous les roumains de tous les espaces géographiques situés entre les frontières politiques, la revue *Vatra* s'inscrivait sur les coordonnées thématiques d'autres publications similaires, telles *Dacia literară* (1840) et *Tribuna* (1884-1903). *Vatra* manifestait son intérêt intellectuel vers les traductions de la littérature universelle, textes écrits par H. de Balzac, V. Hugo, G. de Maupassant, H. C. Andersen, M. Twain, Ch. Dickens, H. Ibsen, A. Cehov, N. Gogol, F. Dostoievski, I.S. Turgheniev etc.

La revue *Floare-albastră* (1888-1889) représentait une continuation de la revue *Vatra*, publication ressentie comme une expression radicale face au sentiment national qui visait l'acte de faire renaître l'esprit populaire roumain, considéré soumis à des orientations aberrantes.

En 1893, sous la direction d'Al. Vlahuţă et A. Urechia, est née à Bucarest la revue *Viaţa* (1893-1896), avec une position oscillante entre la direction esthétique de Maiorescu et le mouvement littéraire de Gherea.

En 1880, avec l'apparition de la première revue symboliste roumaine sous la direction d'Al. Macedonski, *Literatorul* (1880-1919), un changement fondamental se produit dans l'espace des publications littéraires roumaines, ce qui marquait la rupture avec le romantisme. Avec celle-ci, *Liga ortodoxă* (1896-1897), *Revista modernă* (1897-1898), *Viaţa nouă* (1898-1903) et *Pagini literare*

(1899-1900) allaient ouvrir le chemin vers la modernité et vers la neutralisation des anciennes tendances existantes dans la presse littéraire de l'époque. Dans *Literatorul* publiaient des poètes tels T. Demetrescu, Şt. Petică, I. C. Săvescu, C. Pavelescu, T. Arghezi, G. Bacovia, I. Pillat etc.

La publication *Revista literară* est parue chaque semaine à Bucarest, depuis avril 1885 jusqu'au novembre 1905, ayant quelques numéros publiés sous le titre publication éclectique, sous la direction de Ş. Vellescu (1885) et Th. M. Stoenescu (directeur entre 1887-1907 et rédacteur entre 1885-1886), ayant comme rédacteurs C.A. Ionescu (1901), Th. D. Speranţia (1902-1903) et Al. I. Şonţu (1904-1907). Les textes publiés dans les pages de cette revue, signés par des collaborateurs tels Al. Macedonski, D. Zamfirescu, Tr. Demetrescu, M. Demetriade, B. Florescu, Al. Vlahuţă, B. Ştefănescu-Delavrancea, Al. Davila, M. Sadoveanu et C. Mille, représentaient un mélange de prose, théâtre, vers, esthétique, études de critique et d'histoire littéraires, fait qui dénotait également un certain manque d'orientation programmatique.

La revue *Albina. Revistă enciclopedică populară*, avec une apparition mensuelle à Bucarest, depuis octobre 1897- août 1916, a réuni des noms de valeur de la culture roumaine, tels pe P. Gîrboviceanu, C. Rădulescu-Motru, G. Adamescu, P. Dulfu, G. Coşbuc, I. Kalinderu qui ont milité pour la nécessité de contribuer à la promotion et au développement de la langue et de la littérature roumaine.

Revista nouă, avec une apparition hebdomadaire à Bucarest, depuis décembre 1887 – septembre 1895, sous la direction de Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, a réuni un collectif de rédaction composé de personnalités roumaines importantes, telles: B. Şt. Delavrancea, Al. Vlahuţă, G. Ionescu-Ion, I. Bianu, Th. D. Speranţia, I. Ghica, D.A. Sturdza. L'orientation de cette visait les domaines de la littérature, de la linguistique, de la philologie, de l'histoire littéraire, du folklore et du théâtre, l'histoire politique roumaine et, sporadiquement, les journalistes visaient l'architecture, la géologie, la biologie, les sciences exactes, la chimie etc.

Il faut reconnaître le rôle décisif de la revue *Familia*, sous la direction d'Iosif Vulcan, publication qui se proclamait un miroir fidèle de l'évolution intellectuelle roumaine. Ayant le sous-titre de *Foaie enciclopedică şi beletristică cu ilustraţiuni*, cette revue a cessé apparaître en 1906. Parmi les poètes et les écrivains prestigieux qui ont collaboré avec des articles dans les pages de cette publication, il faut mentionner M. Eminescu, V. Alecsandri, D. Bolintineanu, T. Cipariu, G. Coşbuc, Al. Vlahuţă, B.P. Hasdeu, B. Delavrancea, D. Zamfirescu. Le trait définitoire des journalistes de *Familia* a été leur refus d'être perçus en tant qu'adeptes d'une certaine idéologie littéraire.

La revue *Telegraful român* est née en 1853, à Sibiu, à l'initiative d'Andrei Şaguna, en tant que publication officielle de la Métropolie orthodoxe de Transylvanie, étant considérée la revue avec la plus évidente longévité de la culture roumaine. Ses articles avaient un caractère religieux, social, politique et

culturel, étant toujours argumentés de point de vue historique et linguistique dans un contexte social défavorable. Au fur et à mesure, la problématique des articles est devenue plus large, y compris des articles avec des informations littéraires et artistiques de l'actualité de l'époque, des comptes rendus et des traductions qui encourageaient les jeunes talents.

La publication *Revista critică-literară* est parue à Iaşi, de janvier 1893 – juin 1897, sous la direction d'Aron Densuşianu. Parmi ses collaborateurs constants, il faut mentionner N. Densuşianu, Ovid Densuşianu, S. Florea Marian et T. Bud. Les textes de cette revue visaient tout particulièrement l'étude de l'histoire et de la critique littéraires, le folklore et l'ethnographie roumaines, de même que l'histoire et la philologie nationales.

La IXe décennie de la presse de province se situait sous la domination de la revue *Tribuna* (depuis 1884, à Sibiu), dont le directeur et le rédacteur responsable était l'écrivain I. Slavici, qui militait pour l'unité spirituelle nationale. Sa démarche se réalisait par le biais de l'étude de la langue et de la littérature roumaines, du respect des idées réformatrices, ayant comme point de repère l'actualité littéraire et culturelle de Bucarest.

Après l'an 1900, l'espace des publications roumaines était composé de plus de cinq cents de titres, des revues et des journaux à caractère social et politique. D'ailleurs, le monde de la presse littéraire devenait progressivement un monde actif et expansif qui se proposait de refléter les mouvements des idées littéraires pendant une époque attentive aux démarches de modernisation et d'affiliation aux nouvelles tendances européennes de la sphère sociale et culturelle.

III. En guise de conclusion.

Notre démarche a visé la réalisation d'une approche descriptive et analytique de la presse littéraire aux frontières des deux siècles importants pour l'évolution de la culture roumaine. En fait, il s'agit d'un des plus importants moments que toute la société roumaine a traversé dans un remarquable processus de modernisation historique et culturelle.

Aux frontières des siècles passés, tous les segments de la société ont subi une transformation essentielle grâce à l'intellectualité roumaine qui manifestait son désir de connaître les événements sociaux et culturaux de l'Europe. Les personnalités culturelles roumaines étaient parfaitement conscientes de la différence majeure qui existait entre les cultures européennes et la culture roumaine, entre les mentalités de l'époque et, par conséquent, elles ont lutté pour construire de nouvelles représentations de l'identité roumaine dans tout l'espace européen.

La fin du XIX e siècle et le commencement du XXe siècle ont été définitivement marqués par la prestigieuse activité déroulée par les grands classiques de la littérature et de la culture roumaines, par tous les actes volontaires de matérialisation de la pensée intellectuelle.

La presse littéraire de l'époque a été directement impliquée dans le processus de modernisation de la langue et de la littérature roumaines par toutes ses valences qui ont manifesté un grand impact sur le traitement des aspects significatifs liés à la problématique de la culture.

D'ailleurs, la société en soi, de même que les publications de l'époque ont construit une identité nationale particulière par les représentations sociales et linguistiques offertes, tout en faisant apparaître de nouvelles images et de nouveaux modèles dignes à être respectés dans la culture roumaine. Pour faire une évaluation globale de la presse littéraire aux frontières des siècles, nous pouvons considérer que les publications de ce type particulier de discours ont construit une étape importante pour la consolidation de toute l'identité roumaine.

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ANALIZA UNUI PRODUS POPULAR CULTURE. STUDIU DE CAZ: SERIALUL DE TELEVIZIUNE *DOCTOR HOUSE*

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Abstract: In the definition of popular culture are faced enough difficulties, because of the diversity and spread of this field: from football matches to life in high school, cartoons until sope operas. The objectives of the proposed analysis are identifying intertextuality and entertainment features of a popular culture product, in television series Doctor House. The building of the the popular culture model starts from the mythical paradigms or used stereotypes and conventions that are easily recognizable to reach the public, such as quotes that remind us of the famous detective Sherlock Holmes. More than just identifying patterns, popular culture product took into account the target audience and satisfy the need to unwind, to relax, to forget about everyday life.
Keywords: popular culture, Doctor House, intertextuality, entertainment, TV series

1. Popular culture. Definiţie, tipologii, caracteristici

Produsul popular culture propus pentru analiză este serialul de televiziune „Doctor House". Pentru a putea pune bazele unei analize pertinente, într-o primă instanţă va trebui să definim atât conceptul de "popular culture", din mai multe perspective şi conform mai multor accepţiuni, trăsăturile fundamentale ale acestui concept, cât şi ipostazele în care produsele popular culture se manifestă în spaţiul public şi/sau mediatic.

În definirea conceptului de popular culture sunt întâmpinate destule dificultăţi, asta şi din cauza diversităţii de răspândire a acestui domeniu: de la meciuri de fotbal, la viaţa din timpul liceului, la desene animate, până la *sope operas*. Cu toate acestea, putem identifica unele caracteristici definitorii

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comune; popular culture se raportează la activităţile şi la distracţii din timpul liber, aşadar la activităţile din afara constrângerilor muncii. De asemenea, produsele popular culture sunt percepute de publicul telespectator ca oferind forme de placere şi de divertisment.

Dincolo de unele aspecte pozitive, Theodor Adorno, în studiul „Reconsiderarea industriei culturii"[1], identifică şi consecinţele acestor produse popular culture asupra consumatorilor: popular culture produce prin intermediul filmului, al radio-ului şi al revistelor, bunuri culturale standardizate cu intenţia de a manipula masele şi a le conduce spre pasivitate. Totodată produsele popular culture oferă „plăcerile uşoare", fără a solicita niciun efort din partea acestora, ci doar prin simplul lucru de a „consuma" aceste produse îi determină pe aceştia din urmă sa devină mulţumiţi, ignorând, în fapt, problemele cotidiene cu care se confruntă în lumea reală.

Într-o altă accepţiune, cea prezentată de John Storey în cartea „Teorii Culturale şi Popular Culture"[2], în sfera popular culture putem include orice produs, care într-un anumit interval de timp sau perioada istorică nu respectă formele canonice de cult oficial recunoscute şi comunicate de instituţiile şi autorităţile acelei perioade. Ca să putem înţelege mai exact ce reprezintă un produs popular culture, trebuie să stabilim ce nu intră în această sfera. Astfel, vom raporta popular culture la cultura înaltă, cea a elitelor. În mai toate definiţiile conceptului de cultură, se pune mai mult accent pe cultura înaltă şi rareori se face referire şi la popular culture. În fapt, putem deduce că popular culture reprezintă acel tip de cultură care a rămas după ce am hotărât ce înseamnă „cultură înaltă". Cu toate acestea, indiferent de polul cultural în care se afla un produs, „înalt" sau „jos", Jean Baudrillard a afirmat că produsele culturale sau, mai bine spus, cultura „nu mai este produsă pentru a dura. Se menţine, desigur, ca instanţă universală, ca referinţă ideală [...] dar, în realitate, chiar prin modul în care este produsă, ea este supusă aceleaşi vocaţii a actualităţii ca şi bunurile materiale"[3]. De asemenea, popular culture este prezentat ca fiind ansamblul practicilor de consum ale culturii comerciale furnizată într-o mare măsură de mass-media.

Cele cinci trăsături constitutive care stau la baza conceptului de "popular culture" sunt: *intertextualitatea, caracterul conservator al produsului, caracterul mimetic al produsului, neutralizarea, plăcerea sau divertismentul.*

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[1] http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC20folder/AdornoMassCult.html, accesat în data de 7 iunie 2012

[2] John, Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* Editura Pretince Hall, Londra, 2001, p. 6.

[3] Jean, Baudrillard, *Societatea de consum. Mituri şi structuri,* Editura Comunicare.ro, Bucureşti, 2008, p. 17.

Intertextualitate, potrivit lui John Fiske, porneşte de la premisa că „orice text trebuie, în mod necesar, citit în relaţie cu alte texte"[4]. De asemenea, intertextualitatea „există, mai degrabă, în spaţiul dintre texte" şi nu rezidă dintr-o serie de aluzii clare, directe, pe care un text le face la un alt text. Acelaşi Fiske face o distincţie clară între două tipuri de relaţii intertextuale, create fie pe verticală, fie pe orizontală. Relaţiile intertextuale pe orizontală se referă la acele serii de texte primare „care sunt, mai mult sau mai puţin explicite, legate între ele, de obicei prin gen, personaje sau conţinut, iar cele pe verticală „între un text primar, ca de pildă un program sau un serial de televizune, şi alte texte, de un alt tip, care fac referinţe explicite la el".

Prin **caracterul conservator** putem întelege matriţarea generică şi prefabricatele, printre care putem aminti şi serializarea.

Caracterul formulaic al produsului popular culture reprezintă modul în care miturile şi stereotipurile sunt folosite pentru comunicarea anumitor modele.

Prin **divertisment**, ca funcţie a mass-media, se înţelege timpul destinat de către publicul spectactor relaxării, recreării şi distracţiei. De astfel, în opinia lui Ion Albulescu, exprimată în cartea sa, „Educaţie şi mass-media/comunicare şi învăţare în societatea informaţională", mass-media înlesnesc o ambianţă compensatorie consumatorului lor, care permite refacerea echilibrului lui psihic. Mai mult, „numeroşi autori (J. Stoetzel, E. Morin, J. Cazeneuve ş.a.) au vorbit chiar despre un rol psihoterapeutic (catarhic) al mass-media: provocarea unei reacţii de eliberare a individului, prin proiectarea şi trăirea simbolică a unor emoţii refulate sau a unor conflicte nerezolvate, care îi perturbă viaţa psihică. Receptiv la masiva ofertă de divertisment a mass-media, publicul larg are ocazia de a trăi prin procură, simbolic, ceea ce îi este refuzat în înlănţuirea obişnuită a vieţii cotidiene" .[5]

2. Studiu de caz: Serialul de televiziune Doctor House
2.1. Obiectivul general al cercetării
O: Identificarea elementelor constitutive ale unui produs popular culture în serialul de televiziune Doctor House

2.2. Obiectivele specifice ale cercetării
O1: Identificarea intertextualităţii în produsul popular culture Doctor House
O2: Identificarea divertismentului, ca trăsătura specifică unui produs popular culture, în serialul de televiziune Doctor House

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[4] John, Fiske, *Introduction to communication studies, 2nd edition,* Editura Routledge, Londra, 1990, p. 82.
[5] Ion, Albulescu, *Educaţia şi mass-media/ comunicare şi învăţare în societatea informaţională*, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 34.

2.3. Metodologie

Canalul ales pentru acest studiu este postul de televiziune. Analiza acestui produs se va realiza prin prisma a trei trăsături care stau la baza definirii conceptului de popular culture, și anume: *intertextualitatea, caracterul conservator al produsului* și *divertismentul sau plăcerea.* Astfel, vor fi analizate pasajele din alte opere literare sau seriale pe care serialul Doctor House le folosește, cum ar fi volumele detectivului Sherlock Holmes. Vom raporta trăsăturile specifice ale unui popular culture la „cultura înaltă", cum ar fi opera lui Leonardo da Vinci, Cina cea de taină. De asemenea, vom identifica elementele din serialul Doctor House care ajută la satisfacerea nevoii publicului țintă de a se destinde, de a se relaxa, de a uita de cotidian.

2.4. Prezentarea serialului „Doctor House"

Serialul de televiziune „Doctor House" este un serial american de tip dramă medicală, ce a debutat pe canalul american de televiziune FOX la data de 16 noiembrie 2004. Doctor House a fost creat de către David Shore și a fost produs de regizorul de film Bryan Singer. Serialul se concetrează în jurul lui Dr. Gregory House (interpretat de actorul din Marea Britanie, Hugh Laurie), un personaj arogant, cinic, mizantrop, plin de păcate, dificil, care merge greu, din cauza unei probleme la un picior, dar – dincolo de toate defectele – nimeni nu-i contestă geniul său în domeniul medical. Acolo unde colegii lui nu găsesc soluții, ca un adevarat detectiv, dr. House descoperă în corpul pacienților săi sursa răului. Filmul urmărește povestea acestui medic asocial, lipsit de orice maniere și care, dacă ar putea, ar fi în stare să nu vorbească nici măcar cu pacienții lui. Și pentru că se confruntă zilnic cu propria boală (provenită de la un accident din trecut) el poartă un baston tot timpul, care îi subliniază și mai mult atitudinea brutală, deloc prietenoasă. Deși comportamentul lui atinge adesea limitele antisocialului, House este un diagnostician genial ale cărui gândire neconvențională și instincte fără cusur îi aduc respect din partea tuturor celor care îl cunosc, potrivit sinopsisului filmului prezentat pe site-ul www.cinemagia.ro[6]. Acesta conduce o echipă de diagnosticieni în spitalul fictiv Princeton-Plainsboro Teaching Hospital (PPTH) în New Jersey, Statele Unite ale Americii.

Conceptul acestui serial a fost prezentat, în 2004, de către David Shore și Paul Attanasio, împreună cu partenerul de afaceri al lui Attanasio, Katie Jacobs, postului de televiziune american Fox. Aceștia l-au promovat ca pe un serial medical detectiv, realizat într-un spital în care medicii investighează simptomele și cauzele lor. Chiar dacă compania de televiziune a cumparat serialul, președintele postului de televiziune Fox (Gail Berman) a cerut explicit echipei de producție ca ideea centrală să fie despre medicină, însă „nu vreau să văd halate albe mergând pe hol". Această afirmație a fost receptată de producători, care au schimbat semnificativ forma finală a serialului.

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[6] www.cinemagia.ro/filme/house-md-dr-house-20009/

Timp de opt ani, serialul a adunat oameni din întreaga lume, generând intrigi şi mister în cazuri medicale neobişnuite, aidoma celebrelor mistere rezolvate de detectivul Sherlock Holmes. Mai mult decât atât, aceste cazuri au fost un real catalizator pentru dezbaterea problemelor de ordin filosofic şi etic şi a deciziilor luate de personaje, însă toate au relevat mai multe sau mai puţine lucruri despre caracterul fiecăruia dintre medicii care se perindau anual în echipa lui Gregory House.

Pe tot parcursul episodului, membrii echipei întâmpinau mari probleme de înţelegere sau pe deplină apreciere cu privire la metodele de relaţionare sau strict medicale aplicate de House. De astfel, el nu acceptă cazurile banale, obişnuite, ci atenţia şi interesul său se îndreaptă către cazuri "cool" (expresie folosită adesea de acesta). În final, spectacolul oferă un deznodământ fericit, din care actanţii realizau că, indiferent de metodele sale neconvenţionale şi comportamentul său antisocial, fără geniul său pacienţii în cauză ar fi murit.

Filosofia de viaţă a personajului central este o butada conform căreia „toată lumea minte" (Everybody lies). În acest sens, Gregory House şi-a propus să-şi demonstreze, iarăşi şi iarăşi, că unii oameni sunt în stare să mintă chiar dacă de minciuna lor depinde propria lor viaţă.

2.5. Analiza serialului „Doctor House", prin prisma trăsăturilor fundamentale ale Popular Culture

Caracterul intertextual poatea fi sesizat, în mod constant, în serialele de televiziune, care fac referire la texte sau episoade anterioare. Raportându-ne la serialul Doctor House, observăm multe referinţe intertexuale la celebrul personaj Sherlock Holmes. Chiar şi creatorul personajului Gregory House (David Shore) a recunoscut, într-un interviu publicat în ianuarie 2005 pentru publicaţia Zap2it[7], că „Sherlock Holmes, dar şi un fizician din lumea reală, Dr. Joseph Bell, m-au inspirat în crearea lui Doctor House". De asemenea, David Shore afirmă că speră să „creioneze" din ce în ce mai multe paralele între serialul Doctor House şi filmul Sherlock Holmes prin atribuirea celui mai bun prieten al lui Gregory House multe dintre caracteristicile Doctorului Watson, „mâna dreaptă" a detectivului. „De fiecare dată când pronunţi *puzzle* sau *deducţie briliantă* în aceeaşi propoziţie, inevitabil te gândeşti la detectivul Holmes şi la Doctor Watson", a mai spus creatorul serialului Doctor House, exprimând câteva citate asemănătoare din serialul Doctor House.

În tabelul de mai jos puteţi vedea câteva caracteristici comune dintre cele două personaje, Sherlock Holmes şi Gregory House:

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[7] http://www.housemd-guide.com/holmesian.php

Sherlock Holmes	Gregory House, M.D.
„Poţi deduce multe lucruri pur şi simplu uitându-te la o persoană"	Poţi deduce şi diagnostica multe lucruri pur şi simplu uitându-te la o persoană
Numele lui se aseamănă foarte mult cu "Homes" (Case)	Numele lui mai poate înseamna „Casă"
Sherlock foloseşte cocaina pentru a scăpa de plictiseală	House foloseşte Vicodin pentru problemele la picior, şi de asemenea pentru plictiseala şi durerea de a interacţiona cu oameni „proşti"
Holmes îl strigă pe prietenul lui cel mai bun după numele de familie, Watson	House îl strigă pe prietenul lui cel mai bun după numele de familie, Wilson
Este arogant. Spune că smerenia este o minciună	Gregory House este extrem de arogant şi afirmă constant că „toată lumea minte"
Este apatic şi leneş când nu are un caz la care să lucreze	Este leneş până când este forţat să se uite la un caz care-l intrigă
Muzica este foarte importantă pentru Sherlock Holmes şi cânta la vioară	Muzica este foarte importantă pentru Doctor House şi cânta la pian
Este distant cu lumea, mai puţin cu prietenul lui	Îi ţine pe toţi la distanţă, cu excepţia prietenului lui cel mai bun
Sherlock Holmes locuieşte pe strada Baker nr. 221B	În sezonul 2, episodul 7, intitulat „Vânătoarea" descoperim că Gregory House locuieşte la numărul 221B[8]

De asemenea, intertextualitatea se poate observa în cazul citatelor din prima carte Sherlock Holmes, intitulată „Un studiu în Scarlet", dar şi din a doua carte, intitulată "Semnul celor patru".

Spre exemplu, în cartea „Un studiu în Scarlet", Doctor Watson spune despre Sherlock Holmes: „A fost o întreagă lume a sarcasmului în vocea lui, atunci când a vorbit". Aproximativ acelaşi lucru spune şi Dr. Wilson despre Dr. House de fiecare dată când personajul principal dovedeşte un mare apetit pentru sarcasm. Mai mult, Sherlock Holmes spune despre el: „Eliminând toţi ceilalţi factori, singurul care rămâne este adevărul". Raportăm acest citat la motto-ul lui Doctor House, „Toată lumea minte" şi, în genere, întreaga sa filosofie de viaţă, constatăm similitudini între cele două personaje.

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[8] http://house-md.livejournal.com/641963.html#cutid1

Plecând de la premiza că popular culture este acel tip de cultură care a mai rămas după ce am înlăturat „cultura înaltă", putem constata că în serialul Doctor House, dar și în alte seriale difuzate pe postul de televiziune Fox, sunt parodiate sau doar copiate multe scene aparținând culturii înalte. Spre exemplu, putem observa că afișul de promovare a sezonul 4 este inspirat din celebra pictură a lui Leonardo Da Vinci, „Cina cea de taină", în care Doctor House era asemuit cu Mântuitorul Iisus Hristos, iar ceilalți membri ai echipei erau apostolii săi.

Figure 1 - Leonardo Da Vinci - Cina cea de taină

Figure 2 - Afișul de promovare a sezonului 4 a serialului Doctor House

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Divertismentul în serialul Doctor House este unul accentuat. Chiar dacă episoadele sunt filmate într-un spital (un mediu sobru), în mijlocul unor cazuri medicale foarte complicate, umor nu lipseşte în niciun moment.

Voi enumera câteva scene comice, pe care mulţi le pot considera ca făcând parte din umorul negru:

- în câteva episoade, doctor House este surprins de colegii săi în timp ce mânca, asculta muzică sau pur şi simplu medita chiar în morgă sau într-o sală în care se aflau pacienţii în comă.

- într-un episod, doctor House, care nu a reuşit să salveze un pacient care vroia să-i ofere ficatul prietenului său, diagnosticat înainte de moarte cu hepatită, le propune colegilor medici, la modul cel mai serios cu putinţă, o practică extrem de neobişnuită: vindecarea ficatului celui care a decedat şi implantarea ficatului vindecat în corpul prietenului său. Uimiţi, chiar şocaţi, colegii din echipa doctorului House îl întreabă „Vrei să facem un diagnostic diferenţiat pe o persoană decedată?", urmat de răspunsul liniştit „O să încercăm s-o vindecăm!". A urmat o altă întrebare venită de la un coleg: „Vrei să vindeci moartea?", la care răspuns lui Gregory House a fost un râs diabolic, care ne aminteşte de doctorul care l-a înviat pe Frankenstein. Scena respectivă a avut, pe Youtube, peste un milion de vizualizări, iar fanii serialului au folosit acel râs şi în glumele cu prietenii sau ca ringtone al telefonului mobil.

- încă de la începuturile serialului, doctor House reuşeşte să-şi convingă colegii, mult mai serioşi decât el, să facă pariuri pe bani cu privire la diagnosticele pe care aceştia le dau pacienţilor. După câteva refuzuri pe care aceştia le-au argumentat ca fiind lipsite de etică, Gregory House, prin comportamentul său manipulator şi (aparent) imatur, reuşeşte să creeze o întreagă competiţie a pariurilor în echipa sa. Acest aspect a reuşit să-i apropie pe telespectatori şi să-i facă să înţeleagă că o altă filosofie de viaţă a lui House, „rezultatul final contează, indiferent de mijloace (convenţionale sau neconvenţionale)", este una care trebuie să fie luată în calcul, chiar în practica medicală. De altfel, telespectatorii au înţeles, după câteva episoade în care s-au familiarizat cu comportamentul lui House, că până la urmă orice persoană trebuie evaluată mai mult după rezultatele pe care aceastăle generează, decât după comportamentul său. Atât colegii, cât şi pacienţii, au făcut de multe ori abstracţie de comportamentul său bizar sau neconvenţional şi l-au apreciat pentru faptul că a reuşit să găsească o rezolvare atunci când nimeni nu o găsea.

Concluzie

În urma analizei efectuate, putem afirmă că serialul de televiziune „Doctor House" aparţine sferei popular culture întrucât întruneşte caracteristicile sale specifice.

În construcţia modelului se porneşte de la paradigme mitice sau sunt folosite stereotipuri şi convenţii, care sunt uşor recognoscibile pentru a ajunge

la public, cum ar fi citate care ne aduc aminte de celebrul detectiv Sherlock Holmes. Mai mult decât identificarea unor modele, produsul popular culture a avut în vedere şi satisfacerea nevoii publicului ţintă de a se destinde, de a se relaxa, de a uita de cotidian. Astfel, urmărind acest produs, publicul resimte acea plăcere echivalenta a unei forme de libertate şi de escapism.

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III. RECENZII

**Pierre Bourdieu, *Regulile artei. Geneza şi structura cîmpului literar*,
IIème édition, texte traduit par Laura Albulescu et Bogdan Ghiu, préface
de Mircea Martin, Grupul Editorial ART, Bucureşti, 2007**

La synthèse de Pierre Bourdieu est un plaidoyer en faveur de l'analyse scientifique (sociologique) de la littérature, désignée, à son avis, non pas à limiter, mais à intensifier l'expérience littéraire, une approche nuancée concernant les conditions sociales de la production et de la réception de l'œuvre d'art; elle comprend non seulement des éléments dignes d'être pris en considération, mais aussi quelques affirmations controversées. Si nous devons répondre aux deux questions en guise de prémisse de l'argumentation, cela va de soi que la lecture des textes littéraires n'est pas une lecture exclusivement littéraire (même si elle est la plus indiquée), ni même l'analyse scientifique «n'est pas désignée à coup sûr» à épuiser la spécificité de l'œuvre littéraire. Justement parce que le texte littéraire se caractérise par une grande ouverture, très bien mise en évidence par les linguistes et les sémioticiens, il est si permissif à la lecture et interprétation; mais il ne faut pas omettre deux de ses attributs fondamentaux: l'univers fictionnel et le but esthétique. Et, renoncer autant à l'emphase qu'à l'ironie, nous ne voyons aucun obstacle pour qu'il soit nommé *le producteur de l'œuvre littéraire* utilisant le terme consacré de *créateur*.

Cependant, il y a un brin de vérité dans l'affirmation, contestée par Bourdieu, que l'œuvre d'art (dans ce cas, littéraire) se constitue en une provocation adressée à la compréhension, qu'elle résiste à l'explication. Il ne faut pas ignorer – même si Bourdieu le fait – les nombreuses recherches entreprises partout dans le monde par les critiques, les historiens, les théoriciens littéraires, parfois par les écrivains eux-mêmes sur leur objet d'étude; ils se sont servi d'un appareil conceptuel complexe et raffiné, sans même exclure l'investigation de type sociologique (par exemple, un double système critique structuraliste-sociologique; Nicolae Manolescu, lui-même, l'a utilisé dans son étude sur le roman – pour rappeler en passant l'espace théorique roumain). De telles analyses démontrent la reconnaissance dont l'approche scientifique de la littérature bénéficie à l'intérieur du champ littéraire, la confiance en la connaissance rationnelle, sans nier, cependant, l'existence d'une connaissance spécifique, artistique (*sensible*). Ce qui n'équivaut pas à un privilège accordé à l'art/à l'artiste, mais à une reconnaissance de l'unicité de l'être humain, de ces *prédispositions*, cette fois-ci innées, biologiques, et non pas socialement héritées. Et puisque l'antinomie *intelligible/ sensible* ne peut pas être éludée, le sociologue essayera de la dépasser par la construction des «systèmes de relations intelligibles, capables de rendre compte de données sensibles».

Si l'attitude narcissiste, i.e. sacraliser l'objet d'art et l'auteur (une attitude décelée ça et là et que Pierre Bourdieu n'oublie pas de sanctionner, mais qu'il généralise à tort) est endommagée, son contraire – réduire l'œuvre d'art à sa pure nécessité historique, à l'identification de ses contingences génétiques –, n'est pas souhaitable. C'est ce que notre auteur essaie d'éviter, sans complètement réussir (en parenthèse, la définition de sa démarche est mal formulée: «Cela signifie, bel et bien, regarder en face les choses et les voir telles quelles»).

Son ambition est de faire de l'investigation sociologique une analyse «strictement interne»; pour exemplifier, il l'applique sur l'oeuvre de Flaubert *L'Éducation sentimentale*. S'il n'y a rien d'étonnant dans la conclusion selon laquelle «la structure de l'espace social dans lequel se déroulent les aventures de Frédéric, arrive à coïncider avec la structure de l'espace social dans lequel l'auteur lui-même est situé», il est difficile de comprendre comment cette structure devient «la structure immanente de l'œuvre»; c'est ce qu'il y a de plus contestable est le principe selon lequel cette structure «à peine énoncée, devient indiscutable. De toute façon, il résulte que Flaubert peut être considéré un socioanalyste, de l'œuvre et de lui-même; ce qu'il appelle *éducation sentimentale* n'est autre chose que «le processus de vieillissement social», qu'il soumet à l'analyse. Par une sorte d'expérience sociologique, l'auteur du roman choisit les personnages, il leur distribue les atouts (ces «propriétés incorporées», et «le capital»-économique, culturel, social) et il les met dans le champ du pouvoir, caractérisé par les deux pôles entre lesquels s'exerce une série de forces sociales, d'attractions et de rejets (dont la manifestation est psychologiquement motivée). Une fois établis l'enjeu et les trajets permis à l'intérieur du champ, la structure de l'espace social est re-créée. Il ne reste à l'observateur que de constater le fonctionnement impeccable des mécanismes sociaux, et l'affirmation de la loi de l'incompatibilité entre les univers sociaux qui s'excluent réciproquement: la carrière artistique et le monde des affaires. Le double jeu, cet essai de réconcilier deux contraires: «l'art et l'argent, l'amour fou et l'amour d'intérêt», s'avère inefficace parce qu'il défie la loi fondamentale du champ du pouvoir; cette loi, que le protagoniste Frédéric découvre progressivement, constitue son *éducation sentimentale*.

Ce que Bourdieu voit juste de constater est que «à travers „une histoire" l'auteur réussit à révéler la structure la plus profondément cachée, la plus obscure, étant donné qu'elle est la plus directement liée à ses investissements originaires et qu'elle constitue même le principe des structures mentales et des stratégies littéraires». Puisque, continue-t-il, Frédéric n'est pas une projection de l'auteur, comme nous avons l'habitude de le considérer, mais «une interprétation de l'objectivation de soi»; les preuves mises en discussion sont la correspondance de Flaubert et son rejet concernant les déterminations sociales. Cependant, Flaubert se sépare de son personnage par la démarche esthétique «par l'acte même d'écrire l'histoire de Frédéric», opposant à l'indétermination passive du personnage, l'indétermination active du créateur. Par ailleurs, «Flaubert met en circulation la formule générative à l'origine de sa propre création romanesque: la relation du double refus entre les positions opposées aux divers espaces sociaux et les prises de position correspondantes». Si une telle analyse de la genèse de l'œuvre dans un contexte historique donné peut être, dans le cas ci-dessus, justifiée et possible, la question inévitable vise la possibilité de généraliser la méthode. La réponse semble plutôt négative, si l'on prend en considération non seulement les autres genres littéraires, mais aussi les autres formules romanesques ou les autres auteurs.

Pour consolider les conclusions concernant le principe génératif de l'œuvre flaubertienne et la formule par laquelle il définit son esthétique – «formalisme réaliste» –, Pierre Bourdieu soumet à l'observation, patiemment et fréquemment, le contexte historique et le champ littéraire français de la deuxième moitié du XIXème siècle. Il analyse les conditions économiques spécifiques, les nouvelles formes de domination, l'ingérence du politique, les rapports entre le *salon littéraire et la bohème*, les procès intentés aux écrivains, le développement *d'un monde économique à l'envers* (ce

mécanisme que les artistes mettent à l'œuvre et dans lequel ils sont enfermés; l'artiste triomphe sur le plan symbolique s'il échoue sur le plan économique etc.), c'est-à-dire tous ces éléments qui ont mené à la formation du champ littéraire et artistique, et puis à son évolution jusqu'à l'acquisition d'un haut niveau d'autonomie. Il est nouveau pour un sociologue d'ajouter à sa démonstration des considérations strictement littéraires, par exemple des renvois à l'emploi du style indirecte libre (impliquant toutes les conséquences), à l'ambigüité du point de vue narratif, à l'abandon de la perspective unique, etc. qui lui servent admirablement pour justifier la polarisation et les hiérarchies de ce champ spécialisé, les différences entre les genres ou les différences stylistiques et thématiques. Il le fait risquant une formulation pas tout à fait scientifique: «Précisément à travers le travail sur la langue […] opère la magie évocatrice qui, tout comme une incantation, fait apparaître le réel. C'est seulement quand l'écrivain se laisse posséder par les mots qu'il découvre que ces mots pensent pour lui et lui dévoilent le réel».

Peut-être que le chapitre le plus rigoureux, une enquête sociologique dans le vrai sens du mot, est celui dans lequel est analysé le marché des biens symboliques: leur production et leur circulation, les deux cycles de production dirigés par des logiques économiques opposées, le rôle que les institutions et les autres agents impliqués dans les mécanismes du marché jouent. Les exemples, les statistiques et les graphiques offerts rendent compte de la finesse analytique de l'auteur.

Toutefois, Bourdieu met son entière force spéculative au service de la consolidation d'une science des œuvres, appuyée sur sa propre théorie des champs, le concept de champ permettant, selon lui, «le dépassement de l'opposition entre la lecture interne et l'analyse externe», bénéficiant des gains de deux approches. Il part de la démonstration du mythe fondateur du «projet originaire» et il entreprend une digression critique dans la tradition théorétique littéraire (la linguistique saussurienne, le formalisme russe, la sémiosis structuraliste, la génétique littéraire). Son point de vue s'oppose au principe qui affirme une évolution interne des genres, déplaçant l'accent sur la structure des relations objectives qui agissent à l'intérieur du champ, vu comme un univers social autonome. Ainsi, la plus grande partie des stratégies littéraires «sont surdéterminées et de nombreux „choix" sont *des coups double*s, à la fois esthétiques et politiques, internes et externes». Bref, nous allons voir en quoi consiste la théorie proposée.

Le champ se compose d'un réseau de relations objectives entre *positions* (de domination, de subordination, de complémentarité, etc.), qui positions correspondent aux *prises de position* homologues (des œuvres, des polémiques, des manifestes, etc.). Les prises de position sont l'enjeu d'un conflit permanent, le résultat d'un combat; leur sens et leur valeur sont variables. Celui qui entre dans le champ de production culturelle acquiert *un code spécifique* de comportement et d'expression, il découvre un ensemble de contraintes et un ensemble d'emplois possibles, c'es-à-dire «l'univers limité *des libertés sous des contraintes* et *des potentialités objectives* qu'il propose: des problèmes à résoudre, des options stylistiques ou thématiques à exploiter, des contradictions à dépasser, même des ruptures révolutionnaires à réaliser» (*n. tr.*). Il est à noter que ces actes révolutionnaires doivent potentiellement exister comme *des lacunes structurales*, qui ne peuvent être perçues que par ceux qui détiennent une certaine position dans le champ et un certain *habitus* (un système de dispositions). Ce qu'il arrive à l'intérieur du champ (les succès ou les échecs, la consécration ou l'exclusion) conduit à la redéfinition permanente du «projet créateur» et à un certain trajet social et artistique. Donc, il y a

une nécessité de champ, une logique de la concurrence, voire des choix qui, inconsciemment, visent un profit matériel ou symbolique.

En somme, conformément à la démonstration de Pierre Bourdieu, la liberté de création s'avère illusoire. Elle s'inscrit dans un univers limité des possibles, se manifeste notamment comme potentialité, dépend d'un habitus spécifique et d'une position favorable dans la distribution du champ – un vrai terrain miné – se soumettant à sa logique spécifique. Si nous nous posons, en quelque sorte, le problème de l'existence d'un calcul conscient des stratégies, la réponse reçue serait que la lucidité, en tout cas partielle, varie en fonction des agents proprement-dits et des moments. Quant à la transformation probable du champ, «elle est inscrite, à chaque instant, dans la structure du champ, mais chaque agent choisit son avenir – participant de cette manière à la transformation du champ – réalisant les potentialités objectives qui déterminent la relation entre ses pouvoirs et les objectifs possibles inscrits dans le champ».

Voici, donc, une véritable tentative d'exhibition des mécanismes sociaux qui entraînent l'apparition des œuvres d'art, la construction d'une théorie permettant de décrire et de comprendre l'effort déployé par l'écrivain «contre les déterminations et grâce à elles». Ainsi, il est compréhensible pourquoi, pour Bourdieu, l'option déclarée de Mallarmé de refuser «l'élimination sans pitié de la fiction» n'est pas une solution satisfaisante: elle maintient la prééminence du plaisir esthétique à la compréhension.

À quel point cette méthode proposée est utilisable et fertile, reste à voir. Mais elle se constitue d'un point de vue original, capable de provoquer la réflexion et de tempérer de nombreuses formulations pathétiques et mystifiantes du monde de lettres. Indiscutablement, la synthèse sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu gagne une place bien définie à l'intérieur du tableau vaste de l'interprétation des œuvres littéraires.

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Cornel Munteanu, *Eminescu. Polimorfismul operei,* **Widawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellonskiego, Krakow, 2012, 248 p.**

Cartea lui Cornel Munteanu, profesor la Universitatea din Baia Mare, porneşte de la raporturile operei eminesciene cu canonul estetic, se raliază tendinţelor necanonice din ultima vreme de înscriere a poeticii eminesciene în modernism şi, „în punctul terminus, volumul oferă un Eminescu al studentului în litere, dându-i sugestii de a-i provoca noi dezbateri asupra operei, a-l încuraja într-un dialog deschis şi fără complexe" (p. 9).

Autorul îşi exprimă deschis adeziunea faţă de şcoala eminescologică de la Cluj şi dezvoltă în substanţa propriei cărţi viziunea critică din studiile lui D. Popovici şi Ioana Em. Petrescu. Stilul critic al lui Cornel Munteanu este însă produsul şcolii filologice sucevene, fondate de profesorul Mihail Iordache, caracterizat printr-o angajare polemică în dezbaterile actuale şi spirit cozeur.

Criticul propune o abordare integratoare a practicilor scrisului eminescian şi „multe din sugestiile acestor prolegomene vin din interferenţele literaturii cu teoria textului

ori la confluenţa cu filosofia fiinţei sau cu discursul publicistic" (p. 232). El dezbate mai întâi problema canonului estetic („surogat al absolutismului în literatură" – p. 13), impus de critica literară, care ar reduce literatura „la norme şi reguli" extrinseci ei, anihilându-i „libertatea de a produce texte, multe şi diferite", dar şi lectura multiplă; extins în istoria literară, acesta „produce o adâncire a opoziţiilor dintre grupări şi generaţii", concretizată în negarea afinităţilor şi refuzul modelelor, în condiţiile în care „în afara canonului estetic funcţionează şi alte tipuri, precum canon didactic ori canon moral" (p. 18).

Astfel, criticul propune o lectură în linia teoriilor cu punctul de plecare în poststructuralism (invocându-i Foucault, Lyotard şi Bourdieu), a literaturii ca discurs social, şi pledează, citând-o pe Ioana Em. Petrescu, pentru o interpretare complementară şi multiplă, raportată la logica interioară a operei, care să urmeze multiplele căi ale zămislirii universului artistic, „dinamică şi deschisă, care să încurajeze cititorul în a înainta în lectură pe diferite canale de interpretare", reconfigurând însuşi „conceptul de valoare al operei literare, adăugând valorii estetice intrinseci, un plus de valoare extrinsecă" (p. 23-24).

Desigur, aceste idei nu sunt chiar noi în bibliografia românească; o „critică completă", angajând **opera** din cât mai multe perspective, a fost susţinută de Ibrăileanu; Călinescu a transformat-o în operă de creaţie, explicând în *Principiile de estetică* rolul subiectivităţii şi impresionismului în interpretarea datelor obiective ale obiectelor artistice, iar Tudor Vianu a vorbit şi el despre necesitatea unei interpretări integratoare a operei, prin cele două tipuri de istorie literară, internă şi externă. De fapt, problema pe care pare a o ridica observaţia de mai sus ar fi, în termeni călinescieni, cea a corelării dintre valoarea operei eminesciene şi idealul artistic contemporan. De aici şi importanţa raportării criticului la filosofia poststructuralistă şi postmodernistă, cât şi privilegierea „noii critici" eminescologice.

Referindu-se, în capitolul al III-lea, *Eminescologie*, la istoria receptării operei eminesciene („o încercare de definire şi tipologizare a ştiinţei critice în Eminescu"), el remarcă „o desfăşurare amplă de principii, metode, formule şi limbaje ale criticii", o îndepărtare de momentul unei sinteze a receptării operei, generând, în mod fatal, şi radicalizarea a două atitudini, encomiastică şi contestatară. Desigur, pare puţin ciudată această spaimă de fragmentare (a operei şi a lecturii, în perspectivele diferite – estetică, impresionistă, formalistă, modelară, stilistică, filosofică etc.) şi aspiraţia spre o „sistematică" a receptării operei eminesciene, atât de necesară, totuşi; pentru a o realiza, Cornel Munteanu propune proiecte, precum realizarea unui dicţionar al eminescologilor, a unui dicţionar de termeni-concept ai limbajului critic din eminescologie şi a unui dicţionar de idei în eminescologie, care să ofere o imagine globală asupra perspectivelor exegetice existente.

De fapt, Cornel Munteanu nu se desparte de „modernismul" critic (centrat pe valoarea estetică), deoarece, în absenţa unei modernizări depline a politicii, a instituţiilor literare şi a instrumentelor necesare cunoaşterii, acesta oferă singurul suport (deşi irepetabil în substanţa sa) pentru reorientarea privirii posterităţii. *Eminescologia de sinteză*, cu studiile remarcabile ale lui G. Călinescu, E. Papu, I. Em. Petrescu, D. Popovici, T. Vianu pare a fi terenul care a nutrit „eminescologia ontologică", despre care exegetul crede că e capabilă să situeze opera lui Eminescu într-un loc nou, „în anticamera modernismului", prin studiile lui C. Noica, Svetlana Paleologu-Matta, Th. Codreanu sau Mihai Cimpoi.

Aceste direcţii pot „a-l scoate pe Eminescu de sub canonul estetic", şi pe acest traseu criticul reinterpretează teme precum *Poezia tainei*, *Filosoficul şi fantasticul*, *Fiinţă-Nefiinţă în viziunea arheului eminescian*, *Tipuri de eroi lirici*.

Departajării „specioase" canon-anticanon, el îi preferă una cu deschidere mai mare, dintre convenţional şi neconvenţional, sau dintre monomorf şi polimorf (p. 21). În această ordine de idei, în cel de al doilea capitol, el propune „un Eminescu inovator al formelor" prin *Polimorfismul operei*, care este structurat, la rându-i, de polifonia vocilor eului liric. Polimorfismul „desemnează un text care poate lua mai multe înfăţişări sau, mai precis, acelaşi text de o anumită formă şi structură poate cumula mai multe forme literare" „în funcţie de structura ideatică sau registrul poetic şi stilistic al operei" (p. 51).

Polimorfia reprezentărilor este specifică momentului Marilor Clasici, care se distanţează de structurile textuale monomorfe ale predecesorilor. Criticul identifică două tipuri de construcţie polimorfă, triadică şi asociată; în aplicaţiile pe care le face pe textele eminesciene, el remarcă în „scheletul" fiecărui text, în versuri sau în proză, o construcţie „verticală" complexă; astfel, în *Luceafărul* coexistă forme precum pastelul, idila şi meditaţia, în *Scrisori* se combină epistola, satira şi epopeea cosmogonică şi în fiecare text „regăsim simultan poezie meditativă, erotică, dar şi componente ale poeziei mitologice ori sociale"(p. 54).

Corelative ale construcţiei triadice sunt construcţiile asociate, „structuri de texte reluate, anticipate ori redimensionate de la un text la altul sau chiar între texte de genuri diferite, bunăoară de la poezie la proză" (p. 70), manifestând unitate de viziune şi de discurs, precum *Luceafărul* şi *Sărmanul Dionis*, ori *Archaeus* şi *Avatarii faraonului Tla*. În aplicaţiile sale, autorul reorganizează sugestii de lectură din studiile Ioanei Em. Petrescu, lui Tudor Vianu sau D. Popovici. O atenţie deosebită o acordă *Eului angajat*, în subcapitole precum *Resursele satirei* în *Epigonii*, *Junii corupţi*, ori unor *Probleme de poetică eminesciană*, precum cea a titlului.

Pe lângă analiza aplicată a unor texte din operă, cartea propune deopotrivă o imagine diacronică şi sincronică a exegezei eminesciene şi integrează o serie de „conspecte critice" ale unor cărţi apărute din zorii Anului Eminescu până în prezent, care clarifică principalele teme, perspective şi metode de interpretare, şi pot constitui veritabile modele pentru renovarea discursului exegetic (Constantin Amăruiţei, Mihai Cimpoi, Th. Codreanu, Gheorghe Glodeanu, Dan Mănucă, Dumitru Micu, Mariana Neţ, Doru Scărlătescu).

Ce însemnă a fi eminescolog pentru Cornel Munteanu? „Eminescolog este un critic consacrat şi bine orientat în fenomenul receptării lui Eminescu, al cărui reper este opera sau biografia eminesciană, în jurul cărora propune un construct critic fundamentat teoretic şi aplicat la obiectul său. Acest construct trebuie să ofere o nouă sugestie de lectură şi interpretare, să dea o amprentă specifică şi originală acestei interpretări şi care să-l raporteze şi să-l situeze pe o anumită poziţie în rândul criticii eminescologice." (p. 135). Adică un fel de Călinescu şi Bourdieu la un loc, o conştiinţă critică puternică şi autonomă, în a cărei „producţie" se întâlneşte vocaţia unui actor creator cu luciditatea unui judecător al câmpului literar şi a cărei autoritate este determinată de ierarhizarea internă, în funcţie de „relevanţa demonstraţiei şi afirmaţiilor" (p. 135).

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Jill Lepore, *The Story of America,* Princeton University Press, Princeton and Oxford, 2012, 416 p.

Jill Lepore is a Harvard historian and a *New Yorker* staff writer. Her distinctive approach to the hi*story* of America comes primarily from a unique blending of academic investigation with a particular skill in the art of the essay and an extraordinary sense of the narrative. This allows for a challenging and complex treatment of history, from the perspective of the written stories which built it, as well as for a "telling" of history as a story.

The Story of America is a collection of twenty essays, in which the author makes the case that the rise of democracy is bound up with the history of its reading and writing, which is why the study of American history is inseparable from the study of American literature. American origin stories are investigated – from John Smith's account of the founding of Jamestown in 1607 to Barack Obama's 2009 inaugural address – with a view to illustrating that, over the centuries, Americans have read and written their way into a political culture of ink and type. From past to present, Lepore argues, Americans have wrestled with the idea of democracy by telling stories.

The *Introduction* brings forth the argument that "to say the United States is a story is not to say that it is fiction"; it is, instead, to suggest that it follows certain narrative conventions, in light of the fact that "all nations are places, but they are also acts of imagination" (p.3). The purpose of the book is, therefore, not so much to tell the story of America as to offer a study of the story, aiming, among other things, not to add to a literature of hero worship and national self-congratulation, already large (p.16.).

Having to do with cultural history, mostly, the essays excavate the origins of everything from the Constitution to the American language dictionary, from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first. Along the way, the study presents fresh readings of Benjamin Franklin's *Way to Wealth*, Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe, as well as histories of lesser known genres, including biographies of presidents, novels of immigrants, and accounts of the Depression. While history is considered the art of making an argument about the past by telling a story accountable to evidence, the historical inquiry suggested by the study undertakes a particular reading of a variety of documents, scrutinized with "one eyebrow cocked". "Shifty-looking characters with ink-stained hands" are also identified in travel narratives, campaign biographies and in the dime novel.

The thesis that documents are not to be trusted while under historical investigation is illustrated by the pertinent analysis of its very first "stories". In the first chapter/essay, Jamestown, Virginia, is demonstrated to have been dressed up and pressed into the services of two conflicting types of narrative, making it the birthplace of the American dream (as in the writings of John Smith), on the one hand, and the birthplace of the the American nightmare, on the other (referring to accounts of the arrival of the first Africans in 1619). In the critical eyes of the modern historian, what happened in Jamestown, remains a story of "some lessons painfully learned, and others not learned at all. Here are two. The world isn't made of oatmeal. And to conquer isn't the only way to live" (p.30).

If Smith is termed a Crusader, rather than a Founding Father, and certainly not considered a trustable historian, the governor and first chronicler of Plymouth plantation, William Bradford, is linked with the early colonial art of writing history (p.32). *Of Plymouth Plantation*, as we know it, however, is revealed to be the product of historical rewriting, in the form of a Harvard historian's valuable edition of Bradford's history, edited in 1952. Earlier printed editions are denounced as erroneous and injudicious transcripts of the chronicler's manuscript. With Benjamin Franklin, the author argues, one should beware of a permanent appetite for satire and imposture, whereas the brilliant forty-six-page piece of writing of an apparently "lesser Founder", Thomas Paine, is believed to have convinced the American people of what more than a decade of taxes and nearly a year of war had not: that it was their destiny to declare their independence from Britain. While history itself proves to have often been unkind to Paine, and Americans ambivalent about him, the type of critical study Jill Lepore undertakes, is bound to admit, just as John Adams once did, that *Common Sense* made declaring independence possible, through its gripping prose, and, ultimately, that "History is to ascribe the American Revolution to Thomas Paine" (p.63).

Illustrating the opposite trend in history, the essay *We the parchment* is a brilliant argument against reducing ideas to icons, both in history and in politics: The Constitution is not just "ink on parchment" but also the set of meanings that have been made of its forty-four hundred words and the course of events created by its interpretations, for more than two centuries. Still, to record plain history, Lepore ironically notices that "crying constitution" remains a minor American art form. Supporting evidence comes from accounts of impeached presidents waving around pocket constitutions and congressmen mistaking the preamble to the Constitution for the opening sentences of the Declaration of Independence, while trying to prove political eloquence. Often cited and cried out, one of the shortest constitutions in the world is critically exposed as rarely read and fully understood by its people: "It is the stripes on William Grimes's back, the rule of law, a shrine in the National archives, a sign carried on the Washington Mall, the opinions of the Court, and the noise all of us make, when we disagree. If the Constitution is a fiddle, it's also the music that's ever been played on it. Some of that music is beautiful; much of it is humdrum; some of it sounds like hell". We know of no similar approach to the parchment, in terms of both style and depth of historical insight!

In counterpoint, the following chapter identifies the years when the American Constitution was drafted with a different, less known story: that of New York's debtor's prison. Drawing on John's Pintard's writings as well as the records of the New York Society for the Relief of Distressed Debtors, the study reveals a staggering number of 1,162 debtors committed to prison in New York between 1787 and 1788, most of whom owed less than twenty shillings. The practice prevailed in most parts of the early modern world and, in the seventeenth century, it travelled, with the English common law, to America. In 1831, when the Union voted to abolish imprisonment for debt, most of the countries in Europe would still put debtors in jail (the British Parliament did not ban the practice until 1869). With the argument that debt and slavery are, historically and conceptually tangled together, the author cannot help but wonder, along with the petitioners, why Americans allowed it to exist as a product of feudalism. Salvation is believed to have come with the bankruptcy law being liberalized and the implicit historical realisation that most people who fall into debt are victims of the business cycle, and not of fate, or divine retribution: "Forgiveness of debts, of

everyone's debts lay behind some large part of American prosperity, when times were prosperous" (p.109). Moreover, it accounted for a major shift in literature writing: while nineteenth-century British writers, such as Dickens and Thackeray, kept writing gloomy novels with scenes set in debtor's prisons, American writers turned to "shiny, bright-eyed new plots, rags-to-riches, the hazards of new fortunes"(p.109).

More recent stories come under scrutiny in an approach to historical records of murder, for example. *Rap sheet* tackles provocative notions such as the "murderousness of nations", questioning, in the line of modern historical studies of homicide, the existence of an American way of murdering, rooted in the nation's politics and social culture: for instance, do mobility, federalism, slavery and tolerance account for the fact that the United States has the highest homicide rate of any affluent democracy? A different standpoint in historical criminology advances the thesis that democracy came too soon to the United States, not allowing the people to get used to the idea of a state monopoly on force. Americans therefore preserved for themselves not only the right to bear arms, instead of yielding that right to a strong central government, but also medieval manners: "impulsiveness, crudeness, and a fidelity to a culture of honor. We're backward in other words, because we became free before we learned how to control ourselves" (p.295). Irrespective of possible interpretations, the point made by the author is that murder has a history, and it is well worth investigating.

So is "presidential eloquence": "Every inaugural address is a history lesson" (p.315). This is the thesis of a witty and utterly revealing analysis of fifty-seven American inaugural addresses, offered by the last chapter of the book. The essay brilliantly touches upon rhetoric (length of sentences and speeches, precision, sloganeering) as well as on what we consider pragmatic dimensions of historical discourse. Relating to the purpose of communication, the inaugural is taken to serve four objectives: reconstituting the people, rehearsing shared values, setting forth policies and demonstrating the president's willingness to abide by the terms of his office. In reference to the channel and context of the utterances, one surprisingly finds that Washington's inaugural speech, while setting a precedent, was actually addressed to the Congress and only symbolically to the citizenry. In the words of a political scientist, since Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, "popular and mass rhetoric has become a principal tool of presidential governance" in the United States (Tulis, apud Lapore, p. 312). Finally, one also learns that, with inaugurals being televised (ever since Truman's 1949 speech) and then streamed on the internet, as in the case of Barack Obama, "speaking to posterity no longer means writing for readers" (p.306)! It is only right, then, that presidential speeches should close the book on American democracy writing and reading.

A captivating and provocative piece of reading, Jill Lepore's book offers a history of American origin stories and a meditation on storytelling itself. The author tells resounding stories about real people forging American roots and development, but always through a deeply documented history. History, in Lepore's hands, appears as conflicting and ragged but, at the same time, as gripping as a novel.

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Alex Goldiş, *Critica în tranşee. De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului*, Editura Cartea Românească, 2011

Apărută în anul 2011, la Editura Cartea Românească, lucrarea lui Alex Goldiş este o valorificare literară a tezei sale de doctorat şi a fost primită de specialişti cu mult entuziasm. Structurată în cinci capitole precedate de un „Argument" şi urmate de „Concluzii", cartea urmăreşte să compună fizionomia criticii româneşti postbelice, întrucât, aşa cum afirmă însuşi autorul, „mitologia secretă a criticii e cel puţin la fel de importantă ca postulatele ei deschise" (p. 284). Încă din argument, Alex Goldiş mărturiseşte faptul că intenţia sa iniţială a fost aceea de a realiza o descriere a modelelor teoretice impuse în judecata literară românească postbelică, dar a considerat că ar fi „mai adecvată şi mai interesantă" (p. 7) o istorie a acestor forme. Ordonându-şi demersul potrivit criteriului cronologic, cercetătorul urmăreşte lupta creaţiei cu puterea politică, o putere care capătă, de multe ori, dimensiunile unui personaj.

Dezvoltarea criticii româneşti din perioada postbelică este asemănată de Alex Goldiş unui război de impunere a valorii fireşti în literatură, cea estetică. Metafora războiului este aplicabilă doar unui context particular, cel românesc, întrucât condiţiile de manifestare literară sunt unele deosebite. Nevoită să se raporteze puterii politice nou instaurate, stalinismul, care avea pretenţia de a construi prin intermediul prozei, mai ales, un *om nou*, critica trebuie să combată, mai întâi, schematismul producţiilor literare din această perioadă şi tendinţa ideologizantă, implicată a textelor.

Prima etapă a bătăliei pentru dezvoltarea firească a manifestării literare se consumă în deceniul al cincilea al secolului trecut, când editoriale anonime sau puse pe seama unor „bravi oameni ai muncii", dar cu evidente cunoştinţe în domeniul esteticii, corectează, prin paginile revistei „Scânteia", eventualele derapaje ale actului critic de la adevărata sa misiune, aceea de a da seamă, alături de scriitor, de felul în care „câştigurile noii epoci" sunt transmise şi inoculate oamenilor din societatea „de producţie". Nu fără ironie, dar detaşat şi obiectiv, Alex Goldiş prezintă derapajele logice ale teoreticienilor români ai realismului socialist, care, deşi grăbiţi în a pune în practică ideea partidului asupra literaturii, eşuează lamentabil, demonstrând, de fapt, caracterul vag şi hibrid al acestui „supracurent", caracterizat de reciclarea unor termeni manifestaţi în critica interbelică, precum „realism" sau „romantism", transformaţi acum în modalităţi de percepere a realităţii, iar, pe de altă parte, de insuficienta specializare estetică a limbajului critic.

Caracterizată, din punct de vedere ideologic, de două tipuri de raportare la reacţia socială, una închisă, de „monobloc", care sancţiona orice abatere de la linia partidului, manifestată către finalul deceniului cinci, şi una ceva mai permisivă, în deceniul şase, teoria realismului socialist este susţinută, fie din convingere, fie dintr-un instinct de conservare, de nume precum Ion Vitner sau Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, ultimul dintre ei, pus întâi la zid printr-un editorial-rechizitoriu după model rusesc, lăudat apoi pentru aceleaşi idei, aplicate de această dată poeziei şi nu prozei, fiind folosit de Alex Goldiş pentru a scoate în evidenţă fisurile care apar în blocul ideologic după destalinizarea din 1953.

Tânărul critic observă cu pertinenţă două caracteristici ale acestei perioade a luptei: pe de o parte, re-descoperirea şi valorizarea operelor marilor clasici, precum Mihai

Eminescu sau I. L. Caragiale, dar şi reluarea rolului firesc de către revistele literare, acela de gazdă şi de promotor al ideilor de înnoire a literaturii, de oglindă a stării culturii la un anumit moment cronologic. Tratată cu reticenţă, prima dintre aceste trăsături este contextualizată sub forma unei acţiuni de „falsificare a moştenirii literare" (p.41) petrecută după 1950.

În ceea ce priveşte re-intrarea în drepturi a revistelor culturale româneşti, Alex Goldiş evidenţiază rolul celei clujene, „Steaua", punctând în mod obiectiv faptul că aceasta este prima publicaţie care manifestă un spirit de disidenţă în epocă. După părerea mea, Alex Goldiş supraliciteză importanţa acesteia, care, oricât de curajoasă în acest moment (să observăm că autorul însuşi arată faptul că lipsa de obedienţă apare în articole care nu ocupă prima pagină, ci mai ales ultima, şi care utilizează un limbaj ironic, acţiuni justificabile într-o perioadă de „îngheţ ideologic", în care abaterile erau drastic sancţionate), rămâne, totuşi, importantă mai ales în context local, deşi manifestările ei nu trec neobservate de „dogmaticii" vremii.

Alex Goldiş aşază existenţa războiului de impunere a valorii estetice sub paradigma transformărilor de regim politic pe care le suferă spaţiul românesc. Începându-şi capitolele cu o prezentare a scenei politice din diversele decenii urmărite, autorul induce, de fapt, ideea, exprimată apoi în mod clar, că reprezentanţii noii critici, precum Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Simion sau Matei Călinescu, speculează relaxarea politicului în impunerea ideologiei partidului, ducând, mai ales, o luptă neconvenţională, exprimată, în text, prin metafora „războiului în tranşee", menită să desemneze o tatonare a celor două tabere în încercarea de a apăra sau de a pune la zid noua literatură, manifestată de reprezentanţii generaţiei ´60 sub influenţa Noului Roman francez. Meritul criticului de la Cluj mi se pare a fi, în această parte a textului, re-valorizarea unei lucrări umbrite de acuzaţia ralierii la ideile marxiste. Arătând rolul pe care *D´un réalisme sans rivage* a lui Roger Garaudy îl joacă în deceniul al şaselea în lupta pentru re-cucerirea esteticului, autorul impune acest text atenţiei publice.

Criticul observă cu obiectivitate faptul că ambele tabere, a „dogmaticilor" şi a „liberalizatorilor", încearcă, prin tatonări reciproce, introducerea unei grile de lectură proprii. Vorbim despre o înfruntare de tip subiectiv, în care cronica literară, prin caracterul ei efemer, gazetăresc, reuşeşte să păcălească ochiul atent al ideologilor, impunând valoarea estetică nu prin intermediul vreunui manifest, ci prin victorii mărunte şi „mici acumulări" (p. 105). Alex Goldiş explică, astfel, importanţa din ce în ce mai mare pe care cititorii o acordă cronicii literare, care începe să se abată, pe teritoriul culturii româneşti, de la rolul ei, acela de a înregistra chipul literaturii într-o epocă determinată, preluându-l pe cel de apărător al tinerei literaturi de uniformizare. Întrucât critica şi producţia literară se aşază de aceeaşi parte a baricadei în lupta împotriva politicului, nu este exagerată observaţia pe care o face autorul, aceea referitoare la comuniunea dintre scriitori şi critici, extrem de vizibilă în volumul lui Mircea Martin din 1969, *Generaţie şi creaţie*, volum care surprinde misiunea de credinţă a cronicarului literar, care-şi vede activitatea „ca pe o comunicare esenţială cu literatura şi ca pe o construcţie a propriei identităţi" (p. 119).

„Instaurarea autonomiei esteticului" se realizează abia după 1960 şi este cuantificată de Alex Goldiş prin intermediul unei „antimetode", adică nu prin evidenţierea schimbării de canon, ci prin tonul şi reacţia celor care se opun acesteia. Fără a demonstra vreo atitudine partinică, încercând cu obiectivitate să-i înţeleagă şi pe „înnoitori" şi pe „dogmatici", autorul înregistrează diferendul dintre aceştia, pledând fiecare pentru

propriile concepţii. Foarte interesantă este, în acestă parte a textului, sesizarea aspectului de solidaritate care se manifestă în interiorul unei generaţii, de data aceasta cronologică. Fie că vorbesc în termenii criticii „totale" sau „unilaterale", prin intermediul unor „lecturi infidele" sau prin „psihanaliza creaţiei" (p. 147), reprezentanţii noii generaţii de critici trimit, fără niciun fel de dubiu, către ideea de existenţă în opera literară a unui substrat ce trebuie descoperit prin aplicarea unor tehnici critice, variabile de la un cronicar la altul. Diversificarea metodelor, polemica în interiorul generaţiei referitoare la primatul uneia sau alteia dintre modalităţile de abordare a textului literar sunt considerate semne ale instaurării autonomiei esteticului, realizată „la diferite niveluri şi în raporturi inegale de Nicolae Manolescu, Eugen Simion, Adrian Marino, Ion Negoiţescu, Mircea Martin, Matei Călinescu, Gheorghe Grigurcu sau Mihai Ungheanu" (p. 150), dar în contradicţie cu intenţia reformării marxismului a lui N. Tertulian.

Următoarele două capitole ale lucrării surprind lupta pentru specializarea limbajului critic şi pentru orientarea către modele teoretice, luptă dată acum între reprezentanţii noii generaţii de critici şi ilustrând conceptul de „unitate în diversitate". Specificul proaspăt eliberatei meta-literaturi româneşti este, cum observă în mod just Alex Goldiş, lipsa specificităţii, manifestată fie prin deschiderea totală, lipsită de analiză şi instauratoare de haos, spre toate modelele teoretice occidentale, fie prin „narcisism". Deşi adoptă ideile Noii Critici, referitoare la „realitatea nevăzută a operei" şi la „polivalenţa interpretării" (p. 175), figuri centrale ale peisajului literar postbelic, precum Nicolae Manolescu sau Eugen Simion, le trec prin filtrul tiparului interbelic acceptat de regimul comunist, lucru care are drept finalitate îndepărtarea acestora de preluarea vreunui model teoretic în favoarea importului de concepte preluate din curente diferite şi aplicabile imediat textului, acţiunea ducând la o lipsă de specializare a instrumentelor critice româneşti.

Trebuie observată, în această parte a textului, maturitatea de care dă dovadă tânărul critic de la Cluj în evaluarea modelelor. Astfel, deşi scoate în evidenţă, la modul laudativ, rolul pe care Nicolae Manolescu îl joacă în lupta dusă pentru reinstaurarea criteriului estetic de ierarhizare a operelor, el nu se poate opri de la a adopta o poziţie critică faţă de întârzierile pe care întoarcerea la teoria interbelică le produce în planul culturii româneşti. Atitudinea lui Alex Goldiş se distanţează de intransigenţă şi de căderea în dogmatism, fiind nuanţată prin exprimarea rolului „de tranziţie" (p. 190), de „a recupera o literatură pierdută şi de a descoperi una nouă" (p. 190) specific meta-literaturii noastre.

Liberalizarea extremă a criticii româneşti postbelice se realizează, cum just observă Alex Goldiş, prin intermediul unui gen literar de care abuzează cercetătorii acestei perioade, eseul, raportat în epocă la un alt concept, cel de monografie, ultimul respins, aproape demonizat, perceput ca purtător de mesaj dogmatic. În această cheie explică autorul preeminenţa criticii ca practică, văzută ca încercare de curăţare a vechilor dogmatisme pentru a se atinge conceptul de „critică pură" către care aspirau creatorii generaţiei ´60.

Utilizând un amestec original de spirit călinescian şi de metode aparţinând Noii Critici, cei care populează, în perioada de după 1967, scena criticii româneşti sunt animaţi de dorinţa de a reconstrui o literatură autohtonă valoroasă prin descoperirea lumii, a cosmosului ascuns în opera fiecărui scriitor re-valorificat. Aceasta operaţiune, definitorie pentru climatul cultural românesc, are rolul de a creiona faţa unei lumi, întrucât operele sunt văzute, în mod primordial, drept confesiuni.

Alex Goldiş s-a bucurat de aprecierea unui număr important de personalităţi literare, care au evidenţiat, printre altele, „documentarea remarcabilă", „cercetarea

riguroasă şi ritmul dezbaterii", „modalitatea reconstrucţiei contextelor social-politice şi istorice". Dincolo de unele exagerări legate de statutul, încă, de ucenic al autorului, se afirmă un critic lucid şi obiectiv, care se impune deja în peisajul literelor româneşti.

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Ana Selejan, *Adevăr şi mistificare în jurnale şi memorii literare apărute după 1989,* **Editura Cartea Românească, 2011, 220 p.**

Distinsă de Filiala Sibiu a Uniunii Scriitorilor din România cu premiul pentru cartea anului, la secţiunea „Critică şi istorie literară", lucrarea *Adevăr şi mistificare în jurnale şi memorii literare apărute după 1989* (Ed. Cartea Românească, 2011), semnată de Ana Selejan, depăşeşte, prin nuanţarea critică a discursului, efortul documentaristic din volumele publicate anterior de universitara sibiană. Cunoscută pentru conturarea unei imagini fruste a vieţii literare din perioada totalitaristă, aşa cum se desprinde din *Trădarea intelectualilor*, *Reeducare şi prigoană*, din cele şase volume ale *Literaturii sub totalitarism*, dar şi din *Poezia românească în tranziţie. 1944 − 1948*, autoarea îşi moderează, în ultima sa carte, tonul vindicativ, construind captivante încercări de portret, prin punerea în oglindă a autoficţiunilor „explicatoare sau moralizatoare" cu mărturiile din publicaţiile vremii.

Grila documentelor vremii, pe care Ana Selejan alege să o utilizeze, permite devoalarea câtorva dintre pârghiile care au dus la zămislirea unei literaturi încorsetate într-o ideologie totalitară, completând astfel studiile apărute anterior sub semnături precum cea a Sandei Cordoş (*Literatura între revoluţie şi reacţiune*, 1999) sau a lui Eugen Negrici (*Literatura română sub comunism – Poezia*, 2002; *Proza*, 2003).

Chiar din *Argument*, autoarea formulează întrebări vizând reconstituirea, asumarea sau eludarea unor evenimente particulare importante pentru tabloul general, anunţând o prezentare în ordine cronologică a celor zece mărturii aduse în discuţie. Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, Petru Dumitriu, Mihai Beniuc, Dumitru Micu, Sorin Toma şi Lucia Demetrius se rătăcesc, voluntar sau nu, în labirintul înşelător al memoriei capricioase, pe când Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Victor Felea, Nina Cassian şi Petre Solomon ţin un jurnal sau recurg la însemnări diaristice, cu (autoimpuse) amnezii parţiale. Cu toţii se regăsesc dezonoraţi, la sfârşitul rechizitoriului Anei Selejan, când sunt „demascate" stridenţele între lumea autoficţiunii şi realitatea documentelor.

Detectând (şi blamând), în *Jurnalul unui cobai* (1994), eludarea mârşăviilor diaristului, Ana Selejan consideră că funcţia de document şi savoarea portrelor caricaturale ale unor *cobreslaşi* (cuvântul este împrumutat de la Magda Ursache) sunt atenuate de omisiunile frapante ale lui Miron Radu Paraschivescu privind campaniile sale din presa comunistă: demersurile categorice pentru impunerea „culturii în sens unic", campania privind criza culturii (1946) şi denigrarea lui Tudor Arghezi (1947). Astfel încât, în opinia cercetătoarei, jurnalul-roman devine drama scriitorului-instrument ideologic care, alungat de la masa puterii, oscilează între osanale epistolare închinate lui Gheorghe Gheorgiu-Dej şi etichete injurioase pentru alţi „muncitori cu condeiul".

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Acelaşi stil brut, frust (mai ales când se referă la exilul românesc) remarcă autoarea şi la Petru Dumitriu. „Confesionistul" îşi mărturiseşte avatarurile în interviurile publicate de Eugen Simion (1994, 1998) şi de George Pruteanu (1995). Autorul *Cronicii de familie* îşi recunoaşte duplicitatea, expunându-şi compromisurile şi asumându-şi vina. (Cercetătoarea îl compară, şi în acest sens, cu Miron Radu Paraschivescu, deşi una este să spui, în memorii sau în interviuri postdecembriste, adevăruri pe care toată lumea le ştie şi altceva este să le scrii într-un jurnal, în „vremi" ale provizoratului existenţial, şi încă fără detaşarea pe care ţi-o oferă distanţarea temporală.)

Deşi observă că Petru Dumitriu utilizează aceleaşi formulări în ambele interviuri, se lasă aşteptată o concluzie. Să fie criza de conştiinţă a scriitorului cea care a generat un discurs disculpator îndelung repetat, întâi în sine, apoi pentru exil (care, de altfel, l-a respins)? Sau situaţia precară a perioadei de început de drum în Occident să fi dus la naşterea unei autobiografii înduioşătoare, de asemenea prea ades recitată?

Analizând activitatea literară a lui Petru Dumitriu, în paralel cu mărturisirile acestuia, Ana Selejan conchide că atât contribuţiile consistente la crearea personajelor tipologice anume cerute de obtuzitatea ideologică (comunistul, tractoristul, chiaburul), cât şi agresivitatea din articolele contra lui Tudor Arghezi sau G. Călinescu, toate puse de autorul lor pe seama condiţiei de „sclav", au avut un impact puternic în îndoctrinarea scriitorilor şi în pervertirea literaturii romăne. Dar, în pofida panglicilor multicolore fluturate în mereu aceleaşi cuvinte de căinţă, cercetătoarea detectează faptul că nu acest impact nefast este marele regret al lui Petru Dumitriu, ci − fata morgana – succesul literar niciodată atins după evadarea în Occident.

Comentariul Anei Selejan stă sub semnul unei mirări tăioase în faţa denaturărilor comise de citici literari autentici: în *Amintirile deghizate* (1994) ale lui Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, intransigenţa dogmatică a criticului marxist-leninist este (auto)travestită în ajutor providenţial acordat unor scriitori precum Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Tudor Arghezi sau Ion Barbu. Sunt imediat puse la index minciunile referitoare la Ion Barbu sau la victimizarea memorialistului, altminteri unul dintre clasicii realist-socialişti. La fel, în cazul lui Dumitru Micu: cercetătoarea consideră o mistificare grosolană concluzia acestuia, că vinovaţi pentru ideologizarea literaturii sunt mai ales politrucii, nu şi cei care au scris la comandă într-o cultură literaturocentrică. Cu toate acestea, memoriile lui Dumitru Micu, *Timpuri zbuciumate* (2001), îi prilejuiesc Anei Selejan observaţii, pe un ton mai curând apreciativ, cu privire la valoarea documentară şi la calitatea de *Bildungsroman* a acestora, la crezul literar şi la figurile publice prinse cu dexteritate în insectarul evocărilor, la severa introspecţie a unui privilegiat al regimului totalitar.

Cercetătoarea este stupefiată de incapacitatea unor figuri publice ale totalitarismului de a-şi vedea propria vină, precum poetul stalinist Mihai Beniuc şi criticul marxist Sorin Toma. Dar, dacă în primul caz, se găseşte „stimabilă" consecvenţa convingerilor ideologice ale lui Mihai Beniuc, memoriile lui Sorin Toma provoacă o schimbare drastică de ton. Comentând pe marginea evocărilor şi a regretelor celui care a instrumentat critic *cazul Arghezi*, autoarea capitolului *Contestarea lui Tudor Arghezi* (*Reeducare şi prigoană*, 2003) îşi aminteşte de Iuda. Criticul de circumstanţă Sorin Toma este blamat nu numai pentru abjectul, infamantul şi aberantul său articol din 1948, ci şi pentru contribuţiile consistente la etatizarea literaturii şi la eliminarea modernismului. Sunt etichetate fără rezerve scrierile celor doi memorialişti: demagogie, mistificare, neadevăruri şi chiar aberaţie.

În analiza Anei Selejan, Victor Felea şi Nina Cassian se dovedesc doi „literatori de rând" duplicitari, ce râvnesc la vizibilitate publică. Îi demască tot prin

raportul dintre presa care comenta *literatura aservită* (sintagma îi aparţine lui Eugen Negrici) şi însemnările din jurnale sau memorii. Autoarea *Trădării intelectualilor* comentează cu destulă greutate şi silă primul volum din *Memoria ca zestre* (2003, 2004, 2010) a Ninei Cassian. După cum mărturiseşte, dificultatea este dată nu de structura narativă etajată (jurnal dublat de adnotări ulterioare, aşadar dublu discurs, diaristic şi memorialistic), ci de decupajele pe care cercetătoarea le realizează voluntar, din dorinţa de a ignora confesiunile de natură erotică din „jurnalul amoros al unei mitomane".

În *Memoriile* Luciei Demetrius, autoarea *Literaturii sub totalitarism* identifică patru axe de susţinere: lumea literară guvernată ideologic, crezul literar, teatrul şi familia, toate reconstruite cu „miza şi ţinta auctorială" (p. 163) de a asigura un loc în galeria scriitorilor autentici. Valoarea de document a *Memoriilor* este alterată, parţial, de notele false create în încercarea de a reabilita imaginea unor ideologi notorii (Nicolae Moraru, Ofelia Manole), aflaţi cândva în ipostaza de binefăcători ai memorialistei. În finalul comentariilor şi confruntărilor cu realitatea din *Adevăr şi mistificare în jurnale şi memorii apărute după 1989*, profilul Luciei Demetrius pare să fie cel mai luminos.

Cartea Anei Selejan se încheie în aceeaşi notă în care a început, prin relevarea tehnicii omisiunilor, de data aceasta la Petre Solomon. Poetul şi traducătorul se înscrie în paradigma textului evocator prin notele memorialistice şi de jurnal cuprinse în *Am să vă povestesc cândva acele zile* (primul volum apare în 2006, iar cel de-al doilea în 2008). Analizând, din primul volum, perioada cuprinsă între1952 şi 1965, cercetătoarea observă că accentul cade pe viaţa literară, cu extrem de puţine bucle autoreferenţiale, iar omisiunile făcute cu scopul de a evita adevărurile compromiţătoare dau o notă falsă întregului tablou.

Căutând, în memorii şi jurnale, profilul scriitorului din perioada totalitară, Ana Selejan urmează un algoritm eficient: stabileşte axele textului, delimitează un interval temporal cuprins între1944 şi1965, pune în oglindă operele analizate şi presa literară a vremii, determină imaginea lumii literare şi identifică strategiile la care au recurs, voluntar sau nu, memorialiştii şi diariştii.

Scrise în scopul reabilitării, memoriile, jurnalele şi mărturisirile din interviuri devin, pentru cunoscuta documentaristă, dovezi ale unor strategii şi stratageme de ameliorare a imaginii scriitorului realist-socialist. Omisiunile, eludarea unor fapte (Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Petre Solomon), falsul, justificările, erorile de informaţie (Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu), edulcorările (Lucia Demetrius), regretul (sincer?) şi autocritica (Petru Dumitriu), demagogia şi aberaţiile (Mihai Beniuc), falsa reabilitare (Dumitru Micu, Victor Felea), erorile de gândire (Sorin Toma) şi mitomania cu accente erotice (Nina Cassian) sunt demascate prin suprapunerea autoficţiunilor peste documentele vremii.

Cartea Anei Selejan nuanţează critic zece portrete de scriitori aserviţi, încadraţi într-una din categoriile: „fidelii", „duplicitarii" sau „conformiştii" (p. 145) şi identifică tehnicile distorsionante ale fiecăruia. Mistificările sunt demascate şi sancţionate prompt, iar consecinţele, mai mici sau de-a dreptul monstruoase, ale contribuţiei fiecăruia la prigoana esteticului sunt relevate cu exactitate. Îndreptând nişte „istorii", Ana Selejan le restituie cititorilor un fragment dintr-o Istorie (a literaturii).

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Călin Horia Bârleanu, *Mircea Cărtărescu. Universul motivelor obsedante*, Editura Universitas XXI, Iaşi, 2011, 300 p.

Parcurgând traseul sinuos de la lectorul ideal la exeget, prin re-lecturi paralele şi suprapuneri ale textelor analizate, Călin-Horia Bârleanu „îmbracă" ipostaza unui fin psihanalist al operei lui Mircea Cărtărescu, scriitor contemporan acuzat uneori că se adresează unui public restrâns, unui lector specializat, capabil să recepteze mesajul încifrat pe parcursul a sute de pagini de proză, poezie sau memorialistică. Fără a emite pretenţia de a fi revelat toate înţelesurile universului cărtărescian, autorul reuşeşte în lucrarea sa – *Mircea Cărtărescu. Universul motivelor obsedante* (Iaşi, Editura „Universitas XXI", 2011, 300 p.) – să pătrundă dincolo de lumina *orbitoare* în care sunt învăluite textele pentru a dezvălui substanţa intertextuală generatoare a acestui univers întreţesut atât cu „elemente de psihanaliză, cât şi elemente psihanalizabile" (p. 41). Aşa cum însuşi autorul mărturiseşte în „Introducere", obiectivul său principal este acela de a evidenţia prin analiza operei lui Mircea Cărtărescu motivele obsedante, ce constituie pilonii construcţiei ficţionale, motive utilizate nu numai în mod conştient de către autor, ci, mai ales, inconştient.

Structura tripartită a lucrării – 1. „Psihanaliză şi literatură", 2. „Proza", 3. „Concluzii" – reflectă rigoarea analizei întreprinse, care porneşte de la o bază teoretică solidă cu privire la psihanaliză (cum reiese şi din „Bibliografia generală" de la sfârşit), indispensabilă analizei pe text realizată în partea cea mai consistentă a exegezei şi se încheie prin câteva concluzii pertinente asupra operei cărtăresciene. Privind retrospectiv legătura dintre psihanaliză şi literatură, Călin-Horia Bârleanu precizează atât aspectele pozitive, cât şi cele negative ce decurg din aplicarea metodei freudiene în planul ficţiunii. După această incursiune a teoriilor psihanalitice în spaţiul culturii române, analistul poposeşte pe *harta* operei lui Mircea Cărtărescu. Corpusul supus analizei psihanalitice îl reprezintă cu precădere proza – *Visul, Nostalgia, Orbitor,* dar sunt relevante şi referirile la poezie, *Jurnal* sau eseul *Pururi tânăr, înfăşurat în pixeli*, deoarece autorul mărturiseşte opţiunea sa pentru viziunea cronologică (p. 285), indispensabilă unui demers critic a cărui miză constă în evidenţierea motivelor obsedante din care a fost plăsmuit textul.

Aparatul de interpretare simbolică a operei lui Mircea Cărtărescu are în centru tema visului, considerată „formă unică de manifestare a scriitorului" (p. 55) şi evidenţiază legătura cu motivul macului – simbol esenţial al peisajului oniric narativ, sugerând în subtext uitarea, somnul şi viziunea thanatică. Simbolul primordial ce conduce spre lumea visului şi, de aici, spre interioritatea abisală este scoica, element analizat de interpret. Atent la detaliile purtătoare de semnificaţii, caracteristică principală a scriiturii lui Mircea Cărtărescu, acesta intră în „jocul scriitorului cu literatura şi de-a literatura" (p. 185), reuşind să-l de-mascheze pe naratorul ascuns în spatele operei prin intermediul motivelor obsedante inconştiente, reluate şi amplificate de creator pe parcursul actului scrierii conştiente: motivul oglinzii, motivul obsesiv al androginului, motivul labirintului, motivul dublului (din perspectivă jungiană: *anima-animus*), motivul gheţii, motivul Totului „cuprinzând, până la urmă, un tot care se află în toate" (p. 94), motivul scoicii, motivul florii, simbolul focului, motivul alesului, motivul orbitorului şi al transparentului. Viziunea operei ca un întreg este conferită prin arta creatorului de a reuni aceste motive, aparent disparate, în vis. Visătorul reface prin

intermediul visului traseul spre interiorul său și, totodată, spre trecut, timpul rememorat prin excelență de către narator.

Drumul inițiatic prin labirintul prozei scriitorului postmodernist debutează cu nuvelele din volumul *Nostalgia*, fără însă a eluda diferențele dintre acestea și cele cuprinse în *Visul*. De-construcția fiecărui text relevă o poietică a imaginilor, simbolurilor, miturilor și *motivelor obsedante*, reflectate în oglinda trecutului și aflate la rădăcinile imaginației, care le disociază potrivit celor două polarități: *Animus* (entitatea masculină) și *Anima* (entitatea feminină). Acuitatea analitică recunoaște în personajul Svetlana pe Gina (p. 101) sau în studentul Vali pe Andrei, ele fiind ipostaze „diferențiate doar de timp" (p. 98), marcând la nivelul discursului ficțional nu numai un anume *evoluționism* cărtărescian, ci și matricea inconștientului, transpusă prin limbaj în imagini recurente, chiar obsesive.

Denumindu-l „romanul-metaforă al operei lui Mircea Cărtărescu" (p. 139), exegetul a remarcat pe lângă drama însingurării și depersonalizarea voită a naratorului „aceeași reverie a cărții care să cuprindă Totul" (p. 144), realizată, poate, prin trilogia *Orbitor*. Perceput ca o reală aplicație psihanalitică întreprinsă la vârstele maturității și adolescenței cu frecvente digresiuni în trecut (copilăria) pentru re-găsirea propriei identități, textul se conturează în jurul câtorva simboluri obsedante: imaginea closetului, ușile stacojii închise cu lacăte grele, păianjenii, imaginea dublului – Victor, toate acestea ajutându-l pe narator „să transforme în literatură absolut tot ce atinge. Romanul său este rotund, făcând un drum în sine pentru a se descoperi, transformat în fetiță de părinții săi" (p. 147).

Cercetarea continuă cu abordarea *Jurnalului* scriitorului, în care Călin–Horia Bârleanu identifică, în fază incipientă, obsesii (cea a scrisului) sau motive (visul, zăpada, Victor etc.), folosite „inconștient de scriitor, în evocarea aceleiași scene, la nesfârșit, în variante ușor modificate" (p.176). Mecanismul metaforic, voluptatea rememorării și procesul de prelucrare a biografismului într-un vizionarism oniric îl îndreptățesc pe exeget să recunoască măiestria scriitorului de a mânui cuvântul, evidentă în paginile de literatură ce pot fi decupate din *Jurnal*. Ideologia lui Cărtărescu cu privire la literatură – ca ocupație de bază transpare și-n textele nonficționale, precum *Baroane!* sau *Pururi tânăr, înfășurat în pixeli*.

Studierea din perspectivă psihanalitică a fiecărei *aripi* a trilogiei *Orbitor* dezvăluie cititorului decriptarea mesajului literar prin identificarea a numeroase motive, reluate sistematic pentru a imprima ficțiunii coerență și coeziune: dublul, Bucureștiul, labirintul, mama, fluturele, uși și oglinzi, psihologie și sexualitate, nostalgia neobișnuitului, inițierea și ființa androgin, păianjeni, jocul copilăriei/copilăria mitică, *Orbitor* și *Totul*, influențe biblice, apariția lui Victor. Subtitlul retoric „Aceleași motive, noi viziuni?" reprezintă parcă o invitație adresată lectorului, ajuns spre finalul studiului, de a reflecta asupra validității și verosimilității *motivelor obsedante* asupra cărora s-a insistat pe parcursul demersului interpretativ.

Se poate observa că autorul acestei lucrări evită utilizarea limbajului freudian (de exemplu, complexul lui Oedip în loc de „Mama") pentru denumirea imaginilor ce revin agasant în fiecare text; acest fapt relevă intenția lui Călin-Horia Bârleanu de a psihanaliza textul literar/opera, nicidecum pe autor. Meritul său constă în a fi reușit să-l lămurească pe cititor că Mircea Cărtărescu nu este privit ca un caz patologic, nu autorului i se dă un diagnostic, ci operei; obsesiile sunt ale naratorului, chiar dacă prin el se face auzită vocea inconștientă a autorului. Tocmai această obstinație de a lămuri lucrurile a determinat o oarecare scindare a *universului motivelor obsedante*, care se cristalizează fragmentat, pe măsură ce este interpretată fiecare pagină a textelor analizate.

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Alături de *universul motivelor obsedante,* psihanalizate şi psihanalizabile, întrupate în complexul eroului sau complexul paginii albe, autorul evidenţiază şi alte aspecte ale textelor: ludicul, privit de Mircea Cărtărescu drept o cale de a atinge magicul, ironia prezentă în ultimul volum al trilogiei *Orbitor* şi inserţia elementelor realiste, care clarifică motivaţia scriitorului de a refuza „încăpăţânat realitatea, prin duritatea şi obtuzitatea ei paradoxală" (p. 188). Pornind de la teoria lui C. G. Jung despre arhetip, se oferă şi o posibilă explicaţie pentru „tăria cu care se impune opera lui Cărtărescu" (p. 288) în conştiinţa publicului contemporan: pentru că arhetipul se adresează tuturor oamenilor şi opera exercită o fascinaţie deosebită asupra publicului cititor.

Avem de a face, prin urmare, cu o analiză detaliată a prozei lui Mircea Cărtărescu şi o interpretare plauzibilă prin prisma freudiană şi jungiană, care a facilitat înţelegerea punctelor nodale ale unui univers ficţional labirintic, în care „atribuirea mai multor sensuri şi planuri unui singur subiect fiind o tehnică specific cărtăresciană" (p. 286). Trebuie observat însă faptul că poeziei scriitorului postmodernist nu i se acordă aceeaşi importanţă ca prozei, deşi câteva aprecieri sporadice indică prezenţa aceloraşi motive şi-n poezie, într-o fază incipientă.

Contestabilă, poate, sub aspectul metodei de investigare (abordarea psihanalitică/psihocritica fiind privite cu o oarecare reticenţă de către critica literară, considerând interpretarea reductivă şi speculativă, acuzând-o că pune accentul pe cercetarea autorului şi nu a operei), cartea lui Călin-Horia Bârleanu reuşeşte să vină în întâmpinarea cititorului, care nu poate depăşi la o simplă lectură barierele impuse de încifrarea mesajului. Sprijinindu-se pe ajutorul unor savanţi precum Freud, Jung, Adler sau Rank, autorul reuşeşte să decripteze sensurile ascunse ale textelor cărtăresciene. Tehnica sa, introspecţia psihanalitică, pare a fi aceea de a-l „bate" pe autor cu propriile-i arme: conştient de faptul că Mircea Cărtărescu este „cunoscător al psihologiei analitice" (p. 288), utilizează aceleaşi metode şi pentru a parcurge demersul decodificării în sens invers: „aşa cum l-au ajutat ele pe scriitor să ascundă mulţimea de sensuri închise cititorilor obişnuiţi, ne-au ajutat şi pe noi să identificăm câteva dintre motivele literare nedescoperite încă" (p. 289).

Mai mult decât o direcţie interpretativă, cartea de faţă a reuşit să impună, în urma lecturii critice, un *diagnostic* corect operei, şi nu autorului ei: puterea discursului narativ rezidă în arta cu care sunt întreţesute în scriitura conştientă motivele *obsedante* cu arhetipurile izvorâte din inconştient, astfel încât universul criptic configurat de scriitor s-a pretat interpretării psihanalitice, demonstrând că resursele conceptuale ale doctrinei impuse de Freud nu au fost epuizate în totalitate.

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Cristina Scarlat (coordonator), Mac Linscott Ricketts, Marcello de Martino, *Mircea Eliade Once Again*, **Editura Lumen, Iaşi, 2011, 345p., ISBN 978-973-166-276-3**

Mircea Eliade Once Again se dezvăluie drept un volum „mozaic", reunind articole ce reprezintă fragmente din monografii, intervenţii personale sau la conferinţe internaţionale, capitole din teze de doctorat, toate demonstrând, de fapt, intenţia coordonatoarei, Cristina Scarlat, de a arăta că Mircea Eliade „adună, radial, entuziasmul, opiniile, cercetările, preocupările unei *comunităţi* speciale: aceea a eliadiştilor de pretutindeni". Nume cunoscute în analiza operei/biografiei lui Mircea Eliade (Mac Linscott Ricketts, Mircea Handoca, Sabina Fînaru, Mihaela Gligor) se întâlnesc cu cercetători mai puţin afirmaţi (Monica Domnari, Traian Penciuc) în aceeaşi încercare, reuşită de altfel: de a demonstra că ideile savantului roman şi elemente ale biografiei sale, transfigurate sau nu artistic, rămân puncte de reper în multe domenii şi pot „schimba viaţa"[1] multora dintre noi.

În ce măsură Mircea Eliade a schimbat viaţa Sabinei Fînaru putem descoperi pătrunzând pe itinerarul indian propus în studiul "Restoring the Indian Palimpsest". Plecând, pas cu pas, pe urmele tânărului Eliade, cercetătoarea prezintă, detaliat, evocativ şi sub semnul emoţiei, un itinerar în care trecutul şi prezentul se glisează, luminându-se reciproc, ca „între oglinzi paralele". Impresionează evocarea casei din Bhowanimore, în care Maitreyi este încă, în 2007, o prezenţă-absenţă la fel de vie ca în romanul omonim, prin amintirile celor care au iubit-o şi cu care Sabina Fînaru a intrat în dialog. Totul făcut în intenţia ca ulterior, noi, lectorii, să ne „întâlnim" cu India de ieri şi de azi, într-un „prizonierat" al istoriei depăşit prin anamneza ce ne întoarce în timp şi ne purifică de timp, deopotrivă.

O întoarcere în trecutul lui Eliade ne propun Mac Linscott Ricketts şi Giovanni Casadio. Dincolo de informaţii deja cunoscute din *Rădăcinile româneşti ale lui Mircea Eliade*[2], monograful american oferă câteva „fragmente" inedite din biografia savantului: de exemplu, faptul că există într-adevăr o „declaraţie", care a făcut posibilă eliberarea din lagărul de concentrare, semnată în timpul internării lui Mircea Eliade la Moroeni. Aceasta nu conţinea o „desolidarizare" de Mişcarea Legionară, ci un angajament de neimplicare politică. „Mircea Eliade visto da Mircea Eliade", dar din perspectiva lui G. Casadio, prin paginile *Jurnalului portughez*, traversează două itinerare, intim şi politic, analizate cu o fineţe a detaliului ce impresionează.

Coincidentia oppositorum, concept esenţial pentru înţelegerea operei scriitorului, este ilustrată diferit de Adrian Boldişor, Monica Domnari şi Sabina Fînaru. Primul dintre cercetători, într-un studiu analitic şi comparativ, demonstrează că Mircea Eliade şi Thomas J. J. Altizer, deşi preocupaţi de aceleaşi probleme (sensul religiei, istoria, sacrul şi profanul etc), le înţeleg diferit. Cu argumente solide şi o bibliografie foarte bine articulată, analistul susţine

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[1] „Eliade changed my life" reprezintă o sintagmă deja cunoscută, utilizată ca titlu de articol atât de către Sorin Alexandrescu, cât şi de Mihaela Gligor.
[2] Traducerea românească a monografiei *Mircea Eliade: the Romanian roots, 1907-1945*, scrisă de Mac Linscott Ricketts, a fost publicată în 2004 de Criterion Publishing House, Bucureşti.

ideea că teologia „morţii lui Dumnezeu", al cărei înfocat susţinător este Altizer, operează, de fapt, cu aceleaşi concepte ca şi istoricul religiilor, dar înţelese diferit şi insuficiet explicate/argumentate de către teolog, conform opiniei specialiştilor. Monica Domnari ne conduce anevoios printre concepte teoretice recurente în opera savantului, bine explicate şi parţial aplicate în câteva nuvele fantastice, în vreme ce Sabina Fînaru analizează şi exemplifică într-o manieră inedită şi captivantă conceptul de *coincidentia oppositorum*: *Şantier*, un metaroman, este o fuziune sugestivă a elementelor specifice romanului şi jurnalului, ceea ce conferă textului o structură dublă, la fel ca *Maitreyi*, ce ascunde sub atmosfera exotică şi iubirea dintre Allan şi personajul eponim, un scenariu iniţiatic, un *pattern* mitologic.

Trei dintre studii susţin, într-o manieră diferită, capacitatea recuperatorie. Marcello De Martino „recuperează" un studiu nepublicat, scris de Eliade în drum spre Ceylon, în 1928, printr-o atentă comparare a romanului *Lumina ce se stinge* cu câteva lucrări filozofice ale lui J. Evola, dezvăluind astfel o parte dintre firele discursului despre gândirea magică[3]. Traian Penciuc demonstrează forţa recuperatorie a teatrului, reprezentând în literatura lui Mircea Eliade un fir al Ariadnei, ce salvează omul de „teroare istoriei". Iniţierea prin spectacol presupune, pentru autorul acestui text, deschidere către experienţe spirituale, recunoaşterea mitului şi recuperarea *acelui timp*, prin anamneză. Mircea Handoca, care a contribuit esenţial la „recuperarea" lui Mircea Eliade în spaţiul românesc, chiar şi atunci când vremurile erau ostile, pune în lumină modul în care scriitorul Eliade l-a „recuperat" pe sculptorul Brâncuşi. O „recuperare" la puterea a doua, piesa de teatru *Coloana nesfârşită* este, deopotrivă, o punte între artişti români (Eliade scrie despre Brâncuşi, dedicând textul unui alt artist, Ionel Perlea) şi o dovadă a dialogului intercultural, al cărui promotor a fost nu doar savantul, ci şi scriitorul Eliade.

Pentru a rămâne în atmosfera de „mozaic" anunţată în Cuvânt înainte, coordonatoarea volumului, Cristina Scarlat, propune un studiu interdisciplinar care instituie un „dialog" pertinent între literatură şi alte limbaje ale artei: film, muzică, pictură. Corpusul de exemple selectate (telefilmul lui Viorel Sergovici, operele muzicale ale lui Şerban Nichifor, respectiv Luis de Pablo şi tabloul lui Dimitrie Gavrilean) susţin într-o manieră exemplară ipoteza cercetării, reflectată şi în titlu, – „*textul Domnişoara Christina de Mircea Eliade reprezintă un construct semiotic radial*" –, oferind lectorului plăcerea de a călători în lumea artei prin intermediul unor opere ce traspun în limbaje diferite, mai mult sau mai puţin fidel, elemente ale textului sursă.

Finalmente, afirmăm, alături de Mihaela Gligor: *Eliade changed my life* („Eliade mi-a schimbat viaţa"). Susţine această afirmaţie, în studiul său, atât prin corespondenţa dintre Mircea Eliade şi Henry Pernet, cât şi prin mărturii de suflet ale celor care au avut norocul de a-l cunoaşte sau de a schimba scrisori cu el. Autoarea afirmă în articol un adevăr care motivează cu prisosinţă apariţia acestui volum ce reprezintă o nouă „întâlnire" cu omul, scriitorul şi savantul Mircea Eliade: el a schimbat viaţa celor cărora destinul le-a oferit şansa de a-l întâlni personal, dar şi celor care s-au întâlnit cu el în şi prin opera lui.

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[3] Titlul manuscrisului pierdut este *Faptul magic*. Articolul a fost scris de Mircea Eliade pentru jurnalul *Duh şi slovă*.

Petru Ursache, *Omul din Calidor*, Editura Eikon, Cluj Napoca, 2010, 329 p.

Omul din Calidor, de Petru Ursache, marchează în interpretarea operei lui Paul Goma un moment semnificativ şi necesar şi, considerăm, va influenţa pentru mult timp modul în care va fi apreciată, de acum încolo, opera disidentului român. Asta pentru că dărâmă miturile pe care şi le-au luat drept alibi generaţii întregi de critici care au aplicat, aşa cum constată Ursache, cea mai nedreaptă „grilă de receptare" a operei în ceea ce-l priveşte pe Paul Goma.

Cel puţin două elemente de forţă se impun din capul locului, iar discutarea studiului îşi pierde din tărie dacă nu ţine cont de aceste două direcţii. În primul rând, universitarul ieşean atacă nişa de literatură nonficţională care a dus la excluderea lui Goma din viaţa literară ulterior perioadei postdecembriste, când Goma a fost tratat ca retrograd şi antisemit, verdict dat în lipsa unei analize serioase. Apoi, documentaţia este dublată de experienţa mărturisitoare, de acel *şi eu am văzut asta*, sau chiar prin apelul la paremiologie, solidarizare necesară încă din momentul Chartei '77. La toate acestea se adaugă notorietatea autorului. Nu poate fi ignorat nici faptul că, în judecăţile pe care le emite, Petru Ursache nu se sprijină pe niciun studiu anterior dedicat lui Goma, nici chiar în momentul în care pune sub lupă acuzaţii dintre cele mai grave, aspect ce demonstrează suflul nou al analizei.

Dacă partea a doua a titlului ales de Petru Ursache nu pune probleme în analiză, fertila metaforă *calidor* fiind preluată dintr-un roman gomian („Din calidor. O copilărie basarabeană"), calificativul *Omul*, în detrimentul scriitorului, disidentului sau al altor termeni folosiţi excesiv, până la golirea de sens, impune, din capul locului, o redimensionare a perspectivei. Petru Ursache va căuta, aşadar, de-a lungul celor peste 300 de pagini să găsească acea dimensiune lăuntrică ce asigură combustia unui creator fidel, în toate *anotimpurile* sale, aceluiaşi crez. Miza este, aşadar, imensă, demonstraţia impunându-se în direcţia stabilirii devenirilor literare izvorâte dintr-un sistem de gândire unitar. Efortul lui Petru Ursache este de a da o altă interpretare acestei fidelităţi faţă de crez, pe care unii au văzut-o drept secare a forţelor creatoare sau, în cel mai fericit caz, oprire a lor la borna '77. Să amintim doar opinia lui Marius Miheţ, exprimată în *Caiete critice*, nr. 4/ 2012, sincronizată temporal cu lansarea *Omului din Calidor*, acesta insistând asupra unei „încremeniri în *proiectul disidenţei*" – sublinierea îi aparţine autorului (*Literatura document şi literatura nonficţiunii*, p. 29).

Studiul discutat aici arătă că o astfel de analiză este păguboasă şi ţine de fărâmiţarea operei, de analizarea separată a genurilor pe care Goma le încearcă de-a lungul vremii: roman – jurnal – eseistică. O astfel de operaţie este considerată drept o incompetenţă: „Există critici literari şi istoriografi care se opresc, din daltonism, doar la una dintre dimensiunile personalităţii scriitorului Paul Goma" (p. 258). Interpretarea pe care o dă Ursache momentului '77, văzut drept o metaforă a tensiunilor auctoriale, ţine de lupta pentru Drepturile omului de la care Goma nu a abdicat în niciun rând al operei sale. Dincolo de a-şi fi epuizat substanţa la acel prag temporal, care vesteşte pentru câţiva divorţul de roman, nedrept echivalat cu moartea autorului, momentul '77 este o constantă uşor de stabilit mai ales prin analiza scrisorilor gomiene, trimise către Kohout, Ceauşescu, Iliescu şi, în cele din urmă, Băsescu. Aceasta este prima mişcare pe care Petru Ursache o face, convins că „lectura pentru lectură îl poate ţine

departe de înţelesurile de fond pe cititorul neavizat ori rătăcit printre izvoare controversate. De aceea îi recomand să raporteze informaţia la contextul istoric, agitat şi grav, care a provocat-o" (p. 143). Vorbim, aşadar, de o apropiere faţă de text în baza teoriei cauză-efect, coroborată cu o pertinentă privire de ansamblu.

În lupta sa de restabilire a adevărului faţă de însemnătatea lui Goma, Petru Ursache nu va da uitării grelele încercări ale vieţii literare la care acesta a fost supus prin topirea celor trei manuscrise: *Culoarea curcubeului* (Gabriel Liiceanu, Editura „Humanitas"), *Garda inversă* (Marin Sorescu) şi *Patru dialoguri* (Marian Papahagi, Editura „Echinox"). Va conchide: „Să fim înţeleşi: nimic nu poate fi socotit mai grav decât arderea cărţilor", iar eventualele scuze, „economice sau ideologice", „îl coboară definitiv" (p. 157) pe cel ce le invocă. În ceea ce-l priveşte pe Liiceanu, Petru Ursache îl va situa în descendenţa directă a lui Mihai Gafiţa, primul cenzor al lui Goma. Mediul cultural românesc poartă, deci, rănile nevindecate ale vechiului regim: „Ar fi utilă o paralelă între munca artizanilor corpului omenesc din închisorile comuniste, fie cu palma – cu sudalma, fie cu nuiaua – cu ciomagul şi ceilalţi slujbaşi şi confraţi care şi-au adjudecat ca zonă de lucru mic-puţina cultură română, sub avântul revoluţiei proletare şi al luptei de clasă" (p. 205), conchide criticul.

Unul dintre miturile pe care Petru Ursache îl va demonta se referă la sintagma *un Soljeniţîn român*, care mult timp a fost cartea de vizită a lui Goma, în special în mediul literar european. În acest sens, criticul va realiza o paralelă între cei doi scriitori angajaţi în lupta împotriva comunismului, discutând despre *O zi din viaţa lui Ivan Denisovici* şi *Gherla* şi observând „simultaneitatea elaborării şi chiar a publicării". Ideea indusă că Goma ar fi fost influenţat de scriitorul rus este deci nefondată, deşi măgulitoare inclusiv pentru Goma însuşi, fiind însă o prejudecată cu fundament politic deoarece, „în termeni hegelieni, conţinutul a luat-o înaintea formei" (p. 163).

De departe cea mai curajoasă opinie, exprimată într-o lume obsedată de *political correctness*, este lansată în legătură cu presupusul antisemitism al lui Goma – aspect faţă de care cei mai mulţi evită să se pronunţe. Petru Ursache dovedeşte curaj în folosirea termenilor, dar şi responsabilitate a ideilor, atitudini de care sunt capabili numai exegeţii de o profundă deontologie profesională. Într-o epocă ce recomandă ocolirea fricoasă a tabuurilor, Ursache nu se va sfii să aprecieze, în legătură cu mareşalul Antonescu, „profilul moral şi uman al celui mai important erou al vremii" (p. 245), dar nici să repete întrebările lui Goma referitoare la rolul evreilor în marea dramă a Basarabiei postbelice. Nu este vorba, nici la Paul Goma, nici la Petru Ursache, de motivarea unor crime abominabile şi condamnabile, ci doar de o privire în cerc la care obligă adevărul istoric. De aceea, scrieri precum *Săptămâna roşie* au o valoare inestimabilă: „Paul Goma reprezintă documentul de care istoria noastră recentă are nevoie pentru legitimare" (p. 207).

Petru Ursache propune, aşadar, o carte ce anulează multă cerneală veninoasă care a curs împotriva lui Goma, redând culturii perioadei pilonul ei cel mai de încredere. Privindu-şi chipul în această oglindă, disidentul român, de obicei extrem de rezervat faţă de laudele care i se aduc, nota în *Jurnal 2012*, în însemnarea din 14 ianuarie: „Am terminat **Omul din Calidor**. Sunt fericit. Şi istovit./ Nu-i voi putea scrie lui Petru Ursache cuvintele potrivite" (p. 63).

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Michael P. Winship, *Godly Republicanism: Puritans Pilgrims and a City on a Hill*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England, 2012, 339p.

The study of early America has been a constant preoccupation for scholars on both sides of the Atlantic. In an academic area where the works of Perry Miller or Sacvan Becovitch are still regarded as some of the most important and influential, Michael P. Winship's *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* provides a very valuable and highly acclaimed contribution to the ever-intriguing story of Puritanism.

This impressive study consists of ten chapters, covering the whole period from the birth of Elizabethan Republicanism to the apocalypse of the puritan ideas of Godly Republicanism. The analysis itself starts from a question formulated by Joshua Scottow in 1691, when the early days of triumphant Puritanism in New England succumbed to the new wave of immigrants in search of economic success: 'What is become of the primitive Zeal, Piety, and Holy Heat found in the hearts of our parents? Their Soul lively Thirstings and Pantings after God and his Ways had metamorphosed into Land and Trade breathings.'(p.1) The author of this book carefully investigates historical and literary sources in order to provide an in-depth story of Puritanism, one of the most accomplished so far, which, in its turn, provides an extensive answer to the question mentioned above. As Winship himself explains, it is 'a study in applied sacred political theory, it is about Massachusetts's republican civil and church governments created in the early 1630s and about the fear of tyrannical power that in large measure shaped them.'(p.4)

The book's first four chapters take the reader back to the British Isles and Holland and look into the doctrines behind the English Presbyterian churches, in order to define the complex contexts which eventually led to Massachusetts congregationalism. The first chapter, *The Rise and Bleeding Fall of Elizabethan Godly Republicanism*, explains the ways in which the radical Puritans of the Elizabethan period believed that their republican churches would generate a wave of national reformation and cooperate with the Protestant monarchy. Their ideals fell apart by the 1580s, when the bishops, whom they identified with a hideous antichristian tyranny, managed to infiltrate at various levels of the state. 'It was the bishops of England, arrogant, corrupt, greedy, and grasping, claimed the Presbyterians, who were the greatest obstacle to effective preaching in England. It was the bishops who, for money, licensed the inadequate preachers and gave them multiple livings. It was they who were the greatest obstacle to discipline, since they appointed the corrupt officials who ran the disciplinary machinery of the church and exploited that machinery for their own financial gain. Moreover, it was the bishops who thwarted the further reform of the church by punishing puritan ministers and whispering poison in good Queen Elizabeth's ears that prevented her from realizing that the Presbyterians were her most loyal subjects.'(p. 20-21) As the investigation continues, Winship explains that '"Puritanism" emerged as a term of insult to describe the reformers who were busy labeling their opponents "popish."'(p. 29) The beginning of the second chapter, *The Separatist Beginnings of Elizabethan Congregationalism and Presbyterianism*, focuses on the role played by Henry Barrow in the denunciation of

bishops and his support for a Reformation based on introverted and self-isolating groups which, according to Murray Toulmie, cited by Winship, 'were doomed to a sterile isolation among the protestant radicals in England.' (p.39) In the author's view, Barrow's perspective was important in the formation of Massachusetts because 'he took what had been a separatist drift away from Presbyterianism toward what was to be called congregationalism, clarified it, and defined it sharply as a deliberately anti-presbyterian church polity.[…] In that Elizabethan back and forth between separatists and Presbyterians lay the beginnings of Massachusetts's own congregationalism, as well as some of its earliest religious conflicts.' (p.41) As a precursor to New World Puritanism, Barrow did not consider that Christian liberty was a privilege; on the contrary, it was a serious and frightening responsibility, threatening those who failed at it. Chapter 3, *James I and a New Crisis of Antichristian Power*, analyzes the early seventeenth century Puritans' rude awakening under James I, whose hostility led to the appearance of separatist groups that fled the country. 'After James was crowned James I of England in 1603, radical Puritans discovered his profound hostility to them. As a result of that hostility they found themselves plunged into a new crisis of illegitimate, antichristian power, this time with the monarch implicated in ways that Elizabeth adroitly avoided.'(p.68) James I showed a rapid appreciation of the Church of England, a rather unexpected move, particularly for the Puritans who were expecting a Scottish infusion. But that did not happen and his consistent effort to remodel the Scottish Church based on the English one led to rebellion in 1639. Under these new circumstances, the Puritans were suddenly left without political goal; moreover, for radical Puritans, the future promised nothing but 'escalating conflict against Antichrist and his power, with the odds increasingly against them.' (p.70) A very interesting segment of this chapter is dedicated to Henry Jacob, whom Winship calls a 'shadowy figure' engaged in a grim religious debate on the issue of Christ's physical descent into hell after his death and the ways in which Christ gave his power to each individual church. This led him to the conclusion that 'covenanting was an act of free, mutual consent among the people.' (p.83). The fourth chapter, *The Triumphs and Trials of the Lord's Free People*, focuses on the small group of separatists which first chose to leave England and, while in Holland, decided to further develop their views on the other side of the Atlantic. The analysis follows the Leiden separatists and the connections they established with radical Puritans. Winship underlines the fact that the two groups could not decide whether these connections could be taken as the sign of a new fusion or as the premises of a conflict between them. The separatists concluded that 'the reformation they thought to create with puritans was not possible in the Old World, and they began to consider Virginia as a destination.'(p.110) Winship argues that the uncertainty mentioned above 'would cross the Atlantic and play a major role in the creation of Massachusetts's city on a hill.'(p.110)

The second part of the book focuses on the development of Puritanism on the other side of the Atlantic. Chapter 5, *Christian Liberty at Plymouth Plantation*, analyzes one the most controversial issues related to American Puritanism, that of a community of immigrants in search of religious liberty. The question here is how exactly this group of Leiden separatists understood the concept of religious liberty. Winship writes: 'That the Pilgrims came to America seeking religious liberty is common American knowledge. Not so well known is the kind of religious liberty they were seeking, a tightly defined, not particularly tolerant, specifically Christian liberty,

as befitted the lofty ambitions of a group of seventeenth-century Protestant zealots.' (p.111) An interesting story included in this chapter reveals the way in which a combination of two factors helped them cross the Atlantic: on the one hand, in need of a permission for settlement from the Virginia Company, they adapted their radical views and adopted a misleading tone, which would make them pass as regular Puritans; on the other hand, fortunately for them, the company itself was in a desperate search for settlers and agreed to take them to the New World. Chapters 6 and 7 (*Separatism at Salem?* and *The Appeal of Massachusetts Congregationalism*, respectively) analyze how 'the founders of the first Massachusetts church, at Salem, learned not only congregationalism from the Pilgrims but separatism; and how the separatism of the Salem church both shaped and catalyzed Massachusetts congregationalism.' (p.10) Winship's approach starts from one of Perry Miller's statements, according to which the church of Salem (1629) owed nothing to the colony of Plymouth. He contradicts the famous historian of early America, concluding that 'despite Miller's impact on later historians, his reasons for dismissing Plymouth were consistently flimsy. There is a great deal of evidence indicating that Plymouth, far from being pathetically unimportant, was the exemplar and catalyst for Massachusetts's congregationalism, with major short- and long-term consequences on both sides of the Atlantic.' (p.135) Chapter 8, *Designing a Godly Republic* , looks at the ways in which godly ecclesiastical republicanism became godly civic republicanism. Winship develops his analysis around the settlers' fear of unchecked power, which they inherited from the Old World. He argues that 'the decision to create a new body of freemen and dilute the power of the assistants had nothing overtly religious about it, but it was scarcely coincidental that the settlers had just instituted a form of church government that drastically restrained and carefully monitored the power of church rulers and that the defenders of congregationalism insisted that all governments had to be founded on the consent of the governed.' (p. 193) Chapter 9, suggestively titled *A City on a Hill*, describes in detail the controversies that challenged the stability of the colony's unity between church and state, the most notable case being that of Roger Williams. Winship explains how the colony's overcoming of such situations led to the general belief that their form of republicanism was mandated by divinity. This conclusion opened the way for revolutionary interpretations of the New Testament, according to which the churches of Massachusetts would be a point of reference for the rest of the world, fulfilling God's plan. 'Although the original emigrants did not leave England with much of a blueprint for either their republican churches or state, by the mid-1630s the tiny republican theocracy of Massachusetts offered, at least in the minds of some of its most zealous and influential partisans, a pattern for all the world to emulate. It had become a shining city on a hill, for better or worse.' (p.232)

In the closing chapter, *Godly Republicanism's Apocalypse*, Michael Winship takes the reader back to England, in an attempt to identify the influence of the New England beliefs on mid-seventeenth-century changes in English religious and political realities. Such influences, predicted by John Cotton in the 1640s, 'ensured,' according to Winship, 'a tumultuous reaction to the British imperial innovations of the 1760s and 1770s that finally provoked the American Revolution.' (p.248-249)

Michael P. Winship's book offers a new and elaborate perspective upon the much debated story and role of Puritanism, with a strong emphasis on the *godly*

republicanism it brought along. The theses, challenges, and conclusions are thoroughly formulated and deeply investigated, based on a sharp and careful distinction between the different varieties of Puritanism (the author convincingly identifies 8 categories of Puritans). Meticulously researched, this authoritative retelling of the Puritans' endeavor represents an outstanding and provocative contribution to the field of colonial America and opens new and stimulating directions of study for scholars and students interested in this fascinating unit of British and American history.

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