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„ȘTEFAN CEL MARE” SUCEAVA

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Tel./Fax: 0230 524 097

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I. DOSAR CRITIC

**CORP ȘI TEXT/
CORPUL CA TEXT**

INTRODUCTION

Luminița-Elena TURCU,
'Stefan cel Mare' University of Suceava, Romania
l_turcu@yahoo.com

Motto:

'If one really thinks about the body as such,
there is no possible outline of the body as such.'

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

The past decades have seen a growing interest in the body, in its literary representation as well as in its historical, social, and philosophical construction, which certifies that corporeality is not viewed any more as a Cartesian entity. Cartesian epistemology, with its huge impact on the classical aesthetic ideology, praised the mind at the same time as it devalued the body. The recent 'corporeal turn', which has not resulted yet in a coherent poststructuralist theory of the body, has redirected the focus of a variety of subfields of cultural and literary studies upon the ways in which bodies are made and unmade within our textual culture. 'The possibility of aligning the *subjective* senses of touch and taste with the objective senses – of effectively merging bodies, texts, and technologies – brings the whole human and post-human *sensorium* into play in ways that would have been unachievable and unthinkable until recently.' (Allsopp, 2009, x-xi) The usurpation of the body – equated with perception, imprecision, and unpredictability – reverberated throughout modernity and put its critical print on the philosophical account of subjectivity along with its discursive representation. Yet, not even the skeptical Montaigne, who protested against the unnatural divorce of body and mind as early as the 16th century, could have ever anticipated the postmodernist vision of the body as dissociated from both the mind and empirical reality. Hence, the body is a text: it may be read, interpreted, translated, transposed, presupposed, and deposed. Similarly, the text is a body that can be reshaped, mutilated or remodeled through translation, critical interpretation, cinematographic adaptation, etc. As Peter Brooks writes, the body is both 'an object and motive of narrative writing' as it is 'a primary, driving concern of the life of the imagination.' (1993, xi)

What is the significance of the body from our postmodernist cultural perspective? The term still denotes an entity properly delimited yet liquefied, universal yet autonomous, vital in defining tradition yet unsealed by history. In spite of the fact that the body is a biological and psychological entity, it has nothing of the 'natural' qualities that were once attached to it. After Maurice

Merleau Ponty's phenomenology of the body, Michel Foucault's studies of the body in a carceral society and Husserl's concept of the 'life-nexus', human body has come to be universally accepted as a cultural construct. In fact, this is one of the few palpable certainties left. Even so, can we still describe the body as "natural"? Contemporary anthropology prefers talking about *body multiple*, whereas cultural studies deal with *body culture* instead. There is also a sociology of the body that addresses all kinds of symbolic representations of corporeality, also the body as the place for the inscription of socio-cultural practices. Judith Butler believes that bodies are not to be posited prior to signs as they are 'productive, constitutive, one might even argue, performative, inasmuch as this signifying act delimits and contours the body that it then claims to find prior to any and all signification.' (2011, 6)

The contemporary obsession with technologized bodies is again illustrative of the ceaseless positioning of the human body within the grids of power. The scientific capacity to clone and standardize the body as revealed in creative visions and revisions, also in cultural practices, is circumscribed in the same matter of difference and power relations. Furthermore, the analysis of corporeality has easily moved to an analysis of the organs of the body, that is, to social relations, in a similar manner in which the notion of embodiment has often resulted in investigations of the social self. The fragmented body, made up of disparate pieces (*body-in-pieces*) challenges corporeality at large, but especially the 'entrails' of the body, all of them items of distinctiveness, such as race, class, and ethnic identity.

The escalating contemporary dissatisfaction with one's body, especially among the youth, demonstrates the fact that it has grown increasingly critical to the process of self-identification because, as Alessandra Lemma puts it, our body is nothing else but a canvas: 'We all have a story to tell but we don't always choose to do so. The story we cannot avoid telling is the one that our body inevitably narrates.' (2010, 1) The new-fangled 'consuming self' (Pasi Falk, 1994) requires a body image that could no longer be stigmatized. In recent times, the fat body has become particularly despicable while diet has changed from 'a discipline of the soul into a mechanism for the expression of sexuality, which is in turn the focus of modern selfhood.' (*Ibid*, xii) The cult of the thin tall hairless asexual body infers not only severe dieting but also excessive workout, plastic surgery, body alteration, etc. Globalization has allowed the ideal body beautiful to become a mass model through endless reproduction and circulation and 'fat oppression [has been] intertwined with other forms of cultural oppression.' (Farrell, 2011, 141) By stigmatizing fat bodies we have all accepted the postmodernist claim that the body is a text that can be reissued and remodeled in the same way the printed or the electronic text can be rewritten and reformatted. The view is clearly opposed to the traditional perspective on the body as 'a purely material, biological organism that is separated from (and

usually viewed as resistant to) cultural influences.’ (Weiss, 2003, 25)

We have certainly not intended to define the body in all accuracy in these issues dedicated to *Body as/and Text*. Instead, authors attempt to give here answers to questions regarding ways in which bodies have been imagined and represented through cultural practices. Some studies that we have decided to include in these two volumes are also interested, among others, in what Pasi Falk names ‘the body’s historical shaping of the differences between men and women’ because ‘gender differences continue to play a major role in the representation of power and authority.’ (1994, x) Simona Antofî, Ana-Maria Popescu, Diana Presada, Mihaela-Cristina Lazăr, Paromita Deb and Iryna Galutskikh tackle the cultural transformations as well as the literary and philosophical representation of the body throughout the ages and across cultures. Similarly, Nadja Reinhard, has decided to engage in lucid evaluations of the ways in which body, embodiment, and disembodiment have been shaped and reshaped through various modes of representation in Kafka’s work. Undoubtedly, this is an equally challenging task as ‘the place of the body is ambiguous, being the ground of subjectivity, objectivity, and intersubjectivity’. (Preester and Knockaert, 2005, 2) This is also the case of Sarat Kumar Doley’s article that discusses the stigma of flat nose and blackness within a minority Mongoloid population living in the eastern part of the Indian state of Assam and its translation into odes to the ideal body beautiful, associated as it is with a vanished Golden Age. The relationship between text and body is viewed in every article through the lens of the substantial ‘semioticization of the body which is matched by a somatization of story.’ (Brooks, *Ibidem*, xii) Magdalena Murawska investigates the way in which modernist and postmodernist theories of the body inform clinical practice, drawing on the works of clinicians and academics. She speaks about the body from the point of view of medical professionals who look at the body as an object of gaze and seems to agree with Raya Jones’ opinion that a patient is always ‘expressing his/her way of being in the world.’ (2011, 43) Since both body and text are discursively devised, the reading of bodies’ nakedness as a form of protest in patriarchal cultures that ban nudity appears to be a logical conclusion in Parvin Sultana’s study that describes woman’s defiled body as integral to societies characterized by unequal relations of power. Paromita Deb’s article focuses on transgressive sexuality and woman’s body in Jacobean tragedy while Onoriu Colăcel’s examines the male body in motion as it is projected on the monitor by the creators of a popular video game. The author relates the aggressive body of ‘The Saboteur’ to the broader social environment that includes terrorism, rebellion against mainstream culture, and all kinds of “ordinary” violent practices of the contemporary popular culture.

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THE READING AND DECIPHERING OF THE BODY IN MEDICAL CASE REPORTS

Magdalena MURAWSKA

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland

mmurawska@wa.amu.edu.pl

Abstract: The present paper discusses how medical authors portray the patient's body in professional medical publications. In more detail, the discursive processes of reading and deciphering of the patient's body as manifested at the textual level in medical case reports are examined. To this aim, a corpus of 56 medical case reports from leading British and American medical journals has been compiled and studied with respect to the references to the patients and their bodies described therein. The theoretical background for the study includes selected concepts and distinctions from the sociology of medicine, which allow to examine the construction of the body in the texts at hand – hierarchical levels of medical description, biomedical model, disease/illness and symptom/sign. It will be shown how, linguistically, the body is abstracted from the person whose case is described and becomes the main focus of the text, being scrutinised and interpreted on the basis of the signs and symptoms it displays. This presentation goes in line with the biomedical model and is discussed with reference to selected developments from the history of medicine that shaped the current perception of the body in medicine.

Keywords: medical discourse, case report, patient, body, biomedical model, disease/illness, sign/symptom

1. Introduction

The studies of written medical discourse can be divided into two groups addressing the following two issues: (1) the art of writing in medicine (language) and (2) the relation between form and content (language vs. subject). It may seem that the bulk of studies on written medical discourse are the quantitative investigations into specific lexical and grammatical features. The other group of studies examines linguistic features of texts and the effect they produce. Yet, a substantial body of research has centred around the broad term of patient imaging in written medical discourse. These are studies devoted to the linguistic presentation of patients and diseases (Anspach, 1988; Fraser, 2003) or to metaphors (Sontag, 1991; Rundblad, 2007). In this particular literature, researchers have investigated how patients are depicted by examining, primarily qualitatively, selected linguistic choices. A number of these undertakings have drawn on theories from neighbouring disciplines such as the sociology of medicine, medical ethics or philosophy of medicine. Many is the time this interdisciplinary cooperation has proved effective in revealing not only how professional identities are reflected and enacted in language, but also how scientific discourse images patients. The contribution of the aforementioned

disciplines has pointed to essential contextual factors influencing the production of medical texts.

The present paper discusses how the object of medical procedures, i.e. the patient's body, is constructed in professional medical literature, paying special attention to the processes of reading and deciphering, which are part and parcel of medical diagnosis. First, the theoretical background will be presented, including selected developments from the history of medicine connected with the current perception of the body as well as concepts and distinctions from the sociology of medicine that allow to assess it critically. Second, the data and methods will be described. Finally, the discussion of the results will be presented and some conclusions will be offered.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Historical background

Before the eighteenth century, whenever the doctor wanted to obtain information on a patient's condition, he usually listened to the patient's subjective account. The eighteenth century in the history of medicine was, however, the time when the focus on the body became apparent. It was the time when gradually doctors began to turn to the bodies and their inspection. The century witnessed a major event in the history of medicine, namely the birth of the clinic. The novelty of the institution was that treating patients was at the same time an opportunity to educate medical professionals through the so called bedside teaching. The first clinics were established by Herman Boerhaave, a professor of medicine and botany at the University of Leyden. Because at the time university education did not offer any clinical training to its students, Boerhaave decided to teach them while performing his duties in a local hospital (Cartwright, 1977, 47-8). This way regular hospital care became a means of passing knowledge, which paved the way to a new form of medical service. Yet, such teaching practices required a totally different approach to disease. Before the development of pathological anatomy, symptoms themselves were perceived as diseases and had to be elicited from a patient (cf. Blois, 1984, 110). This understanding changed with the advent of observation, Bichat's and Virchow's discoveries¹ and performing autopsies, all of which agreed with the idea of the

¹ Françoise Xavier Bichat (1771-1802) was a French anatomist and physiologist, who found that organs are built of smaller components, i.e. tissues. He also described them in the state of health and disease (Margotta, 1996, 138). The most important conclusion he drew from his discovery was that "diseases must be seen as *lesions of specific tissues* rather than (...) of *organs*. (Porter, 2003, 74) What is more, Bichat openly advocated dissecting dead bodies and examining pathological changes. His discovery marked the beginning of the era in medicine which was to unveil the secrets of the human body. Bichat's works found its continuation in the studies of Virchow (1821-1902), one of the greatest pathologists. Virchow repeated after Bichat that disease targets not whole organs but tissues and added that tissues' reaction to disease causes their dysfunction.

clinic, i.e. of ‘the physical examination of the patient’ (Newman, 1957, 30). Physicians needed to be taught how to obtain information about the signs of disease as well as other abilities necessary to diagnose a condition (Newman, 1957, 30). Therefore, as Atkinson (1997) points out, ‘[t]he space of the patient bedside thus became a new locus of inquiry and research as well as treatment and instruction’ (1997, 4), where new investigative means played a significant role. Furthermore, the institution, combined with the procedures employed there, gave rise to a new medical discourse which is thoroughly dealt with by Foucault ([1963] 2003). To demonstrate the novelty, Foucault (2003) provides fragments of two medical texts, from the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth century respectively. While in the first text ‘membranous tissues like pieces of damp parchment (...) peel away (...) [and] were passed daily with the urine’ (Pomme, 1796, 60-5, as quoted in Foucault, 2003, ix), in the second one, the layers of membranes are described as ‘transparent’, ‘tenuous’, ‘buffy’ (Bayle, 1825, 23-4, as quoted in Foucault, 2003, x). Other attributes referred to in the second fragment include location, shades, thickness and texture, which reflects close attention to detail. The striking difference in the precision of the chosen vocabulary as used in the two texts is attributed by Foucault to the growing knowledge of the human body and its ailments. It is not only that the whole new area of the unknown was revealed to physicians but also that intellectual advancement changed the way they perceived disease. In Foucault’s words, ‘the language of fantasy’ (2003, x) which described ‘the silent world of the entrails, the whole dark side of the body’ (2003, xi) became a ‘loquacious gaze’ (2003, xii). This ‘mutation in discourse’ (*Ibidem*) came to reflect the growing importance of observation, the recognition and understanding of symptoms and the emerging classification of diseases (2003, 4-12). One of the manifestations of these trends were Bichat’s and Virchow’s works in pathological anatomy, which enabled to define the nature of disease and its location. Consequently, careful scrutiny, which Foucault (2003) terms as medical gaze, coupled with medical expertise, allowed a doctor to track a disease and identify it respectively. The two processes are referred to as reading (Foucault, 2003, 71; cf. Walsh, 2004) and deciphering (2003, 72). The idea of reading the body goes back to Galen’s times, when the argument that the ‘body was intelligible’ (French, 2003, 38) was voiced by the proponents of human dissection and vivisection. They believed that it would provide information about the human anatomy (cf. French, 2003). In the modern clinic, it is common practice to read the body as if it were a text in order to interpret the signs of a disease. This is

This led Virchow to the claim that disease is the altered condition of tissues and cells. (Blois, 1984, 110)

also referred to as somatography (Rawlison, 1982, 71; cf. Hunter, 1991, 8; Kenny and Beagan, 2004). In the clinical environment, the process of decoding symptoms and assigning preconceived disease labels was continuously performed during the patient's observation. Furthermore, accumulating knowledge enforced faithful linguistic representation. As a result, saturated with descriptions of shades, size, texture, etc., medical discourse came to function 'at the level of *spatialisation* and *verbalisation* [original emphasis] of the pathological' (Foucault, 2003, xii). Foucault emphasises this merger of observation and language when he claims that seeing means saying (2003, xii-xiii). In his exploration of factors triggering the change of medical discourse, Foucault also makes mention of the patient's status. As he points out, in order to recognise a disease, a doctor had to scrutinise the body for the signs and symptoms. Yet, as not all of them are indicative of pathology, he had to separate the wheat from the chaff and consider only those pertinent ones. Therefore, disease began to be inspected in abstraction from a patient as he/she 'is only an external fact (...) [and] the medical reading must take him into account only to place him in parenthesis' (Foucault, 2003, 7). What is more, in the very clinic, 'the patient is the accident of his disease, the transitory object (...)' (Foucault, 2003, 71). In sum, the eighteenth century and its developments paved the way to the contemporary perception of the body in medicine where it is the primary object of reading and deciphering, whereas the patient's account is only prefatory material.

In the following subsections, the concepts and tools will be presented which are necessary for the analysis of the reading and deciphering of the body at the level of the text.

2.2. The biomedical model

The aforementioned changes, later on, contributed to the development of the biomedical model of medical practice, which has dominated since the 19th century. As technological advancement in medicine progressed, various inventions helped to fulfil this aim. Certain phenomena became visible, audible and measurable, which allowed physicians to concentrate on smaller and smaller constituents of the human body, abstracting away from the whole person. What is more, what could be observed and measured was treated as objective (Lupton, 1994, 102). Therefore, physicians sought the confirmation of certain disease phenomena in medical tests or physical examination, excluding the emotional and social aspects of patients' lives. As a consequence, focusing on the body, biomedicine distanced it from the experience of illness (Kirmayer, 1988, 60; cf. Jaye, 2004, 41). 'The real development of the new pathological medicine (...) was the development of techniques that allowed the clinician to bypass the patient's self report and attempt to identify the exact nature of the lesion from the tell-tale indicators or signs it left within the body' (Armstrong, 2002, 58; cf. Hunter, 1991, 52; Hofmann, 2001, 14). This meant that the

reliability of the patient's account continued to decrease (cf. section 2.1. above). In short, this framework views illness as a direct consequence of the diseased body and patients as mere recipients of treatment (Wade and Halligan, 2004, 1398). It follows that subjective perception is treated as irrelevant and may even yield false results (cf. Yardley, 1997, 4). The model is believed to be reductionist because it limits the understanding of disease only to its biological manifestations, thereby excluding social and psychological aspects. Accordingly, in Western diagnostic procedures only the biological aspects of disease are taken into consideration. (Monroe *et al.*, 1992, 48)

2.3. Disease and illness

Such a mode of reasoning engendered certain sets of oppositions that now underlie biomedicine, namely disease/illness and signs/symptoms (cf. Atkinson, 1995). The first pair originates in medical anthropology. On this reasoning, disease is a concept of a state conditioned by the presence or absence of the manifestations indicating a given pathological change. What is more, definitions of diseases, their course, and treatment are agreed upon by medical professionals. Illness, on the other hand, is defined in terms of its subjective perception by a patient (Bond and Bond, 1986, 200; cf. Gordon, 1988, 25; Lupton, 1994, 93; Fleischman, 1999; Boyd, 2000; Armstrong, 2002; Conrad, 2005, 5). In Anglo-European medical education students are taught to treat diseases and not illnesses.

The other pair – signs/symptoms – is closely linked to and built upon the first set of oppositions, as it also distinguishes between medical – objective – and lay – subjective – perspectives in the context of disease manifestations. While signs are ‘objective indications in the patient's body’ (Gordon, 1988, 25), as they can be discerned by a physician (directly or through reading medical tests), symptoms constitute the way a patient experiences disease, i.e. ‘the patient's complaints’ (Gordon, 1988, 25; cf. Atkinson, 1997, 164).

In the following section, specific tools for the analysis of how the body is read and deciphered at the level of the text will be described.

2.4. Hierarchical levels of medical description

Blois (1984) demonstrates how disease can be presented in terms of the part/whole relation (cf. Van Dijk, 1980). Employed in many cognitive processes, this relation can emphasise either parts as isolated from a whole or a whole as assembled of its parts (Van Dijk, 1980: 3). In this perspective, a disease can be analysed at various hierarchical levels of medical description, depending on which constituent part of the human body is affected. Blois (1984) isolates the following stages in this description:

Table 1. Hierarchical levels of medical description (after Blois, 1984, 113).

Level	Description
-------	-------------

Level 0	Patient as a whole
Level 1	Major patient part: e.g. chest, abdomen, head
Level 2	Physiologic system: e.g. cardiovascular system, respiratory system
Level 3	System part, or organ: e.g. heart, major vessels, lungs
Level 4	Organ part, or tissue: e.g. myocardium, bone marrow
Level 5	Cell: e.g. epithelial cell, fibroblast, lymphocyte
Level 6	Cell part: e.g. cell membrane, organelles, nucleus
Level 7	Macromolecule: e.g. enzyme, structural protein, nucleic acid
Level 8	Micromolecule: e.g. glucose, ascorbic acid
Level 9	Atoms or ions: e.g. sodium ion

Following the description as demonstrated in Table 1, the departures in the patient's condition are features of diseases which can be considered with reference to a patient in general or to the specific parts of his/her body affected by these changes. On this reasoning, while anxiety, fever or anorexia pertain to the whole patient's condition, the pain which occurs in angina pectoris can be felt in given body-parts (Blois, 1984, 112). The levels in Table 1 start with the whole body, go through systems and organs where bodily sensations of various sorts can be experienced, and end with cellular, molecular and atomic levels at which biological processes can be inspected. These processes may not always cause directly observable or felt signs, yet very often certain bodily or mental reactions are the consequences of the abnormalities at these lower levels. Therefore, while at levels 0-4 the description may refer to specific symptoms or reactions which patients have, the other levels describe changes not directly affecting patients' experience (levels from 5 to 9).

Such a division is reflected in the ways patients describe symptoms, e.g. 'I hurt (ache) all over' (Blois, 1984, 113), and in the ways they are described in medical texts. What Blois also pays attention to is the generality and, consequently, validity of information provided at different levels. As the description at the upper levels considers a general constitution, for instance nervousness or dizziness, it serves as prefatory information. Lower levels, on the other hand, refer to certain biological changes measured and assessed by means of various tests that are believed to provide an objective account of the

patient's state (cf. Hofmann, 2001, 12). Such a mode of reasoning goes in line with the biomedical model and, consequently, its separation of subjective symptoms from objective signs. It assumes that 'patients suffer illness; physicians diagnose and treat 'diseases' (...) [where] illnesses are *experiences* [original emphasis] of disvalued changes in states of being (...) [while] diseases, in the scientific paradigm of modern medicine, are abnormalities in the structure and function of body organs and systems' (Eisenberg, 1977, 43). The phrase 'disvalued changes' emphasises the decreasing credibility of the patient's account in the history of medicine and, at the same time, constitutes the hallmark of the biomedical approach (cf. Blois, 1984, 118). Yet, those levels which score lower on the scale of biomedical credibility cannot be removed altogether. It is because the process of diagnosis cannot proceed solely with its focus on the lower levels, but it must 'trac[e] a causal chain' (Blois, 1984, 119) from top to bottom. Therefore, the difference between the information given at particular levels appears to be not categorical, i.e. valid/invalid, but more or less objective (Blois, 1984, 121), which has to do with the way this information has been obtained. Yet, it demonstrates an attempt to read the body at different levels of the analysis. The effect of this hierarchical description on the imaging of the body in the case reports under study will be demonstrated in the analytical part of the present work.

3. Data and methods

This study is part of a larger project in which patient imaging in medical case reports was studied. The data constitute the corpus of 56 medical case reports coming from British and American medical journals aimed at health professionals – *The Lancet* (15), *The Journal of American Medical Association* (13), *The New England Journal of Medicine* (16) and *The British Medical Journal* (12), published between 1995 and 2008 and devoted to a variety of medical fields. In the project, the texts at hand were analysed both quantitatively – statistical analyses of the occurrence of particular patient references – as well as qualitatively – patient references in their co-text. In this paper, I report on a small study of the representation of the body in the reports.

According to Méndez-Cendón (2009), case reports are among the medical genres that enjoy the greatest popularity. 'They describe some new or rare finding associated with a disease, syndrome or disorder found in a patient. Journals may differ widely in their policies regarding the case report layout (superstructure), but in general the format is: 'Introduction', 'Case Description', and 'Discussion'' (2009, 170-171). The differences may concern the presence/lack of particular sections, their nomenclature and article length.

The rationale behind the choice of the genre of the case report was the fact that this text-type does not present general medical knowledge or detailed results of clinical research, but it discusses particular patients suffering from particular diseases. In other words, case reports give the account of diagnosis

and treatment, but always in the real context referring to a given person. What is more, it is the genre which brings together all the elements of medical management of a patient – recounting his/her history, performing physical examination/tests, as well as therapy and the results of treatment which are described in respective sections of the genre. This way, all the past and present aspects of the patient's health are composed into a report of the case.

In the analysis, each article was carefully read in search of any textual references to the patient's body and the processes of reading and deciphering, which were then analysed qualitatively with respect to their co-texts. In detail, the focus fell on the linguistic means which allow to portray these processes at the level of the text and on the effect they produce. First, the scale of modes of patient imaging will be presented in order to contextualise the references to the patient's body only. Then specific examples of the portrayal of the body will be given. Finally, the fragments representing the processes of reading and deciphering will be given. The results will be discussed with reference to the theoretical background presented in section 2 above.

4. Results and discussion

This section will present particular fragments of the texts studied where the reading and deciphering of the body is exemplified, both directly and indirectly. First, different modes of patient imaging in the corpus will be presented in order to contextualise one of them, i.e. where only the patient's body is referred to. Next, this mode will be discussed in detail. Finally, the instances of reading and deciphering will be provided, yet without the reference to the very body, i.e. the descriptions of signs and symptoms as well as the results of physical examination and medical tests.

4.1. Modes of patient imaging

The analysis of the corpus with reference to the way patients are portrayed in the texts studied yielded the following scale of modes of patient imaging, depending on the type of patient reference and the perspective of the sentence.

Patient's perspective

(1) *The **patient** underwent thymectomy, which did not lower her plasma corticotropin concentration.* NEJM10

Patient as the object of medical procedure

(2) *We gave **her** intravenous heparin, then warfarin, and stopped the oral contraceptives.* LA15

Patient as a location

(3) *Whipple's disease was first described in 1907 **in a patient** with migratory polyarthritis, cough, diarrhea with malabsorption, weight loss, and mesenteric lymphadenopathy.* NEJM5

Patient's body-part/aspect of condition/treatment

(4) *To treat **her** nonfunctional kidney and scarred bladder, we then did a left nephrectomy and caecocystoplasty.* LA6

(5) *I needed to establish the extent to which her management could be evidence-based and, where possible, to determine the optimum management using evidence-based medicine.* B3

(6) *His urinary symptoms settled after a two week course of ciprofloxacin and diclofenac.* B12

Indirect reference – body-part

(7) *Imaging studies of the neck, chest, abdomen, and pelvis were normal.* NEJM10

Patient as a case

(8) *Two of the 18 US cases of inhalational anthrax reported prior to the recent bioterrorism-related outbreak had underlying lung disease; one had beryllium exposure and chronic pulmonary fibrosis and the other had underlying pulmonary sarcoidosis.* JA3

Abstraction from the patient

(9) *Repeated vitreous examinations revealed lymphocytes, neutrophils, and foamy macrophages and slender rod-shaped structures suggestive of bacteria that were positive on periodic acid–Schiff (PAS) staining, but no malignant cells.* NEJM5

The above-given scale begins with three sentences referring to patients as whole persons (1-3). In the first sentence, although the patient is not presented as an active participant, the perspective adopted here is clearly his/hers. (2) and (3) present a different vantage point, as the patients here are those to whom medical procedures apply and a location (container) where a disease is found respectively. Clearly, however, in these sentences the focus falls on aspects other than the patient. Moving down the scale, more impersonal are sentences which refer only to various aspects of the patient's health and treatment (5 and 6) or to body- parts (4). In (7), only the definite article points to whose body-parts are mentioned. Lastly, various diagnostic or treating procedures can be described without those to whom they apply (8). Consequently, language-wise, the scale starts with references to the whole person with varying perspectives and foci (cf. 1-3), then moves to the reference only to patients' bodies, symptoms or the aspects of treatment (cf. 4-6), and ends with sentences in which individual body-parts (7) and the treatment (9) are described in abstraction from the person. The patient may also be referred to impersonally as a *case* (8). The word *case* appears very frequently in medical case reports, usually referring to individual occurrences of particular diseases. There are instances, however, where the word refers to the patient.

In the following subsection, the mode referring to the body will be discussed in detail.

4.2. The body

This mode includes sentences in which it is the patient's body-parts that take centre stage:

(10) *One month later **the spleen** was no longer palpable; at six months, the size of the spleen was normal (13 cm) on ultrasonography.* NEJM2

(11) *We were concerned about the viability of **the kidney**, because of the persistent oliguria and elevated lactate dehydrogenase level, and about the development of a catastrophic vascular event, possibly related to the acute humoral rejection that had been diagnosed a few days earlier, at the time of the first biopsy.* NEJM13

(12) *The left side of **the chest** was not explored.* NEJM10

What these sentences concern is the condition of the body-part (organ, etc.) itself (10 and 11) or its treatment (12) and not the patient whom this surgery concerns. These examples, i.e. where parts stand for wholes – patients, represent a metonymic type of reference. Here, body-parts which are treated or whose condition is assessed seem to exist individually in the text. Their separation is an assumed feature, firstly, by virtue of the specificity of the genre that describes diseases in particular patients, and, secondly, of the local character of treatment. It follows that even if the patient is not mentioned, every time patient-related issues are dealt with, readers know who they are reading about. What is more, admittedly, when a disease is described, reference will be made more frequently to the treated body-parts than to the whole persons. Consequently, a patient becomes objectified as he/she is reduced to his/her body on which medical procedures are performed.

In the next subsection, the processes of reading and deciphering the body as represented in the reports under examination will be studied, referring both directly and indirectly to the patient.

4.3. The reading and deciphering

This subsection will present the processes with direct or indirect reference to the patient, i.e. as the whole person and to his/her body or without reference whatsoever respectively.

4.3.1. Signs and symptoms

The examples are derived from the Case Report body section (cf. section 3.) which addresses the assessment of the patient's condition. It usually takes place at two levels. The first part of the diagnostic procedure delivers the external evidence based on the doctor's observation of the patient's body, its reactions and signs of diseases, which are interpreted accordingly.

(13) *On examination she was feverish (38°C), with exudate on her tonsils and tender cervical lymph nodes.* B8

(14) *She was afebrile and growth was on the 50th centile.* LA5

(15) *Physical examination showed that he had reduced forward flexion of the lumbar spine; straight leg raising was limited to 45° on the right hand side.* B10

(16) *Examination of the ear, nose, and throat detected no discharge or signs of inflammation.* NEJM9

(17) *On examination, we found large venous ulcers on both legs, and bilateral*

ankle oedema (figure). LA12

(18) *On examination of the mouth, there was red, raised soft tissue in the right mandible bicuspid and cuspid region, with mucosal ulceration and exposed bone underlying it.* NEJM14

(19) *Cough was weak; (...).* LA12

The examples (13-19) refer to the observation of the external signs of a disease. In other words, the material dealt with here is restricted only to the sensorially perceivable phenomena, hence the medical description reaches only as far as the second level, i.e. the whole body, body-parts and systems (cf. section 2.4. above). Furthermore, due to the observable character of pathological changes described here, their features are conveyed by linguistic means pertaining to the senses of feeling, sight, and hearing, as in (13), (17), and (19) respectively (cf. Staiano, 1986, 31). Such information is ‘read’ from the body and ‘deciphered’ in the process of diagnosis.

4.3.2. Values, norms and measurements

Physical examination, described in the previous subsection, is usually followed by a series of medical tests. The modes of their presentation are the following:

(20) *He had regular sinus rhythm with a postural drop in blood pressure of over 30 mm Hg without concomitant tachycardia; a sign of autonomic dysfunction.* LA12

(21) *The patient’s arterial-blood gas values while breathing oxygen were as follows: pH, 7.27; partial pressure of carbon dioxide, 43 mm Hg; and partial pressure of oxygen, 133 mm Hg.* NEJM7

(22) *We took skin biopsies which showed dense non-caseating granulomata in the lower dermis with no clonal proliferation.* LA3

(23) *A sciatic stretch test on his right leg had positive results, and responses to light touch and pin prick were reduced on the lateral side and over the dorsum of the right foot.* B10

(24) *Peripheral hormones measured in the infertile twin one day before the transplantation remained at menopausal levels: 75 mIU of FSH per milliliter, 32 mIU of luteinising hormone (LH) per milliliter, and 4 pg of estradiol per milliliter.* NEJM4

(25) *The bladder appeared to be decompressed and contained an indwelling catheter.* NEJM13

This subsection of the Case Report body is dominated by the quantitative and qualitative results of medical tests. The prevalence of such material reflects the widespread application of modern diagnostic equipment which allows to measure and observe every function or element of the human body respectively. This focus on technology constitutes another textual reflection of the development of medicine, i.e. the introduction of technological innovations (Ashcroft, 2000) which started in the nineteenth century. Apart from crossing the barrier of the human body, new diagnostic means supplied

physicians with more accurate information, which was earlier limited to patients' accounts (cf. subsection 2.1. above). Therefore, what this section conveys is the objective account of a disease rendered by devices or machines, which appears to be free from human involvement. This, in turn, dictates a certain mode of data presentation, namely 'technology as the agent' (Anspach, 1988), as demonstrated by (22) and (33), where diagnostic procedures *show* or *reveal* the results. Such a type of reference implies the presence only of the machines, as if without doctors or patients.

5. Conclusion

The present paper has discussed the discursive construction of the processes of reading and deciphering the body as reflected in professional medical journals. It is part of a larger project of the study of patient imaging in medical case reports, which has been studied both quantitatively and qualitatively with reference to textual indexical expressions. To this aim, a corpus of case reports has been studied with regard to the patient references. First, the many modes of patient imaging in the reports were presented in order to place the mode of the body against the background of other modes. Next, it was discussed in detail. Finally, the fragments where the body is read and deciphered were given, in which the results of physical examination and medical tests were presented. In these examples, the descriptions of external evidence of the disease and values of different parameters are given while patients are referred to directly and indirectly respectively. Many examples provided testify to the fact that professional medical texts feature a specific discourse where the *body is treated* and *tests confirm* something. What is meant here is that there are fragments where the body is presented as abstracted from the patient. Other examples refer to the patient only indirectly giving results of physical examination and medical tests. In sum, the analysis showed that the texts at hand very often give priority to medical facts and the patient is often in the background. Additionally, the results were discussed with reference to selected elements from the history of medicine, and concepts and distinctions from the sociology of medicine.

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NAKEDNESS AND RESISTANCE: UNDERSTANDING NAKED PROTESTS OF WOMEN

Parvin SULTANA,
Political Studies in School of Social Sciences
with the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
parvin.jnu@gmail.com

Abstract: Women's agency has often been questioned. Being marginalised in almost every sphere of life, when oppressed they had to resist in their own creative unique ways. Female bodies which are inherently linked to idea of honour in most societies have been the site of humiliation at many levels. How they responded to such humiliation has also been diverse. Because of prior marginalisation their protests have at times been non-confrontationist and unconventional. One such mode has been naked protests especially in societies where nudity is a taboo. Women resorted to such protests time and again to make a point. Generating controversy and questioning mainstream values have been the aim of such protests. But what such protests do apart from giving a cultural shock needs to be accounted for. To understand this, the article looks into two naked protests played out in different socio-cultural contexts. One was in a small state in eastern India, against the rape and murder of a woman by the Armed Forces and the other to oppose imposition of Hijab on women. What these two protests state about the agency of women concerned is worth noticing. Apart from it such protests should be taken into account along with all the complexity they come with, like the slippery ground between assertion and voyeurism that such protest treads on. This paper tries to do that.

Key words: resistance, body, political economy, feminism, Islam

Resistance has taken various forms. From organised class action, agitation, strikes on a massive scale to interesting variations like songs and dances of protest, to individual and rather mundane activities that Gandhiji supported, such as using hand spun cloth. Depending on such variances in terms of scale, methodology, many of them have been called short of movements and merely isolated incidents. Another interesting form of resistance was taken up by the homosexual activists led by Kurt Krickler in Austria (Bunzl, 1997). In the face of homosexuality being condemned by the Christian Church, he took to exposing the clandestine homosexuality of a quarter of Austria's catholic bishops. Here outing was a *dramatic and performative* act and its aim was to firstly rob those who condemned the act of the moral high ground of doing the same, and secondly, to drive home the point that homosexuality was not a sinful, abnormal activity as even those who condemned it in public indulged in

it in private. Thus, *gossip*, i.e. maligning one's public image, is also an important method of resistance feasible in acts of hypocrisy, especially in cases where there is a possibility of the adversary indulging in the same acts while putting up a public image of opposing it.

This article talks about two incidents where naked bodies have been used as sites of resistance. The first one is the parade of naked women that took place at Kangla Fort in Manipur, a small state in the eastern part of India which is under heavy military presence, to oppose the rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama who was suspected to have been with the insurgents in July, 2004. The second one is the topless jihad of Ukrainian-based radical feminist group FEMEN, that tried to question Hijab, which they believe is essentially imposed, by baring their bodies. The aim of the paper is to try to situate the incidents in the larger discourse of how body has been used time and again as the site of humiliation, exploitation and resistance.

Rape as a weapon of humiliation

Rape is crucial to the discursive construction of a feminine body as, numerically, mostly women have been victims of the atrocity. Rape cannot be equated with other physical assaults. Feminists have in fact made a case for understanding rape as a sexual crime. This was in response to Foucault's advocacy of rape to be desexualized and reduced only to its violent manifestations. His comments were expressed in a Round Table Conference held in 1977 on his book *Discipline and Punish*. For him, rape was something a man did rather than something a woman experienced. And it revolved around penile penetration. As it revolves around male physiology it leaves out a number of other ways in which a woman's body might be violated. But once the tables are turned and women are no longer mere objects of rape but subjects, rape can be dehumanizing. In fact, it is something a social man does to a social woman and hence is intrinsic to the creation of a social woman.

The significance of the violent act of rape also changes with the context. There have been cases of rape on mass scale against women belonging to the opposite community during partition. Urvashi Butalia in her *The Other Side of Silence* has documented the tormenting stories of women who are victims of partition related rape. Even after independence any communal riot in India was often accompanied by rapes of women of the opposing communities. Another way in which rape at a large scale takes place is during wars. Miranda Alison talks about wartime sexual violence. (Sutton, 2007) The military is the ultimate exemplar of masculinity as they are the saviours and protectors of the nation and also of the population residing within. Gang rape which was a common occurrence during war was declared a war crime as late as in 2008. Civil wars that rip countries also provide evidence of women of vanquished side being taken as sex slaves and raped over and over again.

Rape as a war crime is a mode of bonding amongst male soldiers along

with a reassertion of their masculinity. The trajectory of wartime rape shows how women of the vanquished enemy first considered as booty of war and hence available to the soldiers, were later often used as a message sent to the defeated. Raping women and murdering them was like sending a message to other women with the aim of terrorising and hence taming them. While martial rape or the use of rape as a weapon is an ancient practice, it has acquired recent attention owing to HIV-related panic. Thus the concern for rape on such a scale came within the health discourse and concern for public health and failed to respond to the questions of dignity and human rights.

In the case of a few recent events, studies consisting of interviews with soldiers who indulged in wartime sexual violence show that soldiers who were initially reluctant, took alcohol and committed the rape. It had more to do with the camaraderie. Martial rape is a weapon yielded by the soldiers of a country or a dominant political, cultural group against unarmed women of other groups. In the case of the ethno national conflicts in an era of the nation state, rape is committed *against specific women* often belonging to ethnic minority groups. Binaries are crystallised — *Our Women* and *Their Women*. The violation of their women is inevitable to the protection of our women. It is a spillover of a highly militarised society where society is not insulated from such violence. Rape in such cases serves more than one purpose. It can be used to domesticate women in the civilian case, while in the situation of a war it can be used to tame an ethnic community, which dares to question the sovereignty of the nation state. *Rape of enemy women is the symbolic victory over their men who failed to protect their womenfolk from utmost humiliation*. Such women are the token of humiliation for their socially connected men. Rape is a cross cultural language of male domination and the vanquished communities are rendered as effeminate.

As pointed out by feminist scholars writing on women caught in conflict areas, the female body is the symbolic *body politic* and is often equated with the nation or motherland, which should not be violated. Women as reproducers are reinforcers of national boundaries and need protection on account of national pride. They are the breeders of future citizens whose purity of lineage should be maintained. This fact determines abuse that leads to the impregnation of enemy women, which is perceived as being of crucial importance. Imperial rape is aimed at genetic imperialism by causing realignments in the loyalty of their future generations. Their citizenry is put under question. It undermines family solidarity which is closely linked with the chastity of their womenfolk which in itself is a patriarchal construct. Raped women are a cause of shame even after the war is over. Forced impregnation of the enemy women undermines family which still enjoys the legal sanction of being the unit of the state. It also destroys a group's identity which is paramount to genocide. This cultural decimation manipulates the group's identity and plays

into the fact that ethnic cleansing has replaced ideas of enslavement. Hence imperial rape can be seen as a political institution. To take an apt example, this was done in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the wars of 1992-1995 where enemy women were impregnated by Serbian soldiers and let go only when it was too late for abortion. Forced impregnation was a part of systematic program of Serbian soldiers. Systematic mass rape is used as an instrument of genocidal campaigns. Therefore, this is humiliating a nation by humiliating and violating a woman's body.

Body as a site of Humiliation

Michel Foucault also placed the body, in his works, as a site of humiliation, hence of potential resistance. Apart from rape, he talked of another way in which the body can be dominated, subordinated and hence humiliated. As Foucault and Bourdieu would have us believe, this is – by the construction of a docile body – transformed and even improved. It is ruled completely by its dominant *other* which however it has internalised as its own. The dominant other is not separate from the self. Power manifests itself in a *non intrusive* and *subtle way* and hence domination occurs through the unconscious manipulation of the body. There is a constant self-disciplining of the body to conform to certain dominant ideas. Bourdieu also uses concepts like *Habitus* and *Symbolic Violence* (Cahill, 2000). While habitus points to habituating oneself in such a way that one perceives as one is meant to, symbolic violence points to the imposition of certain values as the legitimate ones on others. One's perception of the self as well as of the others is manipulated. Women conducting themselves in a particular way in terms of talking and walking, or the way good girls are expected to behave can be apt examples of such internalisation. However, it is this very power relation that gives space for resistance. For Foucault power and resistance are co extensive. Power can never ensnare us. But he has also been critiqued for undermining the potential of transformation that resistance has.

In fact, Foucault talked of resistance only after power had emerged as a central concept in his work. He is credited with giving a positive connotation to power. But does he celebrate any and every form of subversion and sanctions it as resistance? For Foucault resistance cannot be understood as the antimatter of power, it is rather the odd element in power. It eludes power and hence power targets it as an adversary. Power is diffused and by its very nature it creates multiple nodes of resistance. Resistance to a diffused power must also be diffused. As opposed to the beliefs that Foucault paralyzes resistance by portraying the adversary as an all encompassing and all powerful one, he frees resistance from any limits and gives it immense potential. Such struggles of resistance find their expression at the level of the body. Most prison disciplining and revolts have been around the body which is perceived as the object of power. Even in modern prisons make use of tranquilizers, forced isolation, etc.,

which regulate the body. For Foucault the use of the language of rights is not subversive, as it implies an acceptance of the principles against which the resistance is aimed. He does not however lay down how struggles should take place as that might also impose limitations. For Foucault engagement provides possibilities of change as well as of self creation, which is essential if one has to resist internalisation. Both Foucault and Bourdieu state that the main mechanism of domination operates through the manipulation of the body and the resistance should address it.

Some other ways in which the body becomes the site of humiliation is through the *portrayal of a canonical body and the compulsion to conform to a standardised, ideal body which is normalised through media, films, etc.* The canonical bodies of women are often sexually objectified. The point of reference of the construction of such bodies is the male gaze. An hour glass figure or a zero size excludes and hence humiliates. Bodies are often equated with dirt, filth e.g., in the case of people of particular social location. The discourse of hygiene also humiliates when it essentialises the linkage of filthiness to particular groups employed in a specific work field. Here the example of Dalits in India being engaged in the task of scavenging can be stated. Bodies are often marked as *criminal* and *tattooed* without the consent of the person and at times with derogatory remarks. Prisoners are often tattooed with their prison numbers. Tattoos ensure that bodies are marked for life.

Body as a site of resistance

Because bodies can be humiliated they can also be resignified to humiliate the humiliator. Hence bodies can also be the site of resistance through resignification, which means subverting the meaning that is imposed on a humiliated body and investing newer meanings in the same body which renders it more powerful. This resignification can take place in a number of ways. One way of resignification of the bodies is through subversion during carnivals. As understood by *Bhaktin*, carnivals do not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. The carnival is not merely a spectacle seen and admired by others. Rather people live in it. It has an equalising effect. The unattainable equality between subjects which is so lamented by Sartre becomes the cornerstone of *Bhaktin's* carnival. Hence carnivals create an order of human relations different from those constructed by and associated with representation. A destitute can dress up like a king. There is a collapse between the self and the *Other* or the segregation is never complete. In fact there is continuity. *Bhaktin's* carnival body or the body of *grotesque realism* loses its individual definition and is collectivised at a transindividual level through the epitomisation of the body in terms of events and activities in which the boundaries between bodies are obscured and eroded. Also, the woman's evaluation was completely transformed. As opposed to the ascetic tradition of medieval Christianity which saw the woman as an 'incarnation of the sin, the temptation of the flesh', here

she is portrayed as the incarnation of the '*materially bodily lower stratum*' which degrades and regenerates simultaneously. Similarly, the degradation, which characterises carnivals, brings joy rather than dreadful humiliation at the same time challenging the dominant social relations through resignification. Hierarchies do not hold good during carnivals. (Lachmann, 1988-89)

Naked bodies as the site of resistance

Another equally strong way of resignification of the body is through baring it. Barbara Sutton (Sutton, 2007) talked about a paradox in western societies where, while human bodies and especially female bodies are turned into sexually objectified commodities, naked bodies of resistance can lead to social outrage and violent punishment. *Nakedness is filled with multiple, context bound, historically specific meanings.* Nakedness can be a pleasurable experience, a mundane activity or a humiliating event, depending on the situation, on who is shedding the clothes, on whether there is a spectator and, in that case, on the spectator's relationship to the naked person. Nakedness carries gendered connotations that are embedded in history and in the cultural baggage of different societies, being intertwined with the ideologies of racism, sexism, classism, colonialism, homophobia and other types of oppression. In the case of the women of colour in the USA, raped bodies which were paraded as spectacle became fuel for colonialist fascination and white men's desires. Black female bodies are often portrayed within the context of *patriarchal, pornographic, racialised sexualisation.* In the era of capitalism nudity in western society is nothing unnatural. It turns women into sexualized objects which can be consumed by an implicit male spectator. According to John Berger's conceptualisation, while nakedness simply refers to the body without clothes, nudity entails a level of sexual objectification. He argues that nudity presupposes display. While a nude body is to fulfil desires of consumption of a *male gaze*, a naked body asserts its agency in the shedding of clothes. Coming to the body as a site of resistance, Sutton goes on to say that the body (clothed and unclothed) is the tool of protest par excellence. Most political protests are enacted through the body—from marches, to political theatre, to the act of chaining of a body to a tree or a building. The body is a key vehicle of protest. The body also serves as a symbol, a text that conveys political meaning. She gives an example of an incident that happened in World Social Forum in 2003 in Porto Alegre in Brazil. On the site of the forum which itself represented a platform for resisting atrocities, a young woman was hassled by the police for bathing without clothes in the open. While the woman protested by taking off her clothes a number of men sympathised with her and supported her. They showed their solidarity by stripping their clothes. A particular woman who caught Sutton's attention made a statement that under our skin we are all equal. This woman with her naked action perhaps strove to reclaim a position as an active subject and reconfigure nakedness on her own terms away from

objectification in order to convey a broader political message. This was a performance, but was it effective? Her performance might challenge the popular imagining of women's body without clothes which is voyeuristic. But at the same time does it subvert patriarchy? Men supporting them might recreate and reinforce the dominant notions of exotic, vulnerable women who need to be rescued.

As prevailing norms in most contemporary societies prescribe the use of clothing in public spaces, naked bodies can be used in quite sensational ways to call the public's attention to a social problem. Naked protests dramatically enact protestors' willingness to put their bodies on the line to advance a political cause, such as opposition to powerful capitalist and military interests, especially in a context where this kind of protest might trigger violent responses against activists. For example, women in Niger Delta used the 'curse of nakedness'. Niger Delta, located between mid-western and eastern parts of Nigeria, is a crude oil producing area which caters to the need of a number of Trans National Oil Corporations. The oil companies' disregard for any form of good oil field practices has led to the destruction of the environment. While the locals often peacefully protested, a militarised state retorted violently. The women of Niger Delta pushed against the wall resorted to a variety of protests like dancing, singing, demonstration, strikes, testimonies, silence and the extreme act of stripping themselves. In the cultural context of Nigeria, the naked protest enjoyed a social sanction. It is used under extreme provocation and hence has remained a powerful weapon of women's collective resistance. It is effective also because stripping by married and elderly women is a way of shaming men and some of them believe that if they see the naked bodies they will go mad or suffer great harm.

However, because of their very nature, these protests are often on slippery grounds. For Sutton, the message sent by the naked protesting women might be reduced to something sexual. Nudity might be imposed on their nakedness, and thus robbing them of agency. In similar ways the western media sidelined the exploitation in Niger Delta and feasted on the threat of nude protests. Such a protest should be understood neither as an event of flaunting their nudity nor as practicing communal prostitution. Nude protest was not specific to black women who were sexually immodest and employed their sexuality for anything. There was a tendency to give it a primitive touch, which would rob the protest of its conscious assertion by right bearing citizens.

The Manipur Incident

Hence taking cue of the slippery ground on which such protests are played out and having laid down the broad outline of the way a naked body can be the site of humiliation and also a site of resignification, now I will move on to situate the specific incident of the Naked Protest in the former Royal Palace of Kangla Fort in Manipur, following the brutal rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama

by the personnel of Assam Rifles. She was picked up on suspicion of belonging to a terrorist outfit under the Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA). And her bullet ridden body was found in the wee hours of July 11, 2004 at Laipharok Maring village in Imphal east. She was believed to be a victim of custodial death. Here Manorama's body was the body politic of Manipur. And raping her would tame and dominate the state which challenged the sovereignty and supreme authority of the Indian nation state. Manipur always claimed to be independent and blamed the Indian government of making the Manipur king sign an 'Accord of Accession' under duress. The Manipur Merger Agreement is seen to be an instrument of an illegal annexation. In the gruesome act mentioned above, Manorama was '*their woman*' and hence even killing her was justified as being done in the name of the Indian nation. The army had the backing of the state because of the impunity that it enjoyed under AFSPA. This gruesome act was followed by a number of protests but the most noteworthy was the nude protest of 12 Manipuri women who paraded to Kangla Fort where the Assam Rifles was stationed. They carried banners asking the Indian Army to rape them and kill them too. This protest sent a strong message overshadowing, in fact the other kind of demonstrations going on at the same time and compelled the government to think of a humane alternative to AFSPA. Although the act is still in place, this protest was successful in sending a crucial message across. Now I would like to take a closer look at the incident.

AFSPA, which has been in place in Manipur for the past four decades, gives tremendous power to the Army. The prevailing attitude is that the military is protecting the common Manipuris and hence giving them the legitimate right to control them. The people of this small state in the far east of the country comprises both tribal non-Hindu people and Imphal valley's Meiteis, who are mostly Hindus. These people were seen as a community in dire need of protection. Hence there is 1 Indian soldier for every 15 Manipuris. Human rights abuse under this act has been rampant in Manipur. Anybody, even a woman suspected of being a sympathiser of insurgents will be branded as an enemy woman. *The enemy man can be humiliated and hence subjugated by raping their woman.* In this case, Manorama's raped, mutilated, bullet-riddled body became the carrier of the message from the army to the insurgents, as well as the Manipuri community at large. She was used as an example for the others.

Such a heinous act of the so called protectors (Indian Army) shook the whole community. It was not acceptable in a community where women traditionally played a strong role. Imphal's Ima Keithel or Mother's Market shows women's dominant role in the economy of the state. The historical Nupi Lan, which literally meant female warfare showed that historically in case of any injustice women would appeal to the ruler as a delegate. Two famous cases of Nupi Lan—firstly, in 1904 women stopped the extraction of materials from

Kabow Valley necessary to rebuild the house of the British Political Agent which had caught fire. The women broke in the house of the British Political Agent in their thousands and revoked a curfew. Secondly, in 1939, to address the issue of shortage of foodgrains, they protested for banning the export of rice outside the state. More than 15000 women demonstrated in front of the Darbar Hall. They ensured that the Khwairamband Bazaar was closed by boycotting it. This impacted the economy and the government had to give in to the demands of the women. These incidents of Manipur lay down a legacy of dominant women activists.

The protest was unique. The twelve women who bared their bodies in the protest are politically active and lead groups working against the misuse of AFSPA and are closely associated with Meira Paibi. They exercised their agency in deciding to undertake the parade. Hence they were the actors. These were middle aged women and they emphasised the fact that they were mothers. This is important because when mothers strip, it signifies that they are pointing to the origin of the people or to their birthplace, that is the *mother's womb*, and such a protest signifies their stand by showing *we revoke your birth* and, hence condemning the very birth of men. This also ensured that the sight was not reduced to something merely voyeuristic.

Their banners asking the Indian military to come and rape them sends a strong message by showing that something as brutal as rape has become the obvious and normal way in which they confront the Indian Army. The interface between the Indian state and the civilians is rape which is being normalised as an everyday crisis. The counterinsurgency operations have turned Manipur into a highly militarised society.

But, interestingly in this incident, the humiliation of the Indian Army was greater because the humiliator (in this case, the naked women) were not on the same footing with the Army. They were the weaker sex of a community which was to be regulated in the name of the Indian government. Hence humiliation increased manifold because of the status of the humiliators. These women resignified the raped mutilated body of Manorama which was stripped of clothing, by shedding their own robe.

This act of protest, in fact, made the government rethink the feasibility of AFSPA and the possibility of replacing it with a more humane alternative. However, even now, there is contention as to whether the jurisdiction of the state government can cover this case. The findings of Justice Upendra Singh Commission remain to be looked into and Manorama's family is still to get justice. Hence this mode of protest is much stronger than the traditional weapons of the weak because, despite of not being confrontational in a violent sense, it was rather upfront. Manorama's body was attempted to be made into the vessel of shaming the community. And the bare bodies of these twelve women were successful in shaming the Indian state because these bodies

became much more powerful, with resignified meanings being attributed to them.

The topless jihad

Coming to the second incident, women belonging to the Ukrainian-based radical feminist group FEMEN staged a topless jihad whereby they bared their bodies to show solidarity with Amina Tyler, a FEMEN activist based in Tunisia, who was targeted after posting a naked photo of herself. This show of protest was aimed at questioning the Islamists and at asserting the right of Muslim women on their bodies. The aim of this movement was also to question the essentialist way of linking honour to a woman's body. While this movement turned quite a few heads, it also made a lot of Muslim women, whom FEMEN claimed to be liberating, hit back with their own Muslimah Pride Day. The discourse of this counter-protest was nothing new. It goes back to the protests related to the veil (when Muslim women questioned the problematic assertion that the veil was essentially imposed). And Muslim women need to be saved by others.

Such protests start from a belief that veiled women are devoid of agency and they have internalised subjugation. And hence their liberation should be initiated from outside. So, when Muslim women stated that being naked did not necessarily make them liberated, the FEMEN activists hit back saying this was what socialisation into such subjugation had done to these women, for long time. Such an understanding of FEMEN, which starts a homogenous category called women, fails to take into account the specificity of conditions for different women. The veil, which has more to do with culture as a part of attire, is reduced to a religious symbol. Lila Abu Lughod points out that under the Taliban rule, the traditional attire of Pashtun women (the Burqa) was imposed on other too, but after the regime was ousted, women did not throw off the veil. In fact, the veil has grown as a marker of modesty. She goes on to point at how the imagery of a veiled woman was used to portray Afghani women needing to be saved by Western men. This was used as a justification of the American intervention in the country.

While FEMEN did try to talk about the exploitation of women, their protest had the tendency to fall in the trap of reductionist binaries that people who critiqued their method of protest had no respect for liberty and freedom of expression. They should have been more accommodative of Muslim women who live the exploitation that they are protesting against. Such an exclusivist protest might re-entrench the notorious notions of the religious fanatics that women who give up the veil will eventually dress up in a derogatory fashion.

Conclusion

Such protests need to be contextualised keeping in mind the specific conditions under which they were staged. There is a need to situate the naked protest in Manipur in the larger context of the society's reaction to it. Although there were students' movements which supported it but the society did not come out in

large numbers to back such a movement. Also, there was no encouragement to carry forward similar protests. This can be explained because the very nature of the protest places it on slippery ground. It may end up being mere celebratory rather than being motivating. Although since Manipuri society, its politics and social codes of conduct are determined through patriarchal norms, women's voices for concrete solutions have received marginal attention. And despite being giving women a better position in society, such mode of protest does not exactly enjoy a cultural sanction. Especially after *Hinduisation*, which started in the early part of 1700s, there was a level of *sanskritisation* and the social location of women was not insulated from this phenomenon. In substantive way the women may not be powerful if they do not have the scope of making decisions along with men and authority. Their power reduces to symbolism. However one also cannot negate the fact that women's organisation have been leading the protest in Manipur. Coming to the second type of protest by FEMEN, there was an assumption of restoring agency to women who were supposedly suppressed, hence denying any subject status to these women. They were rendered incapable of any decision. So while the first kind of protest acknowledged women's lead, the second one became spokesperson for other women. The agency is manifested separately, while in the first case there is a strong assertion by politically active women, in the second case women on whose behalf the protests were staged were pushed to the margins leading to some kind of dilution of their agency. Hence when do such unique protests actually stop serving the purpose should be a matter of concern. Enveloped in voyeurism, such protests run the risk of slipping into something not merely subversive but living up to male fantasies. All these considerations brings to mind the question whether these twelve women are *powerfully bare* or *barely powerful*?

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MACHTDISPOSITIV UND GENDER IN KAFKAS ROMANFRAGMENT *DER VERSCHOLLENE*

NadjaREINHARD,
Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf
nadja.reinhard@phil.HHU.de

Abstract: Looking back at the method shown here displaying dispositive power and gender in Kafka's unfinished novel *The Man Who Disappeared*, we note a clear tendency of regression and retreat of the young 'hero' Karl Rossmann. He often takes the role of a victim and fails in struggle, for example, when he wants to impress his parents by the defense of the heater. He is sorted out as undisciplined, in the male competition of the best he cannot stand. Also, sexual and dominant women like Clare and Brunella frighten him, whereas older women are more likely to provide maternal protection. The novel fragment is a satire of power relations supported by ambivalent and misogynistic images of the female body. In the tradition of the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Kafka shows a modernist tragicomic vision of the female sadist.

Key words: Kafka, female body, female sadist, *the disappeared*, American hero, normalization, deportation.

Einleitung

Die Werke Franz Kafkas sind häufig als Ausdruck der Krise der Moderne interpretiert worden. Susan Sontag stellt in diesem Zusammenhang die These auf, sie seien 'zum Opfer einer Massenvergewaltigung von nicht weniger als drei Armeen von Interpreteten geworden.' (Sontag, 1980, 13) Kafkas Werke wurden als soziale, psychoanalytische und religiöse Allegorie gelesen, d.h. als Ausdruck der überbordenden Bürokratie des modernen Staates, als Symptom der Angst Kafkas vor dem eigenen Vater oder aber als Weg in die Transzendenz (ebd.). Nach solchen Interpretationsversuchen seit langem bekannter Schulen der Kafka-Exegese ist dem Romanfragment *Der Verschollene* „in jüngster Zeit [...] das Schicksal einer ausschließlich selbstreflexiven Lektüre, nach der auch dieser Text nur vom Schreiben selbst handle [...] ebenso wenig erspart geblieben wie eine postkolonialistische Deutung' (Engel, 2010, 184). Inzwischen gilt Kafka jedoch nicht mehr als gequälter, „einsamer und weltfremder Anachoret, seine Literatur nicht mehr als hermetischer Ausdruck einer gequälten und solipsistischen Psyche, sondern als markantes und exemplarisches Zeugnis der literarischen Moderne.' (Jansen, 2012, 11) In der vorliegenden Studie soll deshalb der stark auf die reale Lebenswelt Kafkas bezogene, direkt am Körper ansetzende biopolitische Aspekt von Machtdispositiv und Gender in den Vordergrund gerückt werden, denn „[u]nter allen Dichtern ist er der größte Experte der Macht' (Caneti, 1969, 76). Das in

der Forschung lange randständig gebliebene berufliche Tätigkeitsprofil Kafkas als Jurist der Allgemeinen Arbeiter- und Unfallversicherung erhellt diese Diagnose Canettis, denn dieses Tätigkeitsprofil zeigt einen engen Bezug zur Machtanalytik Foucaults auf, „indem es Kafka präzise am Ursprung der Bio-Macht platziert: dem Punkt, an dem sich die auf die Kontrolle des Körpers abzielende ‚Norm der Disziplin‘, wie sie die Unfallverhütung mit ihren ergonomischen Normierungen am Mensch-Maschine-Schnittpunkt implementiert, mit der auf die Kontrolle ganzer Bevölkerungen gerichteten ‚Norm der Regulierung‘ verknüpft, wie sie die statistische Gefahren-Klassifikation der Branchen und Betriebe in diesem Zusammenhang auszuüben hatte’ (Wagner, 2010, 408). Die von Markus Jansen (2012, 11) beklagte enge Fokussierung Wagners auf den biopolitischen Aspekt der Versicherung soll hier jedoch ebenso vermieden werden wie die von Jansen auf den Wissensaspekt. Machtdispositive setzen im hier untersuchten Romanfragment demgegenüber sehr direkt am Körper der Figuren an und zeigen in Form von filmreifen Szenen das Machtgefälle zwischen Erwachsenen und dem jugendlichen ‚Helden‘ des Textes. Als Grundlage der Analyse solcher Interaktionen soll zunächst in den beiden folgenden Abschnitten die Machttheorie Foucaults und die auf Körper und Genderbezogene, an Foucault anschließende Konzeption Judith Butlers kurz dargestellt werden. Der abschließende Teil bezieht das am Körper ansetzende Macht- und Genderkonzept auf das Romanfragment *Der Verschollene*. Es wird namentlich aufgezeigt, wie die Funktion erwachsener Frauen gegenüber dem vor der Männlichkeit fliehenden ‚Helden‘ Roßmann „in einer Satire von Machtverhältnissen [...] durch misogyne Bilder des weiblichen Körpers unterstützt [wird], die die satirische Wirkung erhöhen, die aber auch die Grenzen des politischen Diskurses sprengen.“ (Boa, 2010, 478)

1. Machtdispositiv: Überwachen und Strafen (FOUCAULT)

Kafka kannte als Prager Jude und als Mitarbeiter der Arbeiter-Unfall-Versicherungs-Anstalt Prag, die böhmische Unternehmen und Arbeiter versicherte, nicht nur die Konflikte zwischen Unternehmern (die häufig ein höheres Unfallrisiko in ihrem Unternehmen bestritten) und Arbeitern (die ein Interesse an hohem Unfallschutz am Arbeitsplatz hatten), sondern er war auch dem steigenden Antisemitismus in seiner Heimat ausgesetzt. Sollte man als „jüdischer Parasit“ heldenhaft aushalten und bleiben oder etwa nach Amerika auswandern, was einer Flucht oder einer Strafe gleichkam? Zur Zeit des Schreibens am Romanfragment *Der Verschollene* (1911-1914) war eine solche Stimmung schon zu spüren; nach einer Judenverfolgung durch tschechische Nationalisten schrieb Kafka dann im November 1920: „Die ganzen Nachmittage bin ich jetzt auf den Gassen und bade im Judenhaß. [...] Das Heldentum, das darin besteht doch zu bleiben, ist jenes der Schaben, die auch nicht aus dem Badezimmer auszurotten sind.“ (Kafka, 1986, 288) Kafka ist Zeitzeuge vom Übergang der Disziplinar- zur Kontrollgesellschaft, wie sie

Foucault in seinen Schriften analysiert hat, und er schildert an seinem ‚Helden‘ Roßmann die Auswirkungen von Gewalt, die gegenüber einem zwar nicht als Schabe, sondern als Katze unbrauchbar aussortierten, durch das Galton-Sieb der Normalisierung gefallenen Subjekts ausgeübt wird. Karl Roßmanns wahrscheinlichen Tod als ‚Negro‘ in Oklahoma deutet Markus Jansen als ‚internalisierte und konsequent ausagierte gesellschaftliche Strafe für das Nichteinhalten der ökonomischen Normen‘ (Jansen, 2012, 387). – In Foucaults *Überwachen und Strafen* war es die öffentliche Hinrichtung Damians‘ (1757), die er den Paragraphen der Arbeits- und Zeitregulierung im später geschaffenen Gefängnis gegenüberstellte: die ‚Leibesmarter‘ wurde durch eine ‚Zeitplanung‘ ersetzt.² Marter und Hinrichtung hatten eine rechtspolitische Funktion im Sinne einer ‚Wiederherstellung der für einen Augenblick verletzen Souveränität [...]; als Sieg über das den Souverän verletzende Verbrechen entfaltet sie vor den Augen aller eine unüberwindliche Kraft.‘ (Foucault, 1993, 65) Diese Inszenierung der Macht wurde nun durch stete Disziplinierungsmaßnahmen und eine Überwachung im Stil eines panoptischen Systems ersetzt. Michel Foucault hat in seinen Untersuchungen ‚die Entwicklung einer Reihe von Prozeduren und Techniken zur Ordnung, Unterwerfung und Disziplinierung von Menschen und Körpern während des 18. Jahrhunderts nachgezeichnet, in deren Verlauf die in der Person des Souveräns symbolisierte und kristallisierte Macht, zu urteilen und zu strafen, zu befehlen und zu herrschen, sich nach und nach von ihrer Verbindung mit der Souveränität löst, sich gewissermaßen dezentralisiert, vervielfältigt und alle Bereiche des Gesellschafts-Körpers zu durchdringen und neu zu organisieren beginnt.‘ (Guntermann, 2000, 137)

Die traditionelle vertikale Richtung der Machtausübung der Souveränität wird durch eine horizontale Streuung der Disziplinarmacht ersetzt: ‚was in der Werkstatt, in der Schule, in der Armee überhand nimmt, ist eine Mikro-Justiz der Zeit (Verspätungen, Abwesenheiten, Unterbrechungen), der Tätigkeit (Unaufmerksamkeit, Nachlässigkeit, Faulheit), des Körpers (‚falsche‘ Körperhaltungen und Gesten, Unsauberkeit), der Sexualität (Unanständigkeit, Schamlosigkeit).‘ (Foucault, 1993, 229) Macht- und Disziplinierungseffekte konnten in ihrer Wirksamkeit dadurch erhöht werden, dass sie nicht mehr lückenhaft, als ereignishaft wirksame Rituale ausgeübt wurden, sondern ‚durch permanente Überwachungs- und Kontrollmechanismen‘ (Foucault, 2003, 115).

Disziplinierungsmaßnahmen schreiben sich in den Körper ein, sie

²‚Das eine Mal eine Leibesmarter, das andere Mal eine Zeitplanung. Die beiden sanktionieren nicht dieselben Verbrechen, sie bestrafen nicht ein und denselben Typ von Delinquenten. Aber sie definieren jeweils einen bestimmten Straf-Stil. Zwischen ihnen liegt kaum ein Jahrhundert: innerhalb dieses Zeitraums wurde in Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten die gesamte Ökonomie der Züchtigung umgestellt.‘ (Foucault, 1993, 14)

vollziehen sich am Körper, den sie formen, als eine epochentypische Leiblichkeit: „Der Zugriff der Macht legt sich also nicht einfach auf den Körper. Er bringt einen bestimmten, realen Körper – mit seinen konkreten Verhaltens- und Wahrnehmungs-Spielräumen leibhaftig hervor.“ (Gehring, 2004, 88) Auf das Doppelspiel von Subjektivierung und Unterwerfung spielt in diesem Zusammenhang der Begriff „assujettissement“ an, den Foucault erörtert. Die minutiöse Genauigkeit der Dressur ist zum wesentlichen Bestandteil der Militärordnung und der Arbeitsabläufe der Armen geworden und unterliegt einer permanenten Überwachung und Kontrolle: „Die Disziplin steigert die Kräfte des Körpers (um die ökonomische Nützlichkeit zu erhöhen) und schwächt diese selben Kräfte (um sie politisch fügsam zu machen).“ (Foucault, 1993, 77) Von dieser „neue[n] politische[n] Anatomie“ kann man „sagen, daß der Disziplinarzwang eine gesteigerte Tauglichkeit und eine vertiefte Unterwerfung im Körper miteinander verkettet.“ (Ebd.) Die eingeübte Rolle kann ausgefüllt werden, weil die Befähigung zur Ausübung im Rahmen der Disziplinierung entstanden ist; und die genaue Befolgung der eingeübten Regeln wird durch eine ständige Überwachung gesichert, die beim Einzelnen das Gefühl einer ständigen Sichtbarkeit erzeugt. In *Überwachen und Strafen* analysiert Foucault den Bauplan von Gefängnissen nach einem ‚panoptischen‘ System, Modell für eine Disziplinargesellschaft von Beobachtung und Überwachung. Der Bauplan gewährleistet, dass die Häftlinge ständig damit rechnen müssen, dass sich der ihnen verborgene Blick des Bewachers auf sie richtet; er sichert damit die Verinnerlichung der Machtverhältnisse und fördert die Selbstbeobachtung und die erzwungene Anpassung an das System der Disziplin. Foucault findet die modellhafte Wirkung des panoptischen Gefängnisses nicht sehr erstaunlich, denn „mit seinem Zeitrhythmus, seiner Zwangsarbeit, seinen Überwachungs- und Registrierungsinstanzen, seinen Normalitätsregeln“ hat es bewirkt, dass „das Gefängnis den Fabriken, den Schulen, den Kasernen, den Spitälern gleicht, die allesamt den Gefängnissen gleichen“ (Ebd., 292). Der ständig präsente diagnostische Blick des gesellschaftlichen panoptischen Systems der Überwachung, der verinnerlicht wird und nicht nur der Fremdkontrolle, sondern auch der Disziplinierung des eigenen Selbst dient, führt zum Ausgliedern nicht mehr ökonomisch sinnvoll verwertbarer Mitglieder, die Psychiatrien, Arbeitslagern oder Gefängnissen zugeführt werden können, um sie zu resozialisieren, die aber auch deportiert, etwa nach Amerika verschifft werden können. So wurde Karl Roßmann, der von einem Dienstmädchen vergewaltigt wurde und in dieser „Urszene“ (Alt, 2008, 365) zum Vater wurde, für die Familie untragbar und „einfach beiseitegeschafft [...]“, wie man eine Katze vor die Tür wirft, wenn sie ärgert“ (V, 38).³ So

³ Franz KAFKA, 1983. *Der Verschollene*, *Kritische Ausgabe*, hrsg. v. Jost SCHILLEMEIT, Frankfurt a.M., Fischer. Im Folgenden zitiert mit der Sigle „V“. Der Apparateband

beschreibt es Roßmanns Onkel Jakob, der neben der Wahrung eines guten Rufes auch einen ökonomischen Grund für die Abschiebung des Neffen aus der Heimat angibt: „zur Vermeidung der Alimentenzahlung und des Skandales“ (V, 40). Bei dieser ‚Abschiebung‘ hat es sich sehr wohl um eine ‚Deportation‘ gehandelt (Wagner, 1998, 210f.): „Roßmann wird als nichtintegrierbares, deviantes Subjekt in eine überseeische ‚wilde Kolonie‘, nach Amerika verschickt, die über eine entsprechend fordernde Umwelt verfügt, den kapitalistischen Dschungel bzw. die kapitalistische Wüste.“ (Jansen, 2012, 239)

2. Machtdispositiv und Gender: Körper von Gewicht (Butler)

Wenn die scheinbar naturgegebene Geschlechterordnung (sex) erst durch die kulturelle Wissensordnung (gender) hervorgebracht wird, muss man ‚Gender‘ als einen „Produktionsapparat [verstehen, durch den] eine ‚geschlechtliche Natur‘ oder ein ‚natürliches Geschlecht‘ als ‚vordiskursiv‘, d.h. als der Kultur vorgelagert oder als politisch neutrale Oberfläche, auf der sich die Kultur einschreibt, hergestellt und etabliert wird“ (Butler, 1991, 24). Karl Roßmann, der ‚Held‘ des Romanfragments *Der Verschollene*, zeigt immer aufs Neue, wie schwer ihm die Übernahme vorgegebener männlicher Verhaltensnormen fällt und wie unsicher er sich dabei fühlt, ist das Erlernen dieser Normen doch stets mit der Gefahr des Scheiterns verbunden: „Bedenkt man jedoch, daß ein Geschlecht erst erworben wird, daß es in Beziehung zu Idealen angenommen wird, die sich von keinem je ganz erfüllen lassen, dann ist [Männlichkeit] ein Ideal, das von jedem immer nur ‚imitiert‘ wird.“ (Butler, 2001, 136)

Karl Roßmann hat sich aus Sicht seiner Eltern, die wir nur aus der Spiegelung durch den Onkel erfahren, für die Familie als ökonomisch und sozial nicht mehr tragbar erwiesen, ist er doch schon im Alter von 16 Jahren durch die Verführung eines Dienstmädchens im Elternhaus zum Vater geworden. Er soll sich nun in Amerika als Mann bewähren, er selbst träumt ebenfalls von einer Karriere als erfolgreicher Geschäftsmann, der die Eltern mit seinen Erfolgen beeindrucken kann. Der Entwicklungsroman, den man erwarten könnte, wird sich allerdings in umgekehrter Richtung vollziehen; statt der Erfolge werden wiederholte Situationen des Scheiterns zu immer neuer Ausstoßung des jungen Mannes führen, der sich den Anforderungen der Erwachsenen an seine Männlichkeit immer wieder entzieht. Damit wehrt er sich auch gegen die begrifflich-symbolische Ordnung, die nach Judith Butler eine Entscheidung zwischen Mann und Frau erzwingt, die damit aber allererst diese Unterscheidung hervorbringt. Die begriffliche Unterscheidung männlicher und weiblicher Körper wird von diesem Ausgangspunkt aus erkennbar „als eine Grenzvorstellung, die Subjekte als Menschen erkennbar und handlungsfähig werden lässt.“ (MEIBNER, 2012, 7) Hier gilt das ‚Gesetz des Vaters‘ nach Lacan, und Butler schließt sich der These Irigarays zur Mann-Frau-Dichotomie an,

wird mit der Sigle „VA“ zitiert.

„daß jene binären Einheiten, selbst in ihrer ausgesöhnten Form, Teil einer phallogozentrischen Ökonomie sind, die das ‚Weibliche‘ als ihr konstitutives Außen erzeugt.“ (Butler, 1997, 63) Als handlungsfähiger Mann hätte sich Karl Roßmann den gültigen Verhaltensnormen unterwerfen und als handlungsfähig erweisen müssen. Erst im Prozess der Unterwerfung unter Normen männlichen Verhaltens wäre er zu dem Mann geworden, den sein Onkel und die Frauen, denen er begegnet, von ihm erwartet hatten. Den Erwachsenen bleibt er jedoch unterlegen; er kann im für ihn geltenden Machtdiskurs Widerstand nur dadurch zeigen, dass er sich den an ihn gestellten Anforderungen entzieht. Bei den Frauen, denen er begegnet, zeigt sich aus der Perspektive Roßmanns wie bei ihm selbst aus der Perspektive der anderen auch kein klares Bild, das den Rollenerwartungen entspricht. Das entspricht der These Butlers, die sich gegen eine starre binäre Einteilung im Rahmen einer in sich geschlossenen Struktur bei Saussure gewehrt hat: „Obgleich Saussure das Verhältnis zwischen Signifikant und Signifikat als arbiträr begreift, plazierte er dieses arbiträre Verhältnis in ein notwendigerweise vollständiges, geschlossenes System.“ (Butler, 1991, 70) Judith Butler plädiert dagegen für ein System, das kontextuelle Interpretationen von geschlechtlichen Rollen und Normen ermöglicht: „So kann der Signifikant ‚Frau‘ je nach Kontext beispielsweise mit der Bedeutung eines Ideals der fürsorgenden Mutter, eines Opfers von (männlicher) Gewalt, eines Objekts sexuellen Begehrens, einer erfolgreichen Geschäftsfrau, eines selbstbestimmten Subjekts und dergleichen verknüpft sein.“ (Meißner, 2012, 16)

3. Karl Roßmann als Opfer der Machtdiskurse

Schon im ersten Absatz des Romanfragments wird als Exposition der Zusammenhang von Machtdispositiv und Gender deutlich. Karl Roßmann wurde von den mächtigen Eltern verstoßen und nach Amerika verschifft; als Vorzeichen seiner Zukunft sieht er mit der riesigen Statue der Freiheitsgöttin eine übermächtige Frauenfigur vor sich, die statt der Fackel der Aufklärung das Schwert der Rache und Vergeltung in der Hand trägt.

Als der siebzehnjährige Karl Roßmann, der von seinen armen Eltern nach Amerika geschickt worden war, weil ihn ein Dienstmädchen verführt und ein Kind von ihm bekommen hatte, in dem schon langsam gewordenen Schiff in den Hafen von Newyork einfuhr, erblickte er die schon längst beobachtete Statue der Freiheitsgöttin wie in einem plötzlich stärker gewordenen Sonnenlicht. Ihr Arm mit dem Schwert ragte wie neuerdings empor und um ihre Gestalt wehten die freien Lüfte. (V, 7)

Die Veränderung gegenüber der Vorerwartung hatte er sehr wohl registriert, wie man aus einer gestrichenen Passage erkennen kann: „Er sah zu ihr auf und

verwarf das über sie Gelernte' (VA, 123).⁴ Diese Freiheitsgöttin verweist jedenfalls auch auf eine Zukunft mit größerer Toleranz. Der Onkel Jakob, der seinen Neffen vom Schiff abholt und ihn in das Leben in Amerika einzugewöhnen sucht, sieht im ‚Fehltritt‘ Karls nur ein geringfügiges ‚Verschulden‘, ‚dessen einfaches Nennen schon genug Entschuldigung enthält‘ (V, 39). Allerdings sind damit Macht- und Normstrukturen nicht aufgehoben; im Gegenteil wird hier sehr großer Wert auf Disziplin gelegt: ‚So betrachtet ist die Subjektivierung die paradoxe Wirkung einer Herrschaft der Macht, unter welcher schon die bloßen ‚Existenzbedingungen‘, die Möglichkeit des Weiterlebens als anerkanntes soziales Wesen, die Bildung und den Fortbestand des Subjekts in der Unterordnung verlangen.‘ (Butler, 2001, 31) Schon nach geringfügigen und von Karl in ihrer Bedeutung nicht einzuschätzenden Normverstößen wird er aus dem Haus des Onkels verbannt. Schon bei der ersten Begegnung mit seinem Neffen, der einer hilflosen, aber körperlich imponierenden Vaterfigur (dem Heizer) zu helfen versuchte, hat Onkel Jakob als ‚Gegner des Heimwehs und Zurückblickens‘ (Sokol, 1976, 357) Karls ‚bloß erfüllte[r] ‚Gerechtigkeit‘ [...] die objektiv feststellbare und allgemein durchführbare Disziplin entgegen‘ (Ebd., 356) gestellt. Das Klavierspiel als musikalischer Ausdruck von Gefühlen wird Karl nur widerwillig vom Onkel gestattet; an einem amerikanischen Schreibtisch sitzend phantasiert Karl sich in die Kindheit zurück, erinnert sich an ein Krippenspiel und sieht als Phantasiegefährte einen Hasen vor sich, wie er selbst ein hakenschlagendes und rasch flüchtendes Wesen. Dennoch wird der häufig desorientierte Karl, der erst das Schiff und nun die amerikanische Großstadt als Labyrinth erlebt, durchaus als dem Onkel in einigen Zügen ähnlicher Leistungsethiker interpretiert.

Karl dachte gern, wenn er irgendwohin kam, darüber nach, was hier verbessert werden könnte und welche Freude es machen müßte, sofort einzugreifen, ohne Rücksicht auf die vielleicht endlose Arbeit die es verursachen würde (V, 384).

⁴ Diese Abweichung kann mehrere Bedeutungen haben: ‚(1) es könnte sich um einen einfachen Austausch von Attributen handeln: (strafendes? Kriegerisches?) Schwert statt Freiheit und Aufklärung signalisierender Fackel; (2) durch das neue Attribut könnte die Freiheits-Statue in eine der Gerechtigkeit (‚Justitia‘) transformiert worden sein (der allerdings Waage und Augenbinde fehlen – was den strafenden Aspekt einseitig betonen würde); (3) es könnte eine Anspielung auf den Engel mit dem (Feuer-)Schwert sein, der nach der Vertreibung das Paradies bewacht (was auf eine Fehleinschätzung Amerikas durch Karl hinwiese, sie vielleicht auch kritisch kommentierte, da ins Paradies kein Weg zurück führt).‘ (Engel, 2010, 185) Vgl. auch Eberhard OSTERMANN (2003, 451), für den ‚die vielinterpretierte Eingangssequenz [...] das Thema der Erzählung, den Zusammenhang von Strafe, Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit und Kampf, in ebenso gedrängter wie vieldeutiger Weise vorwegnimmt‘.

Typisch für einen solchen Leistungsethiker ist jedoch „seine geradezu erschreckende Empathieunfähigkeit“ (Engel, 2010, 187). Gegenüber Thereses anrührender Lebensgeschichte vermag er wenig Einfühlung und Trost zu zeigen, und als Preis von Beherrschung und Unterordnung fällt eine „Gewaltbereitschaft [auf,] etwa in einer drastischen, bezeichnenderweise auf den Heizer projizierten Gewaltphantasie.“ (Ebd.)

Wenn nur der Heizer besser auf dem Platze gewesen wäre, aber der schien vollständig kampfunfähig. Wenn man ihm den Schubal hingehalten hätte, hätte er wohl dessen gehaßten Schädel mit den Fäusten aufklopfen können, wie eine dünnschalige Nuß. (V, 32f.)

Die europäische Erziehung hilft Karl Roßmann jedoch bei der Kontrolle solcher Affekte, wobei er häufig in eine Opferrolle gerät, der er kaum enttrinnen kann (vgl. Engel, 2010, 187f.). Das Romanfragment könnte mit dem offenbar versöhnlichen „Teater von Oklahama“ enden, wie Kafka gegenüber Max Brod angedeutet hatte: „Mit rätselhaften Worten deutete Kafka lächelnd an, daß sein junger Held in diesem ‚fast grenzenlosen‘ Theater Beruf, Freiheit, Rückhalt, ja sogar die Heimat und die Eltern wie durch einen paradiesischen Zauber wiederfinden wird.“ (Stach, 2002, 277) Allerdings ergibt sich aus Kafkas Eintrag vom 30. September 1915, der „eindeutig [ist] und [...] für Deutungen keinen Raum [lässt,] Kafka wollte seinen Helden sterben lassen“ (Ebd.) Karl Roßmann hatte im ‚Teater von Oklahama‘ den Namen „Negro“ gewählt und damit möglicherweise ein schreckliches Ende, wie es manchen Sklaven in Amerika beschieden war. In Arthur Holitschers Buch über Amerika (Holitscher, 1912) findet sich im Kapitel „Der Neger“ ein Foto mit dem Untertitel „Idyll aus Oklahama“, das eine Gruppe von Weißen zeigt, die vor einem Neger posieren, der offenbar von ihnen im Rahmen einer Lynchjustiz gehängt wurde (Jahraus, 2006, 258f.): „In Oklahoma in der Zeit um 1912 als „Negro“ bezeichnet zu werden, impliziert also das gleiche Schicksal, das ein als Ungeziefer bezeichneter Mensch zu erfahren hat: den Tod.“ (Jansen, 2012, 275)

Im ‚Teater von Oklahama‘ ist jeder willkommen, eine bürokratische Registrierung findet zwar statt, aber nun wird nicht mehr zwischen den Kategorien „verwertbar“ und „abzuschieben“ unterschieden, denn alle werden aufgenommen; das Ende der Machtdiskurse ist nah, sie weichen einem paradiesischen Zustand: „Jeder war willkommen“, hieß es. Jeder, also auch Karl. Alles was er bisher getan hatte, war vergessen, niemand wollte ihm daraus einen Vorwurf machen.“ (V, 388) Wenn nun biblisch-apokalyptische Bilder angesprochen werden, „hunderte Frauen als Engel gekleidet in weißen Tüchern mit großen Flügeln am Rücken auf langen goldglänzenden Trompeten bliesen“ (V, 389), um Bewerber für das Theater anzulocken, ist dieses Theater von

Oklahoma möglicherweise „ein Traum, vielleicht der Traum eines Sterbenden, oder es ist *das Paradies*, in dem der Schuldlose ganz selbstverständlich seinen Platz findet ... nach seinem Untergang.“ (Stach, 2002, 281) In diesem Paradies nach dem Tod werden auf der Anzeigetafel der Pferderennbahn die vom Theater aufgenommenen Bewerber angezeigt: „Jeder ein Sieger.“ (Ebd.)

4. Machtdispositiv und Gender

Führt man die körperbezogenen Machtanalysen Foucaults und Butlers zusammen, um sie auf Kafkas Romanfragment *Der Verschollene* anzuwenden, so kann dieses Fragment als klinische Fallstudie gelesen werden: „Kafkas Roman ist – auch darin Hollywood weit voraus – der vielleicht erste Roman über die Vergewaltigung eines Mannes durch mehrere Frauen.“ (Menninghaus, 2002, 379) Darüber hinaus sind „die abstoßenden Frauen-Szenen [...] durchaus positiv und libidinös besetzt, eher Serien einer Fluchtbahn des Wunsches (Deleuze) als seiner entfremdenden Negation.“ (Ebd.) Neben sadomasochistischen Szenen ist auch eine deutlich homoerotisch Färbung spürbar, so z.B. in der Anfangsszene des Romans, als Karl Roßmann auffällt, „daß er seinen Regenschirm unten im Schiff vergessen hatte“ (V, 8), der als „roter Regenschirm“ in der ersten Szene mit Brunelda, dem „erotische[n] Juwel in Amerika“ (Kundera, 1996, 50), erneut auftaucht „und seine Trägerin als Prostituierte ausweist“ (Menninghaus, 2002, 379; V, 303). Auf der Suche nach dem verlorenen Schirm im schmutzigen Labyrinth des Schiffsbauchs stößt Karl dann in Begleitung des wie er selbst verstoßenen Heizers, dem er helfen will, auf Ungeziefer und Schmutz, auf „eine den Weg kreuzende Ratte“, danach auf „Mädchen in schmutzigen Schürzen – sie begossen sie absichtlich“ (V, 17f.). Als sich eines der Mädchen, das der Heizer zu sich gerufen hatte, „immerzu kokett gegen seinen Arm drückte“ (V, 18), wird, fragt sie den Heizer, der Karl angeblich wegen Platzmangel auf seinem Bett hatte Platz nehmen lassen, wo er „denn den schönen Knaben aufgegabelt“ habe (Ebd.).

Die eigene Verführung durch das Dienstmädchen der Eltern schildert Karl als sexuell unschuldiger junger Mann, der nicht wusste, was sie von ihm wollte, und er dann auf einmal Vater war:

Dann legte sie sich auch zu ihm und wollte irgendwelche Geheimnisse erfahren, [...] und sie [...] drückte ihren nackten Bauch an seinen Leib, suchte mit der Hand, so widerlich daß Karl Kopf und Hals aus dem Kissen heraus schüttelte, zwischen seinen Beinen, stieß dann den Bauch einigemal gegen ihn, ihm war als sei sie ein Teil seiner selbst und vielleicht aus diesem Grunde hatte ihn eine entsetzliche Hilfsbedürftigkeit ergriffen. Weinend kam er endlich nach vielen Wiedersehenswünschen ihrerseits in sein Bett. Das war alles gewesen, und doch verstand es der Onkel, daraus eine große Geschichte zu machen. (V, 42f.)

Die Verführung gewinnt aus der Perspektive des Unwissenden und der ihn ergreifenden 'entsetzlichen Hilfsbedürftigkeit' den Charakter eines Kindesmissbrauchs; der Geschädigte selbst bagatellisiert jedoch das Geschehen und wundert sich, dass man 'daraus eine große Geschichte' (V, 43) machen kann. Das Muster von Fehltritt und Verstoßung wiederholt sich dann bald auch beim Onkel in Amerika. Gegen den Willen des Onkels besucht er einen Bekannten desselben, dessen Tochter Klara (dem Namen nach sein weibliches Pendant) ihn offenbar erwartet, während Karl es kaum erwarten kann, ans Ziel zu kommen, er ist „ungeduldig über die lange Fahrt' (V, 73). Das Mädchen, das er hier kennenlernen kann, gefällt ihm dann jedoch nicht, „trotzdem er sie sich durchaus nicht etwa viel schöner vorgestellt hatte' (V, 859). Hier wird deutlich, dass Karl einen besonderen Geschmack für korpulente Mütterlichkeit zu empfinden scheint: „schlanke, gutaussehende Mädchen [...] sind nicht Karls Fall; von der Serie der korpulenten "alten Mädchen" – von der 35jährigen Johanna über die 50jährige Therese bis zur beinahe unbeweglichen Fleischmasse Bruneldas – geht ein ungleich stärkerer, wiewohl ambivalenter Reiz aus.' (Menninghaus, 2002, 384) Bei Klara kann Karl die Rolle einer Domina erleben, die ihn überwältigt, ins Bett zwingt, um ihn dann zu schlagen und zu würgen.

Nach der obligatorischen Verstoßung aus dem Haus Klaras gelangt Karl in die Obhut der Oberköchin Greta Mitzelbach, einer „hybride[n] Mischung aus Märchenfigur, Mutter und Prostituiertes' (Ebd., 386). Karl hat neben seiner 50jährigen Freundin nunmehr eine Nebenbeziehung zum Küchenmädchen Therese; als sein Freund Robinson betrunken und dem Erbrechen nahe ins Hotel kommt, bringt Karl ihn dort unter, vernachlässigt seinen Dienst und wird entlassen. Die nächste Frau, in deren Dienst er tritt, ist die phallische Prostituierte Brunelda, in deren Bordell "kein faßbarer Schmutz" (V, 384) zu beobachten ist und Karl "befriedigt" ist, weil Brunelda einen guten Eindruck macht, der gegenüber er doch ein ausgeprägtes „Zartgefühl' empfindet (V, 379): „Was Klara durch Jiu-Jitsu gelungen war – das Festbannen Karls auf dem Kanapee -, vollbringt Brunelda durch ihre bloße Masse.' (Menninghaus, 2002, 390) Brunelda entzieht sich jedoch den sie bewundernden Männern und ihrem begehrlchen Blick und steigert dadurch das Begehren: „Die ekelhafte Prostituierte ist Kafkas unschuldig-perverse Variation des Absoluten.' (Ebd., 391)

5. Schluss

Blickt man auf die hier aufgezeigte Darstellung von Machtdispositiv und Gender in Kafkas Romanfragment *Der Verschollene* zurück, so wird eine Tendenz der Regression und des Rückzugs des jugendlichen ‚Helden‘ Karl Roßmann deutlich. Als ritterlicher Mann des Rosses erweist er sich nur selten, stattdessen nimmt er meist die Opferrolle ein und versagt im heldenhaften

Kampf, z.B., als er den Eltern durch die Verteidigung des Heizers imponieren will. Er muss sich Vaterfiguren wie dem Onkel unterwerfen und wird rasch als undiszipliniert aussortiert; im männlichen Konkurrenzkampf der Besten kann er nicht bestehen. Auch sexuelle und dominante Frauen wie Klara und Brunella ängstigen ihn, ältere Frauen sind eher geeignet, mütterlichen Schutz zu bieten, sie weisen Karl jedoch ab und sondern ihn aus, wenn es mächtige Männer fordern, mit denen sie paktieren. Elizabeth Boa sieht den Kern des Romanfragments zu Recht in „einer Satire von Machtverhältnissen [,unterstützt] durch ambivalente und misogyne Bilder des weiblichen Körpers [...], die die satirische Wirkung erhöhen.“ (Boa, 2010, 478) Eine besondere Bedeutung erlangt dabei Brunelda, die als Objekt „männlich-infantile[r]“ Begierde „eine Mischung aus Ekel und Faszination [erregt], die das Unheimliche im *Process* ankündigt.“ (Ebd.) Die der dominanten Brunelda dienenden, von ihr abhängigen drei Männer zeigen ein Zerrbild der Männlichkeit, das nicht die essentialistische Konzeption Weiningers, sondern die machtbezogene Konzeption Foucaults und Butlers widerspiegelt.

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**CORPUL ÎMBRĂCAT. MENTALITĂȚI ȘI
GESTIONAREA IMPRESIILOR
(O ABORDARE COMPARATIVĂ A OPERELOR
LITERARE ALE LUI N. FILIMON ȘI W. M.
THACKERAY)**

Lect. univ. dr Ana-Maria POPESCU
Universitatea din Pitești
anamaria.stoica.sa@yahoo.com

Abstract: The present article offers a comparative, yet partial, analysis of two literary works of the 19th century, *Ciocoii vechi și noi* by Nicolae Filimon and *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray. Its novelty consists in a comparative approach of the two literary works in question, an approach which aims to reveal points of convergence between mentalities, literature and sociology of communication (based on the most important concepts introduced by Erving Goffman). We shall focus on the similarities between the 19th century Romanian and English societies, as they reflect in fashion, in the representation of the covered body and we shall point out similar social position-related stereotypes in Nicolae Filimon's and William Makepeace Thackeray's literary works. In the two authors' novels, both the characters holding privileged positions in society, and the ones trying to reach higher hierarchical positions build their prestige (*personal front*), first of all, through exhibiting symbols which indicate wealth (good quality clothes, valuable estates and objects, sumptuous parties, etc), through limiting their contact with individuals belonging to inferior social categories and through keeping in contact with characters belonging to the same or to a higher social category. Therefore, we shall conclude that irrespective of each author's cultural background and individual style, the analysed aspects highlight features of the epoch similarly reflected in the two authors' novels.

Key words: fashion, mentalities, impression management, literary discourse, Romanian/English society

În cadrul tendințelor actuale, cercetările axate pe inter- și transdisciplinaritate, pe comparatism și pe o viziune globalizantă pot oferi explicații coerente și unitare legate de trecut și de evoluția omului în timp. Prin urmare, în lucrarea de față, ne propunem o abordare comparativă și interdisciplinară (din perspectiva istoriei mentalităților și a sociologiei comunicării) a unor aspecte legate de modă, de corpul îmbrăcat, așa cum se reflectă acestea în *Ciocoii vechi și noi* și *Vanity Fair*, cele mai importante opere literare ale lui N. Filimon și W. M. Thackeray.

Dintre autorii români din secolul al XIX-lea, Filimon iese în evidență prin abilități de „observator social ascuțit” (Simion, 13) iar William Makepeace

Thackeray este considerat a fi cel de-al doilea mare scriitor englez din perioada victoriană, după Charles Dickens. În acest demers comparativ, vom porni de la ideea că orice text este încadrat într-un ansamblu cultural de referință, într-o epistemă a epocii. Pe de altă parte, este cunoscut faptul că între culturi există asemănări, influențe reciproce dar și diferențe sistematice, rezultat al reuniunii factorilor geografici, istorici, economici, socioculturali sau individuali care modelează atitudini, credințe și comportamente. În ceea ce privește literatura, domeniu privilegiat al culturii, formația autorilor, tradiția literară îndelungată sau, dimpotrivă, lipsa unei vieți literare instituționalizate rezultă în diferențe stilistice sau compoziționale. În acest sens, există discrepanțe între scrierea lui Nicolae Filimon și romanul lui William Makepeace Thackeray. Vom privi însă diferența dintre texte în sens de transformare a realităților conceptuale care stau la baza producțiilor imaginarului, precum și în sens de diversitate, într-un spațiu al dialogului cultural și transcultural, deschiderea către Celălalt fiind, în opinia noastră, nu numai actuală, ci și necesară. Așa cum afirmă Tzvetan Todorov, dialogul „presupune o deosebire între Eu și Tu, dar și un cadru comun, voința de a-l înțelege pe celălalt și de a comunica cu el [...]. Diferența nu e o valoare absolută, însă a învăța să trăiești împreună cu ceilalți este, oricum, preferabil închiderii temătoare înăuntrul identității. [...] Diferența este bună pentru că ne deschide spre universalitate: trebuie să observăm diferențele, spunea Rousseau, ca să descoperim proprietățile” (Todorov, 1997, 202-203).

Cercetătorii în domeniul istoriei mentalităților scot în evidență importanța pe care o are „mica istorie”, a vieții cotidiene, consacrată studiului omului și mediului său natural și material, „din pivniță până la pod” (Vovelle, 1982, 90), după expresia lui Michel Vovelle. Sunt astfel interesați de structura caselor și de împodobirea spațiilor interioare, de materialele din care oamenii din trecut își confecționau îmbrăcămintea, de obiceiurile la masă, de „tehnicele corpului”, de bolile de care sufereau sau de practicile funerare. Istoricul mentalităților, care nu îmbrățișează convingerea că omul a fost și va fi mereu același, că există constante, cel puțin în ceea ce privește sentimentele și atitudinile fundamentale, nu neglijează nicio sursă care ar putea oferi mărturii ale vieții cotidiene, ale comportamentelor și sentimentelor de altădată (cf. Dolores Toma) (Toma, 1996, 5-20). Literatura se numără printre acestea deoarece oferă un teren fertil pentru studiul mentalităților, pentru descoperirea asemănărilor și a diferențelor dintre spații culturale diferite, în epoci diferite. Imaginarul colectiv, clișeele de gândire și de exprimare, punctele comune în materie de sentimente și reprezentări reies la analiză prin raportarea unui text la contextul istoric, social și cultural și prin compararea sa cu alte texte ale epocii. Pe de altă parte, o direcție importantă pe care istoria mentalităților a reușit s-o impună cercetărilor din câmpul culturii se materializează în tendințele pe care le urmează în prezent literatura comparată, studiile de imagologie, studiile culturale, interculturale sau transculturale, precum și acelea dedicate comunicării.

Pe de altă parte, deși publicate cu o jumătate de secol în urmă, cele mai importante cercetări ale sociologului american Erving Goffman reprezintă un punct de cotitură în abordarea fenomenelor sociale și continuă să suscite interesul specialiștilor în sociologie, antropologie, psihologie sau etnometodologie. În lucrarea *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Viața cotidiană ca spectacol)* (Goffman, 2007), pentru a descrie funcționarea raporturilor dintre indivizi, grupuri de indivizi și societate, așa cum se reflectă aceasta în interacțiunea față în față, Goffman face apel la metafora vieții ca teatru și compară interacțiunile sociale cu un spectacol. În opinia sa, individul este *actorul* preocupat să se pună în scenă pentru *spectatori*, să joace deci *rolul* unui *personaj*, de obicei o figură pozitivă. Individul care se înfățișează în fața altora proiectează o *definiție a situației*, în cadrul căreia imaginea de sine ocupă o poziție centrală. Cu scopul de a produce *impresii* favorabile, acesta se angajează într-un proces de *gestionare a impresiilor* și devine astfel *performer*, al cărui rol este acela de a scoate în evidență, prin *performare*, calitățile personajului, de a-i contura acestuia o *fațadă (front)* pozitivă. Scopul esențial al performerului este întotdeauna acela de controla atitudinea celorlalți, în special comportamentul prin care aceștia reacționează la prezența sa. *Gestionarea impresiilor* se realizează prin *expresivitate*, înțeleasă prin prisma rolului comunicativ pe care-l joacă în interacțiune. Astfel, performerul *furnizează expresii* (aspectul intențional și dirijabil al comunicării) și urmărește, pe de o parte, să identifice în comportamentul celorlalți *expresiile degajate* (aspectele presupuse a fi nonintenționale și nederijabile) iar pe de altă parte, să dețină controlul asupra propriei *partituri* și asupra *inferențelor* pe care aceasta le declanșează. Cum, după Goffman, „viața interacțională este inferențială” (*Ibidem*, 19), atât inferențele verbale, cât și acelea non-verbale joacă un rol crucial în procesul de gestionare a impresiilor, în negocierea raporturilor dintre performeri precum și în procesul de validare a imaginii pe care aceștia intenționează să o impună în interacțiunea cu ceilalți.

Rezultatele analizelor de sociologie a comunicării pot servi și la studiul mentalităților, inclusiv la studiul mentalităților așa cum se reflectă acestea în literatură. Erving Goffman definește *fațada* ca fiind o „reprezentare colectivă” și afirmă că atunci „[...] când individul se prezintă pe sine în fața celorlalți, performarea lui tinde să încorporeze și să exemplifice valorile oficial acreditate ale societății [deci și mentalitățile *n.n.*], mai mult decât o face comportamentul lui în ansamblu”. Definind situații, gestionând impresii, *performerii și echipele de performeri* urmăresc să mențină „o suprafață de înțelegere” sau un „consens superficial [...] facilitat de faptul că fiecare participant își ascunde dorințele proprii în spatele unor afirmații bazate pe valori la care toată lumea prezentă se simte obligată să adere”. *Fațada personală (personal front)* desemnează, de asemenea, „acele entități din echipamentul expresiv, pe care le identificăm cel mai intim cu performerul însuși și de la care ne așteptăm în chip firesc să-l

urmeze oriunde merge. Ca părți ale fațadei personale putem include aici însemnele funcției sau ale rangului, îmbrăcămintea, caracteristicile legate de sex, de vârstă și de rasă, dimensiunile și apariția fizică, ținuta corporală, particularitățile de vorbire, expresiile faciale, gestică [...]” (*Ibidem*, 37,51,55,63).

Fără a intenționa să acoperim toate aspectele asupra cărora se oprește Erving Goffman în lucrarea sa cu cel mai mare impact teoretic și aplicativ, am sintetizat aici cele mai importante noțiuni și concepte care ne oferă perspectiva unor aplicații ce servesc obiectivelor lucrării de față, așa cum sperăm că vom demonstra în cele ce urmează.

Nicolae Filimon, în acord cu tendințele vremii, scrie „un romanț original”, moralizator și de inspirație autohtonă. Prima parte este dedicată „ciocoilor vechi” de la sfârșitul epocii fanariote, în vremuri nu foarte îndepărtate de propria sa lume. Cea de-a doua parte urma să se ocupe de „ciocoiul cu frac și cu mănuși albe” din epoca de după 1848. Prin urmare, autorul intenționa să acopere o perioadă de tranziție în stilurile de viață ale înaltei societăți românești din secolul al XIX-lea. Dacă partea dedicată „ciocoilor vechi” evocă un univers marcat profund de mentalități orientale, cea de-a doua, neterminată din cauza morții premature a autorului (1865), ar fi adus în prim plan strategiile prin care „ciocoi noi” urmăresc să obțină averi și, implicit, ranguri înalte, într-o societate în care se vorbește franțuzește și se respectă reguli de bune maniere de inspirație britanică. Stilurile de viață care predomină în Bucureștiul secolului al XIX-lea combină rafinamentul occidental cu lejeritatea mentalității orientale. Ulysse de Marsillac afirmă că Bucureștii „[...] printr-un rar privilegiu, satisfac dubla noastră dorință de civilizație și libertate. [...] Intrați într-un salon, vă aflați la Paris. [...] Părăsiți salonul și ieșiți în stradă. Vă treziți, pe deplin, în Orientul viselor voastre [...]” (De Marsillac, 1999, 88).

Romanul *Vanity Fair* a fost publicat pentru prima dată în mai multe periodice, între anii 1847-1848. Un „roman fără erou” (‘a novel without a hero’), așa cum indică subtitlul, scrierea are drept protagonist principal societatea engleză de la începutul secolului al XIX-lea și, în parte, societatea europeană a acelei vremi. Romanul este apreciat, mai cu seamă, pentru că oferă o imagine veridică a stilurilor de viață și mentalităților aristocrației și claselor de mijloc, la începutul epocii victoriene. (Lubbock, 2007, 101)⁵ Stilurile de viață ale victorienilor, indiferent de categoria socială din care fac parte, gravitează în jurul valorilor morale și civice tradiționale, precum *respectability*,

⁵ “*Vanity Fair* creates the impression of a world, a society, a time-certain manners of life within a few square miles of London [...] All men and women are strongly, picturesquely typical of the world from which they are taken. [...] The book is not the story of any of them, it is a story which they unite to tell, a chapter of notorious career of well - to - do London [...]”

self-help, duty, self-control, seriousness, earnestness, prudery, emotional reserve etc. (cf. Sally Mitchell. 2009. 262-272) și sunt asociate cu un anumit tip de comportament (inclusiv vestimentar), atât în spațiul privat, cât mai ales în spațiul public. Cu scopul de a deveni persoane respectabile și independente din punct de vedere financiar, victorienii urmează reguli stricte pentru aproape orice lucru pe care îl fac. Pentru femei, există norme care specifică tipul de podoabe sau de îmbrăcăminte pe care să-l poarte. Rochiile care ascund corpul sub materiale ample și foarte grele au rolul de a exprima seriozitate și sobrietate. Există de asemenea reguli care le indică cu cine pot dansa sau vorbi, când să i se adreseze unui strain și când nu. În schimb, un adevărat *gentleman* trebuie să-și plătească datoriile la timp, să nu vorbească despre probleme personale ('keep yourself to yourself'), să nu mănânce pe stradă, să nu fumeze și să nu bea în fața femeilor etc. Pentru înalta societate, precum și pentru familiile relativ bogate din clasa de mijloc, respectabilitatea se apreciază, printre altele, și în funcție de numărul de servitori care, pe lângă bunurile materiale, sunt un semn de bogăție și faimă. Datoria morală și socială, (auto)disciplina, seriozitatea, buna conduită, conveniențele sunt norme prescriptive pentru comportamentul de zi cu zi al oamenilor, mai cu seamă pentru societatea înaltă și pentru clasele de mijloc, acestea din urmă ajungând să dețină controlul și în ceea ce privește „sistemul moralității”.

W. M. Thackeray își îndreaptă atenția înspre faptul banal, înspre viața de zi cu zi a oamenilor. Scenele de viață cotidiană, regulile după care funcționează societatea și relațiile interumane, evenimentele, experiențele prin care trec personajele fac parte, așa cum observă Percy Lubbock, din „survolul panoramic” care acoperă perioade lungi de timp, asemenea „cronicilor întinse” (Lubbock, 102). Satira acerbă și atitudinea critică față de personaje și față de societatea pe care o (re)creează sunt atenuate de veridicitatea unor detalii, a descrierilor care ajută la (re)construirea unei atmosfere, o atmosferă specifică unui univers încadrat între anumite coordonate spațio-temporale.

La Filimon, mentalitatea de tip oriental se reflectă, printre altele, în stilul vestimentar epatant al fanarioșilor și nobilimii românești. Astfel, în romanul lui Filimon, fanarioșii și nobilii români se deosebesc mai ales „prin eleganța veșmintelor tăiate după ultima modă venită din Fanar [...]”. Ierarhia se exprimă vestimentar chiar în lăuntru aceleiași categorii sociale: „ișlicul cu patru colțuri al marelui terzi-bașa părea că reclamă prioritatea nobleței asupra căciulei de cazaclu a cojocarului subțire, care la rândul ei, părea că disprețuiește căciula cu roată a bogasierului și calpacul de blană al armeanului ibrișmgiu”. Pe de altă parte, „[...] românii, ale căror vestminte de postav verde cu ceaprazuri albe și căciuli de oaie cu fundurile roșii făceau un contrast foarte curios cu binușele de postav roșu și cealmalele cele rotunde și pline de semeție ale artiștilor musulmani” (Filimon, 1956, 109, 110).

Una dintre preocupările esențiale ale femeilor este toaleta, căci aspectul

fizic este indisolubil legat de stratificarea socială. „Toaleta femeilor cochete din zilele noastre, afirmă naratorul, [...] a devenit o îndeletnicire foarte grea și împovărătoare pentru biete slujitoare. [...] Chera Duduca se ungea pe obraz cu alifie vânăță; dimineața se ștergea cu albuș de ou, se aburea cu cărămizi încălzite în foc și stropite cu apă de salcâm, apoi se spăla cu apă de pelin. Acestea le făcea ca să întindă pielea obrazului și să dispară zbârciturile; apoi se ștergea cu un burete muiat în apă de castraveți, ca să scoată petele, și se spoia cu dres, ca să dea pielii o culoare mai albă” (*Ibidem*, 131).

Femeile, mai ales, iubesc luxul și petrecerile iar acelea care nu au drept atu un nume sau o moștenire, ca formă de susținere a prestigiului social, fac eforturi sporite pentru a fi acceptate pe scena vieții mondene, un centru de gravitație pentru grupurile sociale dominante, mai cu seamă în Europa occidentală a secolului al XIX-lea. Dar, așa cum afirmă Nicolae Iorga (Iorga, 1910, 158-168), influența occidentală „nu a scos femeia din gineceu doar pentru a o transforma în simplul ornament al saloanelor mondene”, ci reprezintă debutul schimbărilor în mentalitatea feminină (*cf.* Elena Olaru, 2006).

Apariția și dezvoltarea teatrului influențează modul de viață al societății, mai cu seamă în ceea ce privește luxul. Chera Duduca, cu intenția de a ruina și mai tare averea postelnicului Andronache Tuzluc, dorește să cumpere alte haine, sub pretext că cele vechi „nu sunt la modă” și nu se poate prezenta „la teatrul nemțesc și la comedie” îmbrăcată „cu trențele astea ca o preoteasă de mahala”, riscând astfel să devină subiect de bârfă. Practică comunicativă polifonică, bârfa influențează, în mod decisiv, imaginea și reputația personajelor.

Menținerea distanței sociale reprezintă, după Goffman, una dintre modalitățile care generează o „stare de mistificare” (Goffman, 93) cu privire la performer și se realizează, printre altele, prin îmbrăcăminte și podoabe. Astfel, în *Ciocoii vechi și noi*, dacă cei din clasa de mijloc, „deprinși de mult timp cu viața orientală cea plină de lene și poezie” organizează vara petreceri în grădinile „Breslea, Barbă-Lată, Cișmigiu și Giafer”, unde participanții se ospătează întâi la iarbă verde iar apoi învârt „hora strămoșească și danțurile cele vesele”, cei din păturile înalte ale societății participă la petreceri și mese „în familii mai multe adunate la un loc; rar se întâmplă să mănânce prin grădini”. Când ies totuși în spațiul public, aceștia preferă grădina lui Scufa, via Brâncoveanu din Dealul Spirii și grădina Belu de lângă Văcărești, „spre a nu da prilej norodului a surprinde vreo necuviință a lor și a li se pierde printr-aceasta prestigiul”. (Filimon, 101)

În romanul lui Nicolae Filimon, comportamentul și atitudinea personajelor față de interlocutori variază în funcție de aceste entități ale „echipamentului expresiv” sau se schimbă odată cu transformarea acestora: „Sania mitologică a lui beizadea C. Caragea, făcută în forma carului lui Apollon, și cei șase cerbi ce o trăgeau, conteșul cel de postav alb blănit cu samur de Mosca, hangerul cel semănat cu brilianturi și gugiumanul de samur cu

fundul alb al acestui frumos principe, precum și rochiile cele neprețuite, șalurile și feregelele domniței Ralu întorsese atât de mult capul junilor boieri și cocoane, încât de multe ori vindeau moșii de mare preț, ca să imiteze luxul și strălucirea acestor principii risipitori”. Pe de altă parte, arnăutul lui Dinu Păturică, observând aspectul sărăcăcios al veșmintelor pe care le poartă tatăl lui Dinu și luându-l pe acesta drept cerșetor, refuză să-l primească în casa stăpânului său: „Să vii sâmbătă, moșicule, că astăzi nu face boierul milostenii”. Postelnicul Andronache Tuzluc, altădată obișnuit să fie lingușit de către interlocutori, constată că odată cu fuga lui Caragea, protectorul său, gărzile de la poarta domnească, „[...] care altădată îi făcea temenea până la pământ, acum nici că voiră a-l privi”. (*Ibidem*, 249., 256)

Putem constata că în *Ciocoii vechi și noi*, atât personajele cu poziții înalte în societate, cât și acelea cu aspirații de parvenire fac apel la strategii menite să le asigure prestigiul (*fațada pozitivă*): menținerea distanței sociale și etalarea *echipamentului expresiv*, fie că este vorba de însemne ale rangului și bunăstării materializate, printre altele, în haine la modă și podoabe de lux, de preocupări, atitudine sau limbaj. Se poate constata, de asemenea, că schimbările în ceea ce privește poziția socială, atât în sens de ascensiune, cât și în sens de regres influențează, în mod semnificativ, reacțiile societății.

Comportamentul și atitudinea personajelor din *Vanity Fair* este similară. La începutul romanului, cititorului i se prezintă obiceiurile rigide de la Chiswick Mall – rugăciunile, prânzurile, lecțiile, plimbările, toate fixate după un tipic convențional. Acțiunea se mută ulterior la Londra, în Russell Square, unde locuiesc familiile Sedley și Osborne, prilej cu care cititorul este informat cu privire la ocupațiile de zi cu zi ale acestora. I se oferă, de asemenea, detalii despre interioare și vestimentație. Costumul de dimineață al lui Jos Sedley, un adevărat *dandy*, se compune dintr-o cravată înfoiată care se ridică până aproape de nas, o jiletcă vărgată cu roșu și cu o tunică de culoarea mălului crud, cu nasturi de oțel de mărimea unei piese de o coroană, pantaloni strâmți și tricorn. Jos nu ia niciodată cina îmbrăcat în hainele de dimineață, mai ales că frecventează restaurantele la modă și teatrele, așa cum era obiceiul vremii (Thackeray, 2001, 16, 20, 451, 448).

Fie că interacționează în spațiul public, privat sau semiprivat, temele preferate de personajele feminine sunt moda, evenimentele mondene, iar o căsătorie, o cerere în căsătorie sau un refuz pun în mișcare un întreg regiment de femei, ‘[...] and sets all their hysterical sympathies at work’. Amelia Sedley, o tânără din „lumea bună”, poartă rochii de muselină, șaluri de cașmir, coliere de cornalină albă, inele cu pietre de turcoaz, coliere, broșe, dantele din care îi oferă cu generozitate și prietenei sale Rebecca. Aceasta din urmă va ajunge însă să se prezinte în fața suveranului purtând cel mai strălucitor ‘costume de cour’, devenind astfel obiectul celor mai exigente cronici mondene. Pentru a-și construi reputația (*fațada*) unei femei „virtuoase”, este necesar ca Rebecca să-și

pună o rochie cu trenă și să se prezinte suveranului: ‘If she did not wish to lead a virtuous life, at least she desired to enjoy a character for virtue; and we know that no lady in the genteel world can possess this desideratum, until she has put on a train and feathers, and has been presented to her Sovereign at Court’ (*Ibidem*, 448).

Comportamentul personajelor din *Vanity Fair* este, cel mai adesea, coordonat astfel încât aceștia să-și contureze o *fațadă pozitivă*, asociată cu bunăstarea materială și cu o poziție socială cât mai înaltă. *Gestionarea impresiilor* se realizează prin *performări* considerate a fi adecvate sau conforme cu imaginea care se dorește a fi proiectată (limitarea contactului cu personaje din categorii sociale inferioare sau considerate a fi indezirabile și căutarea legăturilor cu personaje din societatea înaltă), prin etalarea unor simboluri de statut, indiferent dacă acestea corespund sau nu cu realitatea (bogăție, educație aleasă) și cu ajutorul unor mijloace care servesc scopurilor propuse (reuniunile mondene, vizitele la Curte). *Vanity Fair* este opera unui moralist care, descriind un univers imaginar, urmărește să atragă atenția asupra „deșertăciunilor” vieții, într-o lume în care predomină stereotipiile uniform fixate și simplificatoare, stilurile de viață, credințele și mentalitățile care plasează bunurile materiale și recunoașterea socială pe o scară superioară, în defavoarea valorilor spirituale.

În concluzie, în cele două romane asupra cărora ne-am oprit, prin declanșarea unor mecanisme inferențiale, care vizează, alături de dimensiunea verbală a comunicării, și pe aceea non-verbală, care include, printre altele, îmbrăcămintea și podoabele, personajele urmăresc să controleze credințele, percepțiile, atitudinea și reacțiile celorlalți. În termenii lui Goffman, personajele se angajează într-un proces de *gestionare a impresiilor*, care le permite să-și construiască o reputație pozitivă (o *fațadă*), în raport cu valorile oficial acreditate ale societății, cu reprezentările și mentalitățile care predomină în cadrul grupurilor sau categoriilor sociale din care fac parte, opinia publică sau aceea a membrilor grupului validând sau subminând o imagine sau un statut. Analiza pe care am întreprins-o în lucrarea de față scoate în evidență stereotipuri de statut similare în operele lui Nicolae Filimon și William Makepeace Thackeray. Așadar, indiferent de spațiul cultural și de stilul individual al fiecărui autor în parte, aspectele menționate scot în evidență caracteristici ale epocii, reflectate în mod similar în romanele celor doi autori.

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CONSTRUCȚIE TEXTUALĂ ȘI IPOSTAZE ALE CORPULUI FEMININ - MIRCEA CĂRTARESCU, *DE CE IUBIM FEMEILE*

Simona ANTOFI

Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos” din Galați
simoantofi@yahoo.com

Abstract: Starting from the contemporary theories focused on the issue and textual strategies involving body’ literary representations, our study analyses – beyond the necessary conceptual-methodological survey – the feminine body’ images in Mircea Cartarescu’s two short-stories included in his volume, *De ce iubim femeile*. The perspective proposed is based on the relation between the aesthetic function displayed within the erotic nature of the writing and the Postmodern textual engineering mechanisms. Even if shortly activated within the narrative itself, the experiments involving different literary games are overtly manifested within the larger feminine body theme, dressing up the text with sensual descriptions, bare erotic traits, even voyeurism. The effect thus obtained lies in an unexpected body-type corporality of the writing which interferes with the inter / intratextual specificity of the Postmodern texts.

Key-words: feminine body, erotic literature, Postmodern writing, textual strategy.

Problematika și reprezentările corpului în literatura română contemporană reprezintă un reper important al metadiscursului specializat și face obiectul diferitelor abordări și modalități aplicate de analiză. Potrivit Ilenei Botescu-Sirețeanu, se poate ridica la rang de paradigmă ansamblul construcțiilor textuale în centrul cărora se află corpul – în special corpul feminin, urmărindu-se, cu instrumentarul literaturii, fie utilizarea lui ca „obiect manipulate”, fie ca „subiect manipulator și intens subversiv”, în evidentă opoziție față de noma patriarhală de comportament, reflectată în scriitură. (Botescu-Sirețeanu, 14)

În aceeași ordine de idei, Lidia Cotea vede în reprezentările literare ale corporalității o interfață deosebit de activă, astăzi, între „realitatea dinamică” înțeleasă drept „un ansamblu de reprezentări, trăiri și practici conjugate” (Cotea, 1, 2), și spațiul literaturii care descompune și desemantizează semnele literare ale corporalității, pentru a le recompune și resemantiza ca „trup expresiv, o entitate dinamică care suferă, se transformă și exaltă imaginația.” (*Ibidem*, 3) Loc de trecere între public și privat, între comunitate și individ, între dezinhibare/ voyeurism/ erotic/ pornografic și intimitate, tema corporalității și literatura care o poartă antrenează, pe de o parte, o punere în discuție a procesului comunicațional implicit dintre om și societate, întrucât corpul funcționează ca „revelator al unei întregi rețele de semne și simboluri” (*Ibidem*), de lucruri permise/ nepermise, de tabu-uri ori debușeuri cu substrat erotic, manifestate ca fantasme sau transferate în autoficțiuni compensatorii.

Pe de altă parte, relevanța simbolică și culturală a corpului antrenează complicate teoretizări asupra intimității transferate în plan literar, ca și asupra graniței dintre erotic și pornografic. Altfel spus, dacă „erotic și pornografic sunt adjectivele care definesc un tip de literatură de clasă secundă, într-un sistem în care «confundăm morala cu literatura și credem că numai marea literatură are drept de cetate într-o istoriografie a mentalităților și a reprezentărilor»” (Lombardo, 2004, 8), atunci trebuie operaționalizată distincția dintre funcția pornografică a unui text, ce vizează doar trupul, și funcția estetică, care se poate servi de reprezentări erotice sau chiar pornografice pentru a determina (*Ibidem*, 9) „juisarea intelectuală a cititorului.” Altfel spus, investiția trupului gol cu o suprasemnificație menită să surclaseze și să devieze în estetic exhibarea intimității reprezintă condiția *sine-qua-non* a transformării reprezentărilor erotice/pornografice în materie sau recuzită a literaturității. În termenii lui Pascal Bruckner și A. Finkielkraut, „pe scurt, nu trupurile sunt obscene, ci gratuitatea înfățișării lor ostentative. Reproșul se deplasează dinspre despuiere înspre lipsa ei de semnificație. Pentru a merita epitetul de «porc» trebuie să fii de două ori gol: de haine și de transcendență.” (Bruckner & Finkielkraut, 1995, 56)

Posibilitatea de a literaturiza tema intimității trupesti, reală, se dovedește cu atât mai profitabilă cu cât, în fond, „intimitatea ține de imaginar, nu de adevăr sau realitate, de o ordine estetică, simbolică, a elaborării reprezentării și scrierii *secretului intimității* – un secret care, în fond, nu trebuie spus, nici decriptat, ci doar semnalat ca atare”, afirmă Jean Baudrillard, în *La sphère enchantée de l'intime* (Baudrillard, 1986, 12-15). Nu altfel vede lucrurile Daniel Madelénat, de vreme ce definește intimismul – includem, din nou, aici, și intimismul trupesc – drept „un pol constant al dinamismului imaginar, o configurație a spațiului, a timpului, a schimbărilor între individ și lume”, iar intimitatea literară drept un „concept istoric ce particularizează [...] un anumit moment cultural.” (Madelénat, 1989, 32)⁶

În fine, se cuvine discutată și relevanța raportului dintre corpul feminin și cel masculin, pentru o încheiere rotundă a acestui excurs teoretic și pentru a facilita trecerea la obiectul propriu-zis de analiză – două secvențe reprezentative, în raport cu problematica și discursul despre corp în literatura română actuală, din volumul *De ce iubim femeile*, semnat de Mircea Cărtărescu. (Cărtărescu, 2004) Parte a ceea ce studiile de specialitate numesc HERstory,

⁶ Tot autorul citat observă faptul că „acel moment privilegiază sau nu corpul, sentimentele, interzisul, infraliminalul, conformismul social sau originalitatea individuală, el fixează rolurile care guvernează conduitele înseși în culisele teatrului public, ritmurile, momentele zilei – [...] – procedeele de comunicare; acest moment cultural valorizează formele care stilizează realul, vulgarizând, în schimb, schemele perceptive și tipurile de comportament.” – apud Simona Sora, op. cit., p. 34.

respectiv HIStory, tema corpului, a vestimentației și a goliciunii trupei antrenează un joc identitar în cadrul căruia hainele ce îmbracă un trup masculin traduc, în termenii unui cod patriarhal, rangul public și întâietatea în plan privat, dar și o nouă cultură a imaginii ce traduce, la rândul ei, deschis, emanciparea feminină. (Duțu, 202) Este vorba, mai precis, despre o serie de subtilități și strategii (in)conștiente de autodefinire identitară corelative rolurilor de gen. În virtutea acestora, corpul feminin poartă, încă, povara stereotipiilor masculine de percepție, provocate de „anxietatea produsă în subconștientul masculin” de exhibarea feminității, dar își revendică, tot mai mult, dreptul la un nonconformism identitar bazat pe respingerea imaginii de sine reflectată în privirea masculină deformatoare, și devenit *modus vivendi*. (Ibidem, 202)

Acestea fiind spuse, semnalăm nu atât eficiența unei abile campanii de marketing ce a propulsat volumașul lui Mircea Cărtărescu în rândul celor mai bine vândute cărți ale anului 2004, cât inteligența arhitecturală și stilistică, exercitată pe suprefete mici de text, ale scriitorului care se autoficționalizează (sau se inventează de-a dreptul) în spațiul scriptural al unor mici bijuterii literare. Captivante și disponibile atât pentru cititorul sensibil la componenta anecdotico-erotică a istorisirilor, cât și pentru acela amator de rafinamente textuale pe tema corporalității și a eternului feminin, istorisirile poartă cu ele, crede Ovidiu Șimonca, „tușe fine autobiografice” și emană „un erotism sublimat.”⁷ Sau, dacă luăm în calcul opinia autorului însuși, sunt povestite „autoironic și tandru”, „într-o carte fără metafizică”, „lucruri care l-au frapat în viață.”⁸

Bomba de aur debutează cu perspectiva și privirea unui artist. Obsedat, se pare, de culoarea metalului nobil, eul masculin care narează povestește o formidabilă întâlnire cu feminitatea însăși – într-un spațiu erotizat și erotizant precum cel marin – pe plaja de nudiști unde erotismul plutește în aer, încarcă nisipul și apa mării – și imaginația privitorului – cu o senzualitate sporită de multiplele particule reflectorizante ale acvaticului și ale solarului. Panfeminitatea și panerotismul sunt mărcile prin care literaritatea se insinuează și susține imaginea i-reală, sau mai-mult-decât-reală a femeii ce debordează de senzualitate și al cărei trup atrage magnetic toate privirile: „Se arăta pe la ora zece și-n scurt timp am învățat, ca toți ceilalți, să-i aștept răsăritul. O precedau

⁷ Ovidiu Șimonca, Mircea Cărtărescu, un nou „boier al mintii“?, [on-line], accesat la 14 mai 2013, disponibil la adresa: http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Mircea-Cartaescu-un-nou-boier-al-mintii*articleID_13333-articles_details.html.

⁸ Ovidiu Șimonca, „Știu mai bine ce vreau și ce nu vreau de la literatură“. Interviu cu Mircea Cărtărescu, [on-line], accesat la 14 mai 2013, disponibil la adresa: http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Stiu-mai-bine-ce-vreau-si-ce-nu-vreau-de-la-literatura.-Interviu-cu-Mircea-CARTARESCU*articleID_15043-articles_details.html.

coroana și unda de șoc a unei explozii termonucleare. Ne ridicam pe jumătate de pe nisip și, bărbați goi și femei goale, o priveam orbiți, prin ochelari fumurii, ca pe eclipse. Șiroia frumusețe. Mergea pe vârfuri încălțată-n pantofi de cuarț sclipitor, cu tocuri ce se curbau pe alee sub greutatea ei nemaivăzută. Cobora pe nisipul micului golf mărginit de stabilopozi și-și întindea cearșaful foarte aproape de mare. Apoi se despuia, susținută-n picioare de toate privirile de pe plajă, până și ale pescărușilor, căci numai goală putea fi cu adevărat înțeleasă și descrisă. Și mereu rămânea o vreme doar în chiloți, albă ca laptele și linsă de briza din larg, și atunci pubisul ei întindea mătasea albastră ce se cuta dedesubt, între labiile îngemănate.” (*Ibidem*, 161-162)

Privitorul din text, fascinat de explozia de femnitate, face o lectură erotică rafinată, în baza unei adevărate gramatici a privirii ce leagă între ele părțile anatomiei feminine, le investeste cu o încărcătură simbolică aparte – în care miticul, statuarul, sacrul și efervescența imaginativă se susțin între ele. Un întreg cod vizual al seducției – elaborat de ochiul masculin ce privește – este asociat corpului feminin care, dezgolindu-se la soare, umple spațiul cu feromoni și stârnește, aproape animalic, imaginația vizuală a martorului tăcut: „cu picioarele ei groase, de zeiță ce susține un colț de templu, cu sânii ei uriași pe care și-i împingea-nainte cu mândria cu care matroana romană-și împinsese copiii («Iată bijuteriile mele!»), cu pletele ei de Magdalenă din Magdalenian, cu boiul ei criselefantin ar fi fost mândria haremurilor și călăreța filozofilor lumii. Goală, răspânda atâta lumină, că toate celelalte trupuri din micul golf căpătau culoarea cenușie-a cadavrelor. Sânii ei, observai imediat, erau singurii demni de acest nume: celelalte femei aveau pe piept mamele sau pur și simplu țâțe. Fundul ei, cu zona-ntunecată dintre coapse, își arăta din timp în timp, lenș și premeditat, steluța cafenie și structura cealaltă, franjurată complex, asemenea cârniței ce iese dintre valvele unei scoici de mare. Când se-ntindea pe spate, smocul de liță de aur, deasupra păsăricii rase grijuliu, arunca o lumină razantă pe pântec, precum capacul stilourilor din copilărie. Iar când se-ntorcea, peste fese, vâlrându-se pe pernița triumfiulară a șalelor, iveau un tatuaj cu dragoni.” (*Ibidem*, 162)

Femeia – percepută aici ca alteritate în mod absolut, tocmai de aceea dorită și transferată, compensativ, în corporalitatea scriiturii care aproape că palpită de voluptate – nu pare a face nimic neobișnuit. Dar banalitatea gesturilor ei contrastează flagrant cu discursul despre corpul ei care devine centrul absolut al universului și sursă de intense trăiri vizuale, olfactive și tactile la limita suportabilității, păstrate în volutele scriiturii: „Când se-ntindea din nou lângă mine (vai, cu același metru de nisip și scoici sparte-ntre noi), cu lentile moi de apă pe trup și cu părul îmbâcsit de sare, trăgeam aer în piept, și aerul pe care-l smulgeam de pe corpul ei îmi pătrundea-n alveole și-apoi în sânge, iar sângele-mi cobora în arterele sexului, deschizând acolo supape și umplând țesuturi fierbinți. Mă lipeam de nisip, îl mușcam, aș fi mâncat marea ca pe o stridie

uriașă, aș fi ros norii și hotelul din zare. Deveneam tot, din cap până-n picioare, un sex erect, cuprins de febră și nebunie.” (*Ibidem*, 163) Actul sexual rămas suspendat ca dorință și ca rod al imaginației dezlănțuite este atotcuprinzător – bărbați și femei deopotrivă, jinduind la a poseda trupul-explozie de feminitate al *bombei de aur*.

Nu întâmplător, spațiul plajei de nudiști permite transferarea semnelor trupești ale feminității dinspre codul cultural și comportamental care izolează practica nudismului în zone ferite de ochii comunității, respectiv dinspre dorința de emancipare a femeilor, spre literatură. În termenii lui Georg Simmel, citat de Jean-Claude Kaufmann (Kaufmann, 1998, 240), „Sânii goi au început ca o modă: o mișcare structurată de un principiu de conformitate în interiorul unui grup care caută să se distingă față de restul societății.” Iar „malul mării este un loc unde domnește libertatea. Individul se simte acolo eliberat de constrângerile obișnuite. El rămâne față în față cu elementele naturale, despuiat de majoritatea flendurilor civilizației, singur cu corpul său, mai intim legat de el, învăluit în senzații epidermice.” (*Ibidem*, 264) O intimitate exhibită în imaginar, textualizată printr-un discurs despre corpul feminin și, pornind de aici, despre corpul masculin copleșit de dorință, în ipostaza modern-mitică a cuplului adamic. Un cuplu ipotetic, rod, și el, al imaginației și, în egală măsură, al literaturii. Căci copleșitoarea feminitate a Evei moderne capătă dimensiuni arhetipale și o literaritate intrinsecă prin dialogul cu marile texte ale literaturii universale comprimate, aici, în memoria condensată a scriiturii.

În fond, *bomba de aur* nu este nimic altceva decât o reprezentare a alterității erotice instituite de privirile masculine a căror sintaxă sincronă transformă corpul-obiect într-o suprarrealitate ajustabilă la specificitatea eului-subiect. Are loc, astfel, o răsturnare semnificativă de forțe – feminitatea (in)conștientă de ea însăși duce la tălmăcirea limbajului corporal în sensul unei oferte aparent deschise, dar retrase în ultima clipă, spre posesie. De aceea, gramatica gestuală a împreunării ratate cu *bomba de aur* devine, pentru privitorul central – prilej de a construi o genealogie fabuloasă a celei mai dorite femei din lume: „Specii și rase au exterminat specii și rase, popoare au distrus popoare, civilizații s-au ridicat și s-au năruit («unde e Xerxes?, unde Artaxerxes?»), apocalipse-au venit și-au trecut («Turnuri în prăbușire: Ierusalim Alexandria Viena Londra Roma ireale...»), biblioteci s-au scris și li s-a dat foc și-n cele din urmă o femeie a prins în pântec plod de strigoi de voievod și-o celulă-ou, divizându-se și crescând, a recapitulat facerea lumii, și embrionul a devenit o fetiță ghemuită în uter, și fetița a ieșit din mînea de mușchi ca dintr-o mare rotundă și-a crescut și-n cele din urmă a moștenit pământul. Căci întreaga lume există pentru a ajunge la o femeie frumoasă.” (Cărtărescu, 164) Iar pentru ceilalți privitori, înnebuniți de patimă, un motiv de înstrăinare de sine, și de femeile de lângă ei: „[...] știam că, în umbra fiecărei camere de hotel, noaptea târziu, fiecare bărbat își speria de moarte femeia, frământând-o și pătrunzând-o

nu cu oboseala din cuplurile stabile [...], ci cu o ferocitate disperată, pe care nici măcar la-nceputul legăturii lor n-o avusese și nici n-o putuse avea, pentru că biata Mădă sau Cătă erau simple femei, iar un bărbat are nevoie de mult mai mult ca să țâșnească asemeni unui vulcan înecând în lavă arzândă orășelele de marmură de la poale. Are nevoie să călărească peste șalele unei bombe de aur.” (*Ibidem*, 165)

Intangibilă, *bomba de aur* îi ațâță pe toți bărbații de pe plajă și îi menține pe toți la distanță, lăsând în urma ei doar o imagine reflectată în ochii-oglină, în pupilele lărgite de patimă.

Polemizând cu literaturitatea vetustă a eternului feminin, păstrându-și idealitatea și transferată într-un înșelător joc al oglinzilor micro și macrocosmice – între cer, mare și ochii celorlalți – *bomba de aur* provoacă, prin dispariția ei, degradarea și moartea universului: „Ajungea să privesc în jur ca să știu că plecase: bărbații și femeile zăceau pe nisip carbonizați, fumegând... Prin pielea crăpată le ieșiseră coastele acoperite de soare. Marea însăși se umpluse de alge băloase, mucuri de țigări și hârtii.” (*Ibidem*, 165-166)

Seara care cade este o istorisire la limita de jos a eroticului, un text ce incită imaginația cititorului obișnuit dar care, la o lectură atentă, operaționalizează în sens postmodern procedeul punerii în abis, axat pe instrumentul-oglină și funcțiile acestuia. Pârghie a literaturizării unei întâmplări reale sau imaginate, oglinda face prezentă absența, materială și palpabilă imaterialitatea – „între vis și real oglinda își îndeplinește opera de mediere. Ea oferă întâlnirii cu celălalt un spațiu virtual fictiv, în care se joacă un scenariu imaginar.” (Melchior-Bonnet, 2000, 295) Iar instrumentele-oglină sunt, în *Seara care cade*, numeroase: ochii privitorului ce asistă la un spectacol de voită și supusă luare în posesie a corpului feminin de către cel masculin, tablouri în care se reflectă trupul femeii-personaj al istorisirii și pictura lui Magritte, care dă și titlul povestirii, în care cioburile unei ferestre reflectă razele soarelui.

Translatând conceptul din zona scriiturii diaristice s-ar putea folosi, pentru textul lui Mircea Cărtărescu, sintagma *intime fictiogen* („hibrid literar, construit prin procedeele literaturii”), cu precizarea că expresia este utilizată, în raport cu opera lui Benjamin Constant, de către François Rosset, în Christine Pouzoulet (coord.), *La culture de l'intime. Autour de Virginia Woolf, Valéry Larbaud, Arthur Schnitzler* (Rosset, 2005, 23), dar la fel de bine ne-am putea sluji și de accepțiile autoficțiunii. Păstrând, însă, perspectiva postmodernă asupra textului, ni se pare mai profitabilă corelarea temei corporalității cu instrumentarul conceptual prezentat deja, cu precădere în raport cu accepția intimității – și corporale – în opinia lui Baudrillard. Potrivit acestuia, intimitatea este „o sferă vrăjită, care ar fi cea a subiectului, cu sentimentele sale, cu gândurile sale, cu discursul său interior; în realitate, însă, intimitatea este un joc de oglinzi, de dedublări și de complicitate cu sine însuși și cu cineva sau cu

ceva diferit.” (Baudrillard, 24)

Textul prezintă, articulându-se ca o construcție semantică ce crește din semnificația amplificată de simbolicele suprafețe reflectorizante amintite, o aventură erotică fictivă – pentru că naratorul preferă ipostaza de martor-privitor, și ficțională – pentru că poartă mărcile literaturității.

Aflat în Franța, povestitorul – găzduit în casa unui cuplu mixt – o româncă din Sibiu și un berber („mândru de originea lui, marcată prin tichia de catifea cu ape vișinii și cu fund de atlas albastru de care cred că nu se despărțea niciodată”), privește chipul femeii prin intermediarul-oglină-operă de artă cu care, de altfel, se confundă – „Ei îi priveam fața reflectată în sticla vreunui Delvaux și părea chiar de acolo, înconjurată natural de femei goale și blonde așteptând (pe cine?) într-o gară pustie. Era aidoma lor, cu excepția părului tăiat violent la ceafă.” Dincolo de imaginea feminină transferată în virtual, tabloul lui Magritte se transformă, prin ochii admiratorului de artă, într-o temă obsesivă a imaginarului – „Cred că sunt țicnit: uneori iubesc câte un tablou atât de tare, încât literalmente îmi vine să dau spargere la muzeu și să plec cu el. Era le «Soir qui tombe» al lui Magritte: o fereastră spartă, cioburi lungi așezate sub ea în picioare și soarele de amurg răsfrânt în ele sub unghiuri diferite...” (Cărtărescu, 51)

În noaptea pasională care urmează, naratorul, antrenat – ca voyeur – într-un joc erotic golit de orice inhibiții, refuză să participe la o partidă de amor (în trei) pe care o descrie, însă, în contrapunct cu descrierea preafrumoasei femei din vis pe care nu o poate poseda din pricina blocajului psihic determinat de dragostea pentru soție. Evitând termenii psihanalitici la care lectura textului lui Cărtărescu pare să îndemne, totuși, se poate spune că același tip de blocaj acționează și acum, obligându-l la statutul de privitor – „Am văzut-o căutând înapoi pozițiile cele mai submisive, am văzut-o privindu-mă sfidător, în ochi, îngenuncheată, în timpul celei mai dulci dintre torturi, am văzut-o rugându-mă să vin mai aproape de gura ei cu buzele tumefiate de dorință. Am văzut urmele de degete care înfloreau purpurii pe pielea ei aurie. Am văzut un bob de sudoare scurgându-se în cavitatea înghiocată a buricului ei. I-am auzit cuvintele românești, aspre și obscene, strigate când n-a mai putut să nu strige. Am văzut-o zăcând pe-o parte, încă pătrunsă, dar cufundată-n așternut ca o pată de apă ce se evaporă-ncet pe asfaltul încins... Am văzut-o, în fine, ridicându-se greoaie și mergând la baie, cu o mână între pulpele umede...” (*Ibidem*, 54-55)

Ceea ce pare să i se întâmple bărbatului care privește, avid și totuși refuzând jocul erotic, este o luare în posesie prin intermediul imaginii/imaginarului care face ca, în afară fiind, să ia parte la partida de amor fizic total prin integrarea/ asimilarea celuilalt, a berberului, ca un alt sine însuși. O trăire prin procură ce se poate derula prin „acceptarea unei stranietăți cvasi-fizice”, o „deteritorializare corporală” similară aceleia care are loc în procesul lecturii. (Sora, 40)

Gramatica gestual – erotică este citită de ochiul – oglindă al celui care, detașat și, cu toate acestea, implicat, se ascunde în penumbră și se mulțumește cu un *ersatz* voyeurist, cu un simulacru vizual care, transferat în imaginație și în scriitură, este sprijinit de o narațiune duplicitară despre sine și despre alterul feminin, despre sine și despre alterul masculin.

Timpul narațiunii se interiorizează, se restrânge ca timp al privirii focalizate, iar spațiul devine, și el, „un loc decupat de memoria senzorială din continuumul realității.” (Kristeva, 1997, 34)

Dincolo de toate acestea, ceea ce naratorul numește „magia pânzei lui Magritte” deschide o altă perspectivă asupra faptelor. Funcționând, și el, ca un factor de blocaj, tabloul ce prezintă răsfrângerea razelor de soare în cioburile unei ferestre exprimă fascinația exercitată de arta care își ia în posesie privitorul și-l înstrăinează de el însuși, de masculinitatea sa. Pânza lui Magritte, posesoare a unui mister care surclasează concretețea corpului feminin, depozitează de feminitatea lui vie, palpabilă, îl depozitează pe narator de putința de a trăi direct contactul cu corpul care i se oferă. Cu alte cuvinte, transfigurarea realității prin artă face imposibilă (sau irelevantă) experimentarea concretă a erosului. Tema corporalității, purtată de corporalitatea scriiturii, își acaparează, fizic și imaginar, creatorul – „N-am să știu niciodată cum ar fi fost acea noapte dacă aș fi băut mai mult, dacă mi-aș fi iubit mai puțin soția și, cine știe, dacă n-aș fi fost, cu câteva ore-n urmă, atât de paralizat de magia pânzei lui Magritte în care soarele cade, din ciob în ciob, răbindu-se în tășurile lor...” (Cărtărescu, 56)

În acest mod, *Seara care cade* dobândește coerența unei microarte poetice, iar concretețea corporal-erotică, transferată în plan textual, capătă materialitatea cuvântului.

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II. EXEGETEZE

ESTETICA „OMULUI VIU” ȘI CONFLICTUL REPREZENTĂRILOR

Sabina FÎNARU

Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava, România

sab59ina@yahoo.com

Résumé: L'ouvrage analyse la pièce de théâtre qui se trouve en manuscrit, *Aventure spirituelle* de Mircea Eliade, publiée pour la première fois en 2012. C'est le premier texte fictionnel écrit par l'auteur roumain en exil, qui intègre d'une part, la conception sur l'authenticité et sur la représentation des textes écrits dans son pays d'origine, mais qui, d'autre part, modifie sa vision par une dimension tragique, réflexion indirecte de l'expérience historique personnelle. C'est pourquoi l'accès au sens des œuvres de la nouvelle étape de sa création sera crypté d'une manière appelée « le réel camouflé sous des apparences ». L'ouvrage traite de la genèse du texte qui se reflète à travers les notations dans son journal intime et qui se rapporte à l'authenticité relevant de l'esthétique extra-artistique et de sa représentation artistique ; les enjeux de cette œuvre, le thème de la vie créatrice de l'homme moderne dans le cadre de l'histoire, les voies assumées de l'existence authentique dans le monde ; les stratégies spécifiques pour rendre concrète l'esthétique de l'authenticité, ainsi que les hypostases de l'homme représenté comme produit, producteur et consommateur culturel ; la problématisation et la contestation des codes des représentations littéraires et culturelles traditionnelles.

Mots-clé: esthétique, représentation, code, contestation, Mircea Eliade

Mircea Eliade a consemnat în *Jurnalul* său, pe 3 octombrie 1946, circumstanțele biografice în care a avut viziunea piesei de teatru *Aventură spirituală* și starea de tensiune care a determinat, în cele din urmă, scrierea ei: „De câțva timp, înainte de a adormi, mă ispitește din nou piesa de teatru pe care am «văzut-o» într-o seară plimbându-mă singur pe terasele pustii ale Estorilului, în decembrie 1944⁹. Uneori, ispita e atât de puternică încât rămân mai mult de un ceas cu ochii deschiși, în întuneric, urmărind personagiile, ascultându-le, încercând să le văd cât mai clar figurile. Dacă

⁹ Textul *Aventură spirituală* s-a îndepărtat, independent de voința autorului, de viziunea inițială; trebuia să se intituleze *Eurydice*, însă acțiunea s-a modificat „într-un chip care nu-mi convenea” – notează diaristul pe 16 octombrie, în Mircea Eliade *Jurnal* (I-II), Editura Humanitas, București, 1993. I, p. 90; abia pe 30 octombrie se gândește că titlul piesei va fi *Aventură spirituală* (vezi, în acest sens, *Ibidem*, I, p. 93).

m-aș apuca, cred că aș scri-o în câteva zile. Dar mi-am făgăduit să nu fac nimic până ce nu voi încheia primul capitol din *Prolegomene*.” (Eliade, 90)

Scrisă „în gând” integral pe 16 octombrie 1946 (*Ibidem*, 94), redactată, transcrisă și recitită pe 10 noiembrie (*Ibidem*, 95), când e „nemulțumit de actul întâi, mulțumit de actele al II-lea și al III-lea, entuziasmat de actul al IV-lea”, el o revizuieste și o încheie pe 12 noiembrie (*Ibidem*, 94-95). În 1951, recitind-o, se va arăta dezamăgit (*Ibidem*, 204), din cauza „tonului nepotrivit”, în ciuda subiectului interesant.

Deși este conștient că nu are „vocația dramaturgiei” (*Ibidem*, 153), Eliade a revenit „asupra «problemei» teatrului” în proza sa, deoarece poate aduce astfel „«un fel nou» de a valorifica spectacolul dramatic”, al cărui „secret” constă în „tehnicile prin care actorii și spectatorii sunt proiectați într-un «spațiu-timp» inaccesibil experienței cotidiene”, prin care „condiția umană este depășită”. (*Ibidem*, 154)

Preocupările lui Eliade pentru teatru sunt orientate deopotrivă către teatrul de avangardă și experiența inițiativă a sacrului; în *Jurnal*, el vorbește despre teatrul lui Artaud și spectacolul lui, ca „exercițiu spiritual” (*Ibidem*, 602), implicând comuniunea psiho-fiziologică între membrii trupei, care se rupeau de spațiul contingent și scandalizau spectatorii; în această ordine de idei, în „timpul concentrat al spectacolului”, actorul se purifică, „iese din timpul istoric (prezentul cronologic) și pătrunde în alt ritm temporal”, karmic, „încarnând, actualizând existențial atâtea tipuri umane”.

Privit astfel, spectacolul dramatic, ca ritual legat de mitul lui Dionysos, de ritualurile religioase orfice și de cultul morților (*Ibidem*, 306), el devine o imagine a jocului cosmic, cuprinsă în simbolismul scenei, investită cu sacralitate; Eliade se referă la acest aspect prin comentariul asupra teatrului tradițional japonez, în spațiul căruia se unesc trei regiuni cosmice, Infernul (vasul de apă de dedesubtul scenei), pământul (spectatorii) și cerul (actorii, care întruchipează ființe divine) (*Ibidem*, 307); în teatrul modern, acestea din urmă ar putea fi înlocuite de personaje istorice „încărcate cu «mana»”, adică reprezentate „așa cum trăiau ei în mitologiile contemporane, cum le găsim, uneori, de exemplu, în legende și balade (...), [care] s-ar comporta și ar vorbi cum o fac în visele, nostalgiile unor contemporani a căror viață a fost total modificată de existența acestor personaje istorice”. (*Ibidem*, 356)

Însemnările din *Jurnal* demonstrează că viziunea și elaborarea piesei

Aventura spirituală se produc și poartă amprenta elementelor biografice tragice (moartea soției - în noiembrie 1944-, războiul și ruptura de țară - prin asumarea exilului în Franța), cât și a preocupărilor științifice și filozofice din acea perioadă (redacta tratatul de istorie a religiilor și cărțile despre tehnicile yoga și șamanism).

În sfârșit, în intervalul de timp în care a redactat textul, Eliade consemnează și dificultatea de a se desprinde de „otrăvita pasiune a erudiției”, dar și comunicarea intelectuală cu prietenii care îl legau, într-un fel sau altul, de țară¹⁰ sau de locurile în care a trăit „liber”, la modul paradisiac. Două dintre discuțiile din acea perioadă sunt semnificative pentru preocupările lui din acel moment. Una (pe 1 noiembrie), cu „un tânăr român”, se referă la însemnătatea grupării „Criterion” în anii 1933-1937, similară vogii existențialiste din Parisul de atunci: „Ceea ce îi interesa în primul rând era «autenticitatea», experiența imediată, concretul de ordin autobiografic; de aici pasiunea pentru jurnalele intime, pentru confesiuni și «documente». Dacă *Criterionul* ar fi avut un alt instrument de expresie decât limba română, ar fi fost considerat drept cel mai interesant precursor al existențialismului francez de astăzi”. (*Ibidem*, 94)

Cealaltă (pe 28 octombrie) se referă la discuția cu fostul director al Institutului Francez din București și la problema care-l preocupa pe acesta, destinul elitei și „restaurarea omului occidental”, care „trebuie să se încarneze, să *ocupe* cu adevărat trupul pe care-l are, să se încorporeze în el însuși.” În acest context, Eliade remarcă asemănarea tehnicilor de „autorecuperare” cu metodele yoghinice de sensibilizare a regiunilor opace ale corpului. (*Ibidem*, 92)

Critica literară românească a comentat parțial aspectele menționate de Eliade în discuțiile consemnate: preferința pentru genurile biograficului (jurnal, autobiografie), problematica novatoare, existențialistă/ „trăiristă” a romanului din faza „românească” de creație, care reflectă teoria autenticității prin experiențe morale și vitale cu funcție de cunoaștere, prezentă și în romanul european al anilor 30 (de la Giovanni Papini, Italo Svevo, André Gide și Malraux, la D. H. Lawrence și James Joyce, ori – excentric - la Aldous Huxley). Pe de o parte, s-a comentat sensul inițiativ al discursului românesc, ca efect al tehnicilor discursive la persoana I, al contrapunctului și monologului; aproape unanim, s-a constatat indiferența

¹⁰ Între 1 octombrie și 13 noiembrie sunt citați în jurnal: Mihail Șora, Mihail Sebastian, Emil Cioran, Nicolae Herescu, Anton Golopenția, Octavian Vuia, George Ulieru (pentru România), Bostanian (pentru Spania) și Ananda Coomaraswamy (pentru India).

lui Eliade față de problemele de tehnică epică (și prin absența teoretizării, și prin caracterul lor comun), deși romanul său are „o bună organizare”; pe de altă parte, deși Mircea Eliade este teoretician al „romanului de idei”, în care personajele își afirmă „o conștiință teoretică a lumii”¹¹ (*Weltanschauung*), exegeții nu au făcut aproape deloc referire la estetica literaturii „trăiriste” a lui Mircea Eliade, ci au reliefat caracterul eseistic, „tezist”, prin dialogul ideilor din proza sa. (Simion, 41)

Însă teoria eliadescă a autenticității înseamnă mai mult decât literatura experienței și utilizarea unei tehnici narative. Căci valoarea soteriologică a practicii discursive conferă cunoașterii sens ontologic, de aceea este o „tehnică a realului” și o inițiere în propriul destin¹². Textul *Aventura spirituală* îndeplinește, asemenea câtorva romane din creația anterioară, această funcție ontologică, configurând un drum spre adevărul ființei, printr-un proces de clarificare interioară. Totodată, această piesă de teatru este o placă turnantă a literaturii eliadești care, pe de o parte, încorporează concepția asupra autenticității și a reprezentării din romanele scrise în țară, dar, pe de altă parte, modifică viziunea din etapa „românească” (comică și fantastică), încorporând în dramatismul, caracteristic literaturii sale, tragicul, ca reflectare indirectă a experienței istorice personale. De aceea, accesul la sensul acesteia va fi încifrat într-o manieră pe care el a denumit-o în istoria religiilor „camuflarea sacrului în profan”. Acest text, aflat încă în manuscris¹³, este primul din categoria textelor „mitice”, scrise în exil, expresie a aceleiași stări de *doliu*, prezentă și în *Jurnalul portughez*¹⁴, după două iubiri: Nina Mareș, și România.

Experiențele concrete din textul literar eliadesc reflectă omul în dublă ipostază, ca produs al unor evenimente istorice, situat pe coordonatele determinismului materialist, dar și ca rezultat al asumării unei istorii culturale¹⁵, care caută răspunsuri la problemele fundamentale

¹¹ Mircea Eliade, *Despre destinul romanului românesc*, în *Fragmentarium*, 1994. Editura Humanitas, București, p. 97-101

¹² Scrierea acestei piese are aceeași semnificație cu scrierea romanului *Întoarcerea din Rai*, din 1934; în *Memorii*, Mircea Eliade nota: „Pavel Anicet trebuia să găsească soluția problemei lui, ca să mă ajute și pe mine să o găsesc. Trebuia să scriu *Întoarcerea din Rai*.” (Editura Humanitas, București, 1991. I, p. 281); vezi, în același sens, Sabina Fînaru, *Eliade prin Eliade*, 2006. Editura Univers, București, p. 80-97.

¹³ Mircea Eliade și-a scris literatura exclusiv în limba română.

¹⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Jurnalul portughez și alte scrieri*, (I-II), 2006. Editura Humanitas, București

¹⁵ Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal*, ed. cit., I, p. 355

cu care acesta se confruntă, sensul vieții și al morții, poziția lui în cosmos, depășirea condiției umane etc. De aceea, în reprezentarea asupra lumii, vechea gândire ierarhică se intersectează cu cea orizontală, iar scriitura însăși inițiază lectorul¹⁶, în vederea recunoașterii „realului camuflat în aparențe”. (*Ibidem*, 299) Tema vieții creatoare a omului modern în istorie, căile de asumare a unei existențe umane autentice în lume, care să-l renoveze și să-l salveze spiritual, ca om „nou”, reprezintă miza discursului său. De aceea, din strategia de concretizare a „esteticii autenticității”, foarte importante sunt problematizarea și contestarea codurilor reprezentărilor literare și culturale tradiționale, mimetice și psihologizante, și reprezentarea omului „nou” în ipostaza sa de produs, producător și consumator cultural.

În *Estetica* lui Nicolai Hartmann (Hartmann, 1974), natura și relațiile interumane sunt „impregnate de estetic”; deși se află în afara artei, ele sunt înzestrate cu adâncime ontologică, pentru că sunt valorificate de conștiința noastră ca suport pentru bunurile (utilitare, morale, magico-religioase etc.) din care se ivește atitudinea estetică. „Omul viu ca obiect frumos” dobândește valoare estetică prin contemplație; aceasta presupune capacitatea de a surprinde intuitiv, din aspectul și comportamentul exterior, valorile și calitățile morale, într-o reprezentare globală a „icoanei sufletești”, percepute ca „raport estetic de apariție”.: „Este în esența apariției, spune Hartmann, ca ceva real să poată apărea întocmai ca și ceva ireal”. (*Ibidem*, 150) Acest raport apare la polul receptării, ca interpretare, și se caracterizează prin transparența „planului din față” al percepției (forma exterioară) pentru manifestarea „planului de spate” (forma interioară), dincolo de care se află, într-un plan ireal, intenționalitatea acțiunii umane și artistice. Relațiile umane/ moravurile, parte a interiorității umane, nu sunt limitate, așadar, la conținutul etic, ci, în apariția lor sensibilă, sunt percepute estetic prin gradul de adecvare (mai mare sau mai mic) între forma exterioară și cea interioară, ca expresie a deplinătății interioare; când sentimentul estetic al formei se desprinde de sentimentul natural al vieții, dominând valorile vitale ale ființei organice, apare și înțelegerea frumuseții spirituale. (*Ibidem*, 151)

Referindu-se la esteticul extra-artistic, Mihai Morar (Morar, 1) apreciază că, în cadrul relațiilor inter-subiective, forma îndrăgostirii este asemănătoare cu arta; cele două se aseamănă prin cel puțin două aspecte,

¹⁶ În *Jurnal*, Eliade consemnează, în acest sens: „Adevărul este că, la mine, obsesia metafizicului și a biologicului nu mai lasă loc pentru nici o altă problematică”, I, p. 22.

din cele patru, identificate de Tudor Vianu, în *Estetica* sa: izolarea și idealizarea apariției ființei iubite. În același timp, îndrăgostirea afirmă, în bucuria prezenței celuilalt, o cotă de sacru, de sfințenie, după cum afirmă Kant (Kant, 1972, 171). Aceasta aparține deopotrivă cugetului moral și sensibilității estetice, este un triumf asupra planului vital.

La Eliade, estetica autenticității are în centrul său „omul viu ca obiect frumos”. Ea vizează comunicarea inter-subiectivă autentică, a sufletelor ce se deschid, în relațiile lor, spre valori etice și estetice și realizează, laolaltă cu valorile vitale (fizice și psihologice), ființa integrală, ce armonizează contrariile dintre dimensiunile fizică/ biologică și metafizică/ spirituală, genuine condiției umane. și acest lucru are semnificația regăsirii, de către omul modern, a unei „dimensiuni cosmologice”¹⁷, cu scopul de a se salva spiritual. Autenticitatea are, așadar, valoarea unui conținut etico-estetic și moral și, prin aceasta, a unei pledoarii pentru un nou umanism.

De aceea, el este ipostaziat în relația de iubire a personajelor din *Aventura spirituală*, relație manifestată sub diverse conținuturi (de la iubirea carnală și sentimentală, la cea idealizată și de consum, până la dragostea totală) și forme (logodnă, căsătorie, adulter, divorț).

I. Acțiunea prezintă pe dramaturgul Tudor Mănciu, autor în vogă după publicarea unei piese de teatru confuze, *Aventura spirituală*, care pleacă în Delta Dunării cu un mic grup, format din două foste iubite, actrițe, orfana Ștefania și Lucia, însoțită de soțul său, George Alexiu. Expediția avea pentru dramaturg sensul unei „aventuri spirituale” și ca miză întâlnirea compozitorului genial, Mihai Barbura, necunoscut, care trăia în solitudine absolută de cinci ani; fiindcă autorul *Simfoniei în E major*, interpretate pentru prima dată în urmă cu un an, glorifica iubirea și viața, Mănciu dorea să înțeleagă paradoxul absenței lui din lume și secretul genialității prin mijlocirea Ștefaniei, căreia spera ca Maestrul să i se confeseze în timpul plimbării cu barca.

II. După o lună, personajele se reîntâlnesc în casa mătușii și unchiului Ștefaniei, colonelul Dem Iliescu, pentru a asista la ceremonia de logodnă a acesteia cu Petru Baranda, dublu întinerit al lui Mihai Barbura. Mănciu se confruntă cu Ștefania, pe care o consideră creația lui ca artistă și ca femeie, ipostază modernă a Beatricei, și o avertizează de nefericirea destinului ei, în care se implică, manipulându-i, ca un regizor, relațiile cu

¹⁷ Mircea Eliade, *Jurnal, ed. cit.*, I, p. 79

ceilalți. Petru Baranda încearcă să înțeleagă schimbarea de comportament a iubitei sale, îl declară mort pe Mihai Barbura, alături de Christina, soția lui care se înecase cu mulți ani în urmă în Deltă, și își afirmă speranța în miracolul iubirii, alături de Ștefania.

III. După șase luni, de ziua Ștefaniei, Tudor Manciu se află în apartamentul tinerilor căsătoriți și dorește să afle secretul vieții lui Mihai Barbura, prin Petru Baranda, pasionat de greacă, muzică și matematică; el îl sfătuiește pe acesta să păstreze vechea imagine a muzicianului și să își lase din nou barbă. După plecarea dramaturgului, Ștefania afirmă că este îndrăgostită și predestinată compozitorului, pe care dorește să-l regăsească în Petru, a cărui prezență fizică o copleșește și-i provoacă un sentiment de vinovăție adulterină. Acesta refuză să fie iubit pentru „lucruri exterioare” și crede că adevăratul „eu” este transparent, așadar el este întocmai cum arată în prezent și elogiază miracolul vieții și al iubirii pentru Ștefania. Pentru a o salva de la o viață în minciună și confuzie, el o părăsește, iar Ștefania încearcă să se sinucidă cu un pistol lăsat de Manciu, fără gloanțe, deoarece acesta crezuse că actrița va vrea să-l ucidă pe Petru.

IV. După alte șase luni, Manciu, în care a dispărut fără urmă, se întoarce sărac de la Geneva, pentru repetiția la spectacolul piesei sale „istorice și autobiografice”. El nu recunoaște ideea centrală a textului, în interpretarea actorilor și în viziunea regizorului. Întâlnind-o pe Ștefania, care, așa cum îi sugerase el în actul III, „se emancipase” de rudele ei și se mutase singură, supraviețuind în infernul unei vieți vicioase, consumate de sex și alcool, el își dezvăluie concepția artistică, aceea că viața în orizont istoric este o iluzie și că reale sunt existențele creatoare care stimulează dinamica imaginarului. Ștefania refuză atracția infernală a dramaturgului pentru ea și îl părăsește, pentru a se reîntoarce în Deltă, unde crede că va fi găsită și salvată prin iubire.

Asemenea întregii sale proze, piesa în patru acte *Aventura spirituală* este structurată pe mai multe planuri: real (în care apare intriga erotică de la nivel tematic), magic (cel mai dezvoltat, care leagă planul tematic de intriga ficțională: circularitatea relației dintre viață și artă și critica reprezentării lumii) și mitic (legat de viziunea creatorului). Ele sunt organizate concentric și dezvoltă scenarii paralele, în jurul personajelor principale, Ștefania, Tudor Manciu și Mihai Barbura. La final, se unifică într-un plan simbolic/ potențial, al unui real de gradul al doilea, de care se leagă tema salvării și a dobândirii libertății. Ele relativizează, în mintea cititorului, reprezentările anterioare asupra vieții, omului și cunoașterii,

dezvăluind nu atât imposibilitatea înțelegerii lor, cât nelimitata lor bogăție și frumusețe; pe această relativizare mizează atât textul literar, cât și eseurile eliadești despre estetica autenticității. Între planurile realității ficționale și straturile reprezentării artistice și umane (despre care vorbea Hartmann) este un subtil paralelism, relevant pentru *intentio auctoris*.

Intriga de la nivel tematic este dublată de o intrigă ficțională, care problematizează viziunea creatoare originală a tradiției literare, transformată în cod estetic degradat, prin imitație și uz; iar clișeizarea acesteia este supusă criticii/ contestării; pe de altă parte, textul propune o schimbare de paradigmă pentru literatura viitorului, adaptată omului postmodern, situat într-o societate globalizată și mobilă, marcată, din această cauză, de tensiuni provocate de multiculturalism (Nemoianu, 2011, 11), subminată de scepticism și amenințată de neant, prin pierderea memoriei și a valorilor.

Schimbarea de perspectivă asupra caracteristicii dominante a ficțiunii pornește, așadar, de la întrebarea „Cum pot să interpretez lumea?” (McHale, 2009, 30) și vizează însăși dimensiunea ontologică a personajelor. Autorul-dramaturg simte că la intersecția dintre prezentul ficțional al piesei sale și moștenirea tradiției literare nu a găsit răspunsuri la piesa deja scrisă, de aceea el le caută în reacțiile femeilor, integrate de el în tipare. În actul I, atitudinea ironică față de „limbajul predestinat”, leit-motivele și gesturile de seducție erotică, descrise de Manciuc Luciei, imaginând pentru ea plimbarea Ștefaniei cu Barbura, parodiază codul esteticii romantice, transformat în clișeu: „Manciuc: *Doar că Ștefania nu e o femeie obișnuită. E ceva mai mult și mai puțin în același timp*” (...) „*Cred că și-au spus povestea vieții. Așa se întâmplă de obicei. Confesiuni, priviri adânci, lichide, prima ținere prelungită de mână...*” (I, p. 8, 12)¹⁸.

Dar polemica trece, dinspre orizontul de așteptare al consumatorului comun de literatură, pe care în același timp îl satisface și îl ironizează cinic tânărul dramaturg, către producător; discursul autorului implicat parodiază discursul lui Manciuc în actul al II-lea, când acesta își mărturisește atracția pentru Ștefania, tip de „de femeie spirituală”, întrupare a modelului Beatrice, cât și atașamentul acestuia pentru cultura pudorii și a sacrificiului: „Manciuc (apropiindu-se de ea): *Am crezut (...) că ești o*

¹⁸ Retroversiunea textelor în limba română ne aparține și este realizată după textul de bază utilizat în această lucrare, traducerea lui Mac Linscott Ricketts în limba engleză, *A Spiritual Adventure*, publicată în « Theory in Action », Volume 5, Number 1, January 2012.

*apariție eterică, suavă, coborâtă din altă lume în visul unui poet (...) care se rușina de corpul și dorințele lui. Mi-ar fi reușit acel spectacol grotesc, care vă încântă pe voi, femeile (...) De aceea m-ai plăcut atunci: pentru că încarnam idealul tău de noblețe sufletească.” (II, p. 26). Gândind lumea în forme/ aparențe, artistul descoperă că sensul ei pe acest fâgaș se precipită tragic, ajunge la descompunere infernală, deziluzie și dezgust. La sfârșit, el găsește răspunsul căutat, care „să o doboare” pe Ștefania și să o facă „să-i cerșească mila”: „Manciu: *Ești cunoscută în toate barurile, duci viața unei târfe isterice și sentimentale (...) Știi, asta s-a mai făcut. Nimic nou. și totuși vulgar... Alcool, sex și filosofie.*” (IV, p. 54, 56)*

Perspectiva relativizantă, inovatoare estetic, este susținută și de modul în care Eliade deconstruiește relația dintre personaje și structura acestora. Ele apar într-un conflict generalizat unele în raport cu altele, atât la nivelul tematic de suprafață, cât și la cel ficțional de profunzime. Din strategia de subminare și derealizare a reprezentării personajelor face parte imprecizia detalierii identității lor reale: un geniu încununat cu lauri, dar necunoscut de nimeni, despre viața căruia circulă zvonuri contradictorii (Mihai Barbura); o orfană al cărei nume de familie nu-l cunoaștem, ajunsă subiect de bârfă pentru schimbarea de comportament din final (Ștefania); un scriitor de succes și un donjuan aflat într-o relație ambiguă cu femeile din viața lui, care dispare fără urmă (Manciu).

În plus, autorul recurge la strategiile *qui-pro-quo*-ului și la tehnica (de)dublării, care au funcția de a contrazice și a dizolva identitatea lor aparentă. Astfel, la nivelul intrigii tematice, personajele piesei lui Eliade, cu o structură multiplă, sunt interpretate de actorii care pun în scenă piesa dramaturgului Manciu, iar compozitorul genial Mihai Barbura este „substituit” de insul comun Petru Baranda, în actul II.

La nivelul intrigii ficționale metatextuale, aceeași funcție este îndeplinită de intertext. Personajele sunt prezentate printr-o dublă raportare, la un model cultural, sugerat de dramaturgul Manciu (vezi infra) și la un arhetip mitologic originar, sugerat de logica internă a personajelor, opus citărilor parodice ale autorului-personaj, de către autorul implicat.

Mai mult decât atât, piesa problematizează relația dintre personaje și autor. Ele nu numai că refuză modelele autoritare ale autorului-personaj, ci le substituie cu altele, care le inversează sensul, sugerate de *intentio auctoris*. Iar acesta din urmă lasă și personajelor și lectorului deschisă posibilitatea de a permuta rolurile: aparentul Orfeu, sfâșiat de durere și moarte, este, de fapt, Dionysos, care, după experiența în Hades (conotată

de barbă), exaltă bucuria vieții și devine stăpânul artei (Rhode, 1985, 239) (compozitorul Mihai Barbura); Beatrice-Eurydice pare o bacantă, dar, în ultimă instanță, va fi o eliberată Ariadnă (Ștefania); Don Juan-ul-Trickster pare un Pygmalion care rămâne însă în ipostază de Eurydice, deoarece s-a ratat ca Orfeu (Manciu): „Manciu (uitându-se la ea, incapabil să își controleze privirea lacomă, aproape obscenă): *Mi-e milă de tine, mă dezgusti, și totuși mă simt atras de tine! Corpul și înfățișarea ta degajă o atracție infernală...* Ștefania: *Asta-i foarte natural. Frecventez Infernul o bună parte din timp (...)* Am venit să-ți mulțumesc că, datorită ție, am cunoscut Infernul înainte de a muri - și din cauza, datorită ție voi fi în stare, la sfârșit, să redevin nemuritoare. Manciu: *Simți apropierea lui Orfeu?* Ștefania: *Am simțit-o cu mult timp în urmă. O simt tot timpul. Dar el nu m-a găsit... A fost prea întuneric și prea multă apă... Dar acum m-a luat de mână... Și nu mă va mai pierde... Și de data aceasta nu voi privi în urmă, către tine... Nu-l voi pierde din nou... Dar îmi pare rău pentru tine, că te părăsesc aici, în întuneric, în frigul morții, fără iubire, fără lumină, fără speranță...*” (IV, p. 56-57)

Aceeași problematizare vizează relația autor-actor-spectator, ficțiune-realitate. Receptorii „actuali” din text sunt dublul personajelor interpretate de actori și al dramaturgului Manciu (fostul dirijor-manipulator al destinelor celorlalți), care, în această calitate, refuză atât „jocul” propus de regizor, cât și sensurile exterioare, străine deopotrivă de personalitatea lor reală și de intenția auctorială.

În stilul teatrului de avangardă, autorul suprimă convenția spectacolului de teatru, ridică bariera dintre actori și personajele reale, devenite spectatori, dar și dintre scenă și sală; confruntarea dintre ei, reprezentată ca o luptă, are loc la repetiția dinaintea spectacolului, la care asistă, ca la un spectacol, și publicul real, ce a început să-și ocupe locurile și, neînțelegând nimic din haosul aparent, se revoltă.

Acest conflict se referă la două maniere diferite de reprezentare artistică, una care evocă în mod generic poezia tragică, artă a cuvântului, iar cealaltă, spectacolul de teatru și arta actorului.

Deși mai stabil, prin dimensiunea materială a textului, decât reprezentarea scenică, nici textul scris nu eludează contradicțiile unei lecturi multiple de orizontul de așteptare al receptorilor, a căror atitudine variază: de la cea inițial credulă a Ștefaniei, la cea sentimentală a Luciei, indiferentă a lui George, ori ostilă a unchiului Dem (care vrea să-l dea în judecată pe Manciu, pentru încălcarea intimității și onoarei), până la

cea manipuloare, din final, a Ștefaniei, care, printr-o inversiune simetrică, încearcă să negocieze rescrierea parțială a textului, pentru ca autorul lui să evite neplăcerile și amândoi să se salveze de la destinul nefericit pe care l-a croit deja dramaturgul.

Acest labirint de ipostaze este o interogație referitoare la procesul de semioză artistică, la raportul dintre autor-text-receptor. Constructorul lui lasă și un discret fir al Ariadnei, strategii cu ajutorul căruia lectorul confuz reface viziunea artistică și unitatea piesei, fără a-i epuiza sensurile: intertextul cu funcție parodică, simetrii și paralelisme ale compoziției, recurențe tematice și tipologice din alte opere eliadești; ele orientează receptorul spre o lectură plurală, de tip tabular. Astfel, acesta descoperă în scenariile textului care se intersectează o pluralitate de posibile căi de reprezentare a lumii.

Personajele implicate în conflictul ficțional se înscriu în tipologia specifică prozei eliadești și întruchipează două viziuni artistice: una, canonică și fatalistă, întruchipată de Tudor Mănciu, avatar al Meșterului Manole și, dincolo de el, al demiurgului-Trickster, al creatorului ce recurge la convenții ca la niște rețete sau „chei magice”; cealaltă, autentică, originală, optimistă, expresie a beatitudinii și genialității, a lui Mihai Barbura, ipostază a creatorului de tip dionisiac.

Tudor Mănciu își modelează procustian arta și relațiile de iubire, comportându-se autoritar, chiar despot în cele două relații, de îndrăgostit și artist; el limitează libertatea de a alege a femeii iubite atât în viața reală, cât și în piesa sa, prin anticiparea destinului lor tragic, suprimând valorile experienței vitale ale „omului viu”, ale ființei concrete. Facultatea de a vedea dramatic și de a transforma viața etică în material estetic (Cf. Hartmann, 159) îi afectează sensibilitatea morală, iar acest lucru aduce după sine atitudinea rece, ironică și sceptică și eșecul în iubire și creație. Abia la sfârșit el înțelege că singurul rod al acestei duble iubiri pentru creația lui feminină, Ștefania, nu poate fi decât Pathos, ca în mitul lui Pygmalion. Opera lui este indiferentă la adevăr (Cf. *Ibidem*, 166) și inautentică, fiindcă din modelarea fixată în materia stabilă a cuvântului, care se adresează fanteziei, lipsește „ethosul mărturisirii” realului: între „autentificarea misterului” genialității lui Barbura, prin detaliul fizic al bărbii, și întruchiparea viziunii auctoriale asupra acestuia, lipsește tocmai stratul ființei concrete, reprezentate de Eliade prin dublul Petru Baranda. Raportând conținutul psihologic al personajelor la modelele culturale, el suprimă din reprezentare capacitatea de perceptibilitate, evocată de apariția

reală a personajelor, iar textul dramatic scris de Manciu devine confuz, neînțeles de receptori: „Manciu: *Nu are importanță cum simți sau nu simți, ci cum pari în ochii celorlalți. Barba prelunga cumva legenda lui Mihai Barbura și garantează autenticitatea misterului. În ochii mei, de exemplu, tu ești omul care ai trăit trei ani într-o solitudine aproape absolută, în așteptarea miresei tale. Ei bine, acum nu mai pot să te cred (...)* Baranda: *Dar ce importanță are dacă cineva pare sau nu pare ceva, dacă are sau nu are ceva? (...)* Evident, amândoi trăiți în abstracții!... Pentru că, de fapt, singurul lucru care contează este să fii tu însuși, să fii real.” (III, p. 37)

Estetica autenticității vizează, așadar, tocmai acest strat, ontologic, sugerat și de titlul *Simfoniei în E major*, care trimite la verbul *a fi*, și de valorile conotative ale antroponimului Barbura, care evocă sfera semantică a vieții organice. De aceea, apariția sa este a unui „geniu senin, calm, încrezător, chiar optimist”, în pofida tuturor tragediilor personale care i-au străbătut existența. Explicând estetica „omului viu” ca *alias* al lui Mihai Barbura, Petru Baranda nu vorbește despre convențiile reprezentării, ci despre transparența acesteia, care asigură inteligibilitatea formei, capacitatea ei de a se comunica receptorului.

Titlul piesei lui Manciu, *Aventura spirituală*, sugerează o experiență artistică individuală, sterilă, bazată pe imitația canonică și sacrificiul etico-estetic; repetiția acționează vampiric, deopotrivă asupra modelelor, persoanelor și personajelor, pe care le aduce în situații tragice, fără ieșire, de clișee culturale, întruchipând însăși semnificația acestora. De aceea, Ștefania simte că, împinsă de Manciu în brațele lui Barbura, îl iubește pe Petru cu dragostea altei femei: „Ștefania (cu același ton): *De ce spui că nu sunt eu însămi, ci cealaltă? De ce spui că semăn cu ea? (...)* Barbura: *Nu putem trăi în visul lor, până la sfârșit. Le-am cerut iertare, dar asta este peste puterile noastre... Le-am spus că noi nu suntem ca ei, că noi doi suntem muritori... Și că trăim pe pământ. Îi voi implora să ne ierte pentru că ne-am separat de ei și pentru că, de acum încolo, ne vom trăi propria noastră viață. A ta și a mea...”* (II, p. 32)

Reprezentarea teatrală îi distruge iluzia omnipotenței demiurgice și îi relevă lui Manciu că autorul textului modelează doar pe jumătate nu numai sensul operei literare, ci și conținutul reprezentării, întrucât arta spectacolului și a actorului însuși colaborează la plăsmuirea ficțiunii (Cf. *Ibidem*, 122), iar conținutul sufletesc este realizat nemijlocit, în altă formă de apariție, care funcționează după o altă convenție (a scenei); interpretarea actorilor din piesa lui Manciu, „materiale fugitive”, care îi

obiectivează personajele, nu poate să comunice decât lipsa de gravitate specifică jocului, nu și raportul de apariție dintre forma exterioară și conținutul sufletesc al persoanelor/ personajelor, iar autorul nu-și recunoaște ideile.

Tudor Manciu este un personaj de factura lui Manoil, din *Lumina ce se stinge....*, sau a doctorului din *Isabel și apele diavolului*; el este un donjuan, un experimentator cinic, pentru care iubirea este un joc al seducției; prin statutul său social de scriitor în vogă, își domină partenerile (actrițe), și, după scurte interludii erotice, se implică în viața lor sentimentală și le dirijează destinul, după o intrigă inventată de el, în rolurile unor modele culturale, a căror repetiție le este fatală în plan ontologic; acestea variază între statutul de „gâscă sentimentală”, Beatrice și „târfă isterică”. Trăind deviat complexul lui Pygmalion, el își ratează „rolul vieții” deoarece își modelează iubita nu după propria-i dorință, ci după un model străin (dantesc), care o transformă pe aceasta într-o abstracțiune, într-o fantomă culturală. El vrea să-și folosească propria competență culturală în mod demonic, subordonând-o unor scopuri individuale, meschine. Orgoliul demiurgic, voința de a controla viețile celorlalți și de a obține recunoașterea artistică trișând, îl înscriu în categoria tricksterilor, a „bufonilor sarcastici”, cum îl numește Ștefania (III, p. 25), care afirmă, asemenea lui Manoil, metafizica vacuității și a morții. El dorește să fure de la Barbura secretul genialității, punând-o pe Ștefania să îl ispitească (I), și, când cei doi se căsătoresc, vrea să-i afle secretul vieții, împingând-o pe aceasta la crimă, inoculându-i ideea iubirii adulterine și provocând despărțirea lor finală. Iar după ce a eșuat „în rolul vieții” prima oară, vrea să devină consolatorul, surrogatul soțului pierdut, fantomă a iubirii.

Ruperea legăturilor, plecarea și refuzul lui, la întoarcere, de a modifica finalul piesei, la sugestia Ștefaniei (care devine ca el), reprezintă etapele unui traseu inițiativ, al înțelegerii propriei vieți și identități, care îl salvează din țesătura demonică a intrigilor imaginate anterior; el își asumă idealul ascetic și își recuperează coerența umană, armonia cu sine, transparența în raport cu modul de a-și reprezenta lumea; iar Ștefania recunoaște transformarea atitudinii sale în registrul înalt al stilului și vocabularului lui, care devine „mai serios” (IV, p. 52). Vechiul raport cu lumea, antinomic, devine acum antagonic. El se vedește în actul al IV-lea, când artistul apare într-un rol schimbat, atât în relație cu opera sa (de receptor), cât și cu femeia iubită, printr-o inversiune a situației inițiale,

când devine din Don Juan - ascet, iar Ștefania, din Beatrice - bacantă, ce crede într-o transformare mitică și ontologică salvatoare. Căci, în mod simetric, la ultima confruntare cu Manciu, și ea refuză „să se întoarcă în piesă” și alege o altă cale, a realului, diferită de a lui, singura care nu i-a aparținut vreodată, cea a aparenței fizice: „Ștefania: *Nu, nu e nimic nou în asta. Toate aceste lucruri s-au spus de la începutul lumii. Dar tot de la începutul lumii e și dragostea. și în dragoste, când cineva iubește, va continua să te iubească pentru totdeauna, indiferent ce ți se poate întâmpla, în moarte chiar. Dacă acel bărbat îndrăgostit coboară după tine, te ia de mână și te aduce înapoi....* Manciu (sarcastic, teatral): *Eurydice!... Orfeu și Eurydice!* Ștefania: *Nu. Nu doar ei. Ei au arătat doar drumul, atunci, la început (...). L-am presimțit cu mult timp în urmă.*” (IV, 56-57).

Pentru Manciu, arta continuă să fie o practică de factură magică, o inițiere de tip orfic, prin care creatorul afirmă puterea iluziei; de aceea, personajul Manciu din propria-i piesă crede că accesul la genialitate este rezultatul unei stări de grație, ce-i poate fi „injectată”, „revelată”, prin „contactul personal” cu un inițiator mistic (IV, p. 48).

La sfârșit, autorul pulverizează relația dintre personajele sale, prezentate împreună în actul I, fiecare continuându-și drumul pe o cale diferită, care le actualizează identitatea potențială, dimensiunea autentică, libertatea interioară de a se reinventa spiritual. În procesul de recuperare a acestei identități, ruptura le restituie înțelegerea parcurgerii căii lor și, prin distanța asumată, autocontemplarea ca ființe depline. Dar punerea în abis a titlului piesei prin titlul celei scrise de Manciu bulversează semnificațiile textului, invitând receptorul la reluarea lecturii.

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THE ROMANIAN SURREALISM AFTER THE WAR

Ovidiu MORAR

University of “Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava
ovidiumorar10@yahoo.com

Abstract: The study points out the most significant aspects of the Romanian surrealism between 1945-1947, starting with its poetics (formulated mainly in the manifestos *Critica mizeriei* and *Dialectique de la dialectique*, both published in 1945, but also in several essays written by the painter Dolfi Trost), and ending with its poetry, of which main representatives were Gellu Naum, Gherasim Luca, Virgil Teodorescu and Paul Paun. The mechanisms of the poetic discourse and the structures of the surrealist imagery are analyzed in order to grasp the specificity and uniqueness of the Romanian surrealism.

Key-words: Romanian surrealism, poetry, revolution, dream, libido, Naum, Luca, Teodorescu, Trost

The only Romanian avant-garde self-proclaimed surrealist group began to coagulate in 1940, after the return to their native country of the poets Gellu Naum and Gherasim Luca, who had independently left for Paris two years before. There, in Paris, they had met, with the precious aid of the painter Victor Brauner, already a member of the French surrealist group, André Breton and other surrealists, and Gellu Naum had written, on Breton's request, an article on the “devilishness of the object” which was published in the surrealist magazine *Minotaure* in 1938. The other members of the group were the poets Paul Păun and Virgil Teodorescu, and the painter Dolfi Trost. Otherwise, the adverse political context (the setting up of Antonescu's fascist dictatorship and his alliance with Hitler) forced the group to suspend its activity by the end of the war (in addition to their communist sympathies, Luca, Păun and Trost were also Jews).

Paradoxically though it may seem, despite its well-known adhesion to the “proletarian revolution”, soon after its first moment of public affirmation (in 1945), the new political regime that had been imported from U.S.S.R. forced the group to dissolve for good and all (in 1947) as it no longer corresponded to the new ideological commandments (surrealism was to be considered “decadent”, a reminiscence of the old “bourgeois” society, in contradiction with the ideals of the “working class”). It was only Gherasim Luca (who quitted Romania in 1951) and Gellu Naum (with an interruption of 2 decades) who continued to write surrealist poetry afterwards, and although quite different, their poetic

careers eventually reached the highest peak of international recognition.

Though extremely brief (officially developed between 1945 and 1947), the activity of the Romanian surrealist group was undoubtedly prodigious, making some important critics of the time use superlatives in order to define it (for example, the ex-surrealist Sarane Alexandrian considered the Romanian surrealist group to be ‘the most exuberant, the most adventurous and even the most delirious of the international surrealism’). This remarkable activity materialized in several manifestos and theoretical articles, collective texts, and numerous volumes of poetry, prose and essays, most of them in French, which were published in obscure collections, such as: “Colecția Suprarealistă” [*Surrealist Collection*], “Negația negației” [*Negation of Negation*], “Surréalisme”, “Infra-Noir”, or “Éditions de l’ Oubli” (a projected magazine called *Gradiva* could not appear because of the censorship), and also in several exhibitions of which the most important took place in Bucharest, in January 1945, under the generic title *Présentation de graphies colorées, de cubomanies et d’objets*.

The two manifestos that defined the aesthetics and, nevertheless, the politics of the Romanian surrealist group, both published in 1945, were *Dialectique de la dialectique. Message adressé au mouvement surréaliste international*, signed by Gherasim Luca and D. Trost, and, respectively, *Critica mizeriei* [*Critique of Misery*], signed by Gellu Naum, Paul Păun and Virgil Theodorescu. The goal of the first manifesto, written in the form of a pathetic letter addressed to André Breton and the other French surrealists, was to demonstrate that the Romanian surrealist group had been searching, despite its isolation during the war, ‘new dialectical solutions that would make us surpass the heart-breaking conflict between us and the world.’. (Luca, Trost, 1945, 3)¹⁹ Meanwhile, the authors denounced some “errors that had filtered in the core of surrealism”, namely its transformation into a literary-artistic doctrine and the mimetic use of the surrealist techniques, which had been eventually considered to be ‘mechanically transmissible and infinitely usable’, respectively the tendency ‘to introduce surrealism in a sort of cultural policy’. (*Ibid*, 4) The appearance of a “surrealist mannerism”, in the authors’ opinion, had the risk “to make it an artistic current, to make it accepted by our class enemies, to grant it a harmless historical past, in a word, to lose the caustic that had animated, in spite of all contradictions of the external world, those who had considered revolution their only reason of existence”. (*Ibid*) The solution proposed by the authors of the manifesto was to maintain surrealism in “a constantly revolutionary state”, which was possible only “by a dialectical position of permanent *negation* and *negation of negation*, that is, by a “continuous opposition to the whole world and to itself.” (*Ibid*, 5)

¹⁹ translation mine

All common places of surrealism are reiterated in this manifesto: the search for the “objective hazard”, which offers ‘he opportunities to discover the *contradictions* within the society divided in classe’, and the search for the “dialectic and materialized” love, liberated from all constraints, as ‘our principal method of knowledge and action’, ‘our most legitimate insurrectional support.’ (*Ibid*, 6) Nevertheless, this dialectical thought pushed to its limits implies a series of radical conclusions, the majority of them fanciful, of course. First of all, the authors postulate the negation of the whole past of humanity, together with its support, memory; second, they proclaim love (i.e., the “erotic magnetism”) to be ‘the general revolutionary method proper to surrealism, and, consequently, they propose ‘the unlimited eroticization of the proletariat’ (*Ibid*), solution able to accomplish the double surrealist goal of the total transformation of man (by the liberation of the *libido*) and of society (by the proletarian revolution), that is, the conciliation between Marx and Freud.²⁰ Perhaps the most fanciful of all these “solutions” is the proclamation of surrealism in a revolutionary opposition both against the external limits imposed by nature and against the internal limits generated by the Oedipus Complex²¹ ‘in order to liberate love’. Finally, the authors announced the experimental “discoveries” of the Romanian surrealists: “surautomatism”, “talisman-simulacrum”, the “objectively offered object”, “entoptic graphomania”²², “vaporization”, “hypnagogic movements”, “objectanalysis”, “echography”, “stereotypy”, “pantography”, “cubomania” – all of them presented at the exhibition organized at Brezoianu Hall, in Bucharest, in January 1945, under the title *Présentation de graphies colorées, de cubomanies et d’objets*. These experiments – declared the authors – were meant to push the automatism ‘to its most concrete and absurd limits’ in order to ‘break the ice of universal causality’. (*Ibid*, 10) In the book *Le vampire passif*, published in the same year, Gherasim Luca defined the *objectively offered object* as ‘an object made while thinking of the person to whom it was intended. In this way, the object can be used as a vehicle for sentimental or intellectual exchanges, and become a qualitative description which can only be interpreted like a rebus.’ (Luca, 1945, 9)²³ Such an object,

²⁰ Although aberrant at first sight, this thesis was consonant with the Marxist-Freudian theory of Herbert Marcuse, who, ten years later, in one of his major works, *Eros and Civilization* (1955), stipulated the social emancipation of man by total liberation of the *principle of pleasure* from the tyranny of the *principle of reality*.

²¹ In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud maintains that in the Oedipus Complex reside the “simultaneous beginnings of religion, morals, society and art”, as each member of the society bears in his blood the “original sin” of the murder of the primordial Father by his sons *in illo tempore*. The liberation from this complex becomes, therefore, for the authors of the manifesto, the condition *sine qua non* of social emancipation.

²² See Annex 2.

²³ *translation mine*

called *The Letter L*, was meant to be offered to Breton himself, whom Luca much admired.²⁴ But even more interesting was Luca's *cubomania*, an original version of the collage in the form of rectangular cut ups of preexistent images and their fortuitous rearrangement under the impulse of the "objective hazard", a procedure that remembers the children's play with cubes.²⁵ One year later, the author published 33 "non-oedipal" cubomanies in the volume *Les orgies des Quanta*, conceived as an attempt to outrun through negation the anguish of the natal trauma, the Oedipus Complex and the Castration Complex. About the curse inherited by 'the axiomatic man of Oedipus', the obsessive theme of his whole creation, Luca had spoken in greater detail in the poetical essays *Inventatorul iubirii* [*The Inventor of Love*], *Parcurg imposibilul* [*I Cover the Impossible*], and *Moartea moartă* [*The Dead Death*], published in a single volume in 1945. The solutions preferred as an alternative to the passive acceptance of the oedipal destiny were the re-invention of love in a completely new world, without past and reference points, the refusal of birth, of procreation, and even suicide, which was seen as a "dialectical jump", that is, a "negation of the negation of life." Consequently, in *Moartea moartă*, the author (who would really commit suicide at the age of eighty, by jumping into the Seine) described five attempts of suicide which he pretended to have already experimented.

Published in the same year, the manifesto *Critica mizeriei* [*Critique of Misery*] was polemically directed both against the old surrealists grouped around Sașa Pană and the magazine *unu* ["one"], and against the tandem Luca-Trost, fact that already indicates the scission of the group. The authors accused the first generation of "modernists" of having treated the problem of the surrealist image as a mere formal, mere "poetical" problem, and, therefore, of having seen in surrealism an exclusively verbal revolution, a "starting point" for a new poetic experience, and not a more profound, spiritual revolution that was to lead to the "total liberation of man", as Breton had stated: "This *thoroughly formal, thoroughly poetical* preoccupation is indeed a unique product, specific to our avant-garde movements. It is due to this, on one hand, the set back of the new spirit in Romania, and, on the other hand, the confused, reactionary understanding of surrealism, understanding also specific to Romania, and whose responsibility weighs entirely on the poets' shoulders. It still persists in the mind of those who see in surrealism «a verbal revolution», of those who *take surrealism for a starting point*, without having ever had a real contact with all these." (Naum, Păun, Teodorescu, 1945, 5)²⁶ The "imagism" of the poets Ilarie Voronca, Stéphane Roll, Sașa Pană, etc. meant, therefore, a sterile

²⁴ See Annex 3.

²⁵ See Annex 1.

²⁶ *translation mine*

preoccupation to produce artificial images without a profound motivation, and, consequently, incapable of provoking the lecturer's "emotional shock". On the other hand, the authors reproached Luca and Trost the detachment of surrealism from the spirit by the refusal of political action "in favor of a more and more blatant mysticism". (*Ibid*)

Indeed, Luca and Trost differed from the other surrealists in their more intense preoccupation with theoretical approaches, as they tried to find specificity for surrealism so as to legitimate it aesthetically. For example, Trost – probably the main theorist of the group - revealed in several texts that he published between 1945 and 1947 the limits of the Freudian method of dream interpretation. Thus, in an essay entitled *Vision dans le crystal* (1945), he maintained that, by its attempt to reveal the latent contents of dreams, psychoanalysis had reduced all of them to a few general laws, in spite of their practically infinite diversity, so that dreams "concretely different" had been considered to express identical aspects of the unconscious. In conclusion, the author proposed a new method of dream interpretation called *R's Dreams*, a paradoxical combination between the Freudian method and the Dadaist recipe of poetry prescribed by Tzara in his well-known manifesto: since the erotic aspect of their manifest contents was obvious, each symptomatic phrase of dreams could have been interpreted by means of a handbook of erotic pathology fortuitously opened with a knife. The author even pretended that he had managed to conciliate thus the external hazard, which was purely mechanical (postulated by the Dadaists as the unique mechanism of reality), with the internal hazard of the unconscious: 'This oniromancy seemed to offer me the means of connecting the dream to the outer reality, and as concerning its obsessively erotic aspect, a concrete means to find the latent sexual content, conferring thus the hazard a cryptesthesical value both subjective and objective.' (Trost, 1945)²⁷

In another essay published in 1947, *Le même du même*, Trost resumed these issues by asserting that every dream is erotic in its latent content, and that the manifest content represents in fact the sublimation of some repressed desires. The mistake of psychoanalysis, in Trost's opinion, would reside in the attempt to reduce the erotic elements detected in dreams to certain symbols that could be rationally interpreted; nevertheless, these symbols do not exist but for the conscious, and the dreamy desire is "larger than that of the conscious." (*Idem*, 1983, 488)²⁸ For example, if a woman sees in a dream a moonbeam, it means that the beam has *de facto* the functions of an erotic object, and not in a symbolic or metaphoric sense. In conclusion, 'the content of the dream must be considered *directly* and not by analogy', since 'it does not hide an erotic subject,

²⁷ translation mine

²⁸ translation mine

on the contrary, it expresses it' (*Ibid*, 490.). That is why the significations of the dreams can not be grasped by using rational "ready-made" methods, but anyone should interpret one's own dreams, and the unique "objective and scientific" method of doing this would be their "poetic consideration": 'The dream asserts that the image is now the direct expression of the unconscious, or rather of that unconscious that tends to become conscious, when coming up against the conscious that, itself, liberated from repression, tends to become unconscious. The dream advances towards *perfect* insanity, and exactly in its image the superego tends to regain its unity in difference, the negation of negation and the irreducibility of the world. The poetically considered image is the one that gives this exchange a concrete development' (*Ibid*, 493).

It is difficult to say what Trost meant by "poetical consideration" of dreams, since from the very beginning he tried to emphasize that this was 'completely different from the literary, pictorial or metaphoric mode'. (*Ibid*) Perhaps the texts grouped under the generic title *Le plaisir de flotter. Rêves et délires* could offer us a pretty satisfactory answer. Here we do not find the proper narration of certain dreams, but a delirious discourse which does not only narrate certain facts, but also interprets them, by conferring them bizarre significations according to unknown causalities; therefore, the absurd emerges not only from the lack of logic of the related events, but especially from the narrator's aberrant interpretation of them, from the unexpected connections made according to his own logic, *sui generis*. Since dream advances towards "perfect insanity", it means that the only discourse that can reveal its occult, trans-rational significations would be the one that approaches the most to the delirium of the insane. One of the texts in question begins like that:

Ready to leave, the young woman can't elude herself from the madness of waiting, aggravated by that present that is offered to her at the departure. Standing next to her, a very scrupulous man can scarcely repress the interest she inspires to him. He tries on for long the shoes that a beautiful girl has put at his feet: the girl is charming, she could be the model of a dreamer. The expression to fit like a glove silently passes over the voices of the dreamers.

Hesitating between a passionate, unconscious impulse and some contrary reflections, the young woman feels now in danger of death, but at the same time makes immense efforts to save the man from a certain death. She sees herself again, frightened, near some tombs. The primitive desire, under undecipherable symbols, betrays an obstinate and transitory relation: she's about to give in to the man. One can notice, at the center of this scene, some models that unconsciously attract solicitations and allusions.

The young woman suggests, by a lost gaze followed by a mute

movement of the lips, that the miserable look of that man elongates his face. The quick oblivion of this moment is due to a trail of subtle powder that spreads all around: the old desire is now inverted, but the divergence does not appear yet. She now takes into account some contradictory tendencies. The ornamentation of the scenery puts to advantage the couple that descends the stairs, and the young woman, followed closely by a few men, finds herself protected as of some ropes. The image of the rival loathed of jealousy is suddenly betrayed by an aggressive lust (...). (Trost, 1947)²⁹

After their arrival in Israel, in 1951, Luca and Trost wrote independently to Breton, the former sending him, among other things, several sets of transparent rectangular collages, versions of the older “cubomanies”, under the generic title *Transpercer la transparence*, and the latter posting him a 76-page manuscript entitled *L'Âge de la reverie*, an obscure and prolix text in which the author tried to find solutions to surpass the “crisis” of surrealism. In Trost’s opinion, the sources of the surrealist action had to be sought in the *invisible*, that is in the “sensitive unknown” which could not be rationally explained, but established and discovered only automatically: ‘We ourselves are this unknown to discover in the determinative halo of our own undetermined life by superior reasons.’ Only by acting in the zone of the invisible with poetic methods, one could revolutionarily act towards the visible. Another concept directly related to the *invisible* is the *active dreaming*, considered to be superior to the *dream* because it could dialectically solve all the antinomies: ‘that the nocturnal psychological dream made in the universe of determination the active dreaming is going to make in a universe of undetermined determination, beyond all antinomies.’ Other “solutions” advanced by Trost are the replacement of the *personal objective hazard* with the *collective objective hazard*, of the *psychic madness* with the *supermadness* (‘the pure madness of spirit, liberated from any psychological remainder’), the *implicitly theoretical eroticization*, etc. The perfectly tautological conclusion of the text is that *superreality* resides in life itself, and not elsewhere.

Like in the case of the poetry produced by the first generation of Romanian surrealists (Ilarie Voronca, Stephane Roll, Constantin Nisipeanu, Saşa Pană, etc.), the lyrics created by the surrealists of “the second wave” is characterized first of all by the total abolition of the borders between genders and species, between autobiographic confession, fiction and/or criticism, as the poet tries to express himself as completely as possible, in an uninterrupted, polymorph discourse that could be continued *ad infinitum*, since poetry is supposed to thoroughly reflect existence. Yet, unlike the pre-war surrealist

²⁹ *translation mine*

poetry, the one produced during this period (put *ab initio* “in the service of revolution”) (Teodorescu, 1977, 20)³⁰ is characterized by the tendency of programmatic *de-literarization* of the discourse, as the lecturer is incessantly irritated by a continuous series of “defiances and provocations” (A. Breton) aiming to purify his thought of the remainders (that is, the *clichés*) of his previous *literary* experience. As literature is identified with the bourgeois conventionalism and Philistinism *par excellence*, the surrealist poet will wage a frenzied campaign against its demonic domination. This explains the ostentatiously prosaic language, the preeminence of the trivial, shocking terms, in association with rebellious gestures defying the bourgeois morality, and, on the other hand, the almost total absence of the tropes, that is of the eminently *literary* figures. The poetic discourse is entirely “dictated by the image” (V. Teodorescu), as it is made exclusively of a succession of dream-like images out of premeditation, so that any symbolical or allegorical interpretation is from the very beginning excluded. If he is not determined to scandalize by all means decency, following the model of Geo Bogza, the surrealist poet will try to express himself as completely as possible, by penetrating deeply into the unexplored territories of the unconscious and by revealing the jewels of his pure *thought*³¹, unaltered by any conventions (“reactionary” residua) imposed by his daily social existence. Obviously, these poetic images, unlike those produced by the poets of the first surrealist generation, are no longer fairylike, diaphanous, but have a strong subversive content after the model of the “convulsive beauty” postulated by Breton.³² At the core of these images one can easily grasp the *libido* (whose total liberation was considered by the surrealists to be the premise *sine qua non* of the Revolution), often ostentatiously exhibited in violent images. Dialectically, though, *Eros* is permanently negated by the morbid instinct (*Thanatos*), so that the fairy miraculous is mingled with the nightmare generated by the anguish of death. That explains the omnipresence in the surrealist imaginary of the symbols that belong to the “nocturnal regime of the image” (Gilbert Durand), with terrifying connotations – ghosts, mannequins, statues, malefic plants and animals, “dangerous landscapes” –, all meant to provoke, in Breton’s words, the lecturer’s “emotional shock”. The poetic discourse has an eminently visual character, as it generates the same effect as a painting or a movie. Otherwise, it is significant the surrealists’ intention to illustrate their texts with related plastic representations³³, thus transgressing the

³⁰ *translation mine*

³¹ It is well-known that in the first manifesto of surrealism (1924), Breton established a genuine antinomy between *thought* and *reason*.

³² “La beauté sera convulsive ou ne sera pas”, said the author of *Nadja*.

³³ One of the first models for these poetic-pictorial experiences was the volume *Les malheurs des immortels* published by Paul Éluard and Max Ernst in 1922.

borders between artistic languages, which had been considered intangible so far. The “cubomanias” of the poet Gherasim Luca and the “pantographies” of the painter Dolfi Trost were in fact poems-paintings after the model of those created by Paul Éluard and Max Ernst, and of the “pictopoetry” invented by Victor Brauner and Ilarie Voronca in 1924, in the most daring Romanian avant-garde magazine of that time, *75 H. P.* The poet Virgil Teodorescu defined his “ocular texts” grouped under the generic title *Diamantul conduce mâinile* [*The Diamond Leads the Hands*], written in collaboration with Paul Păun and D. Trost, as “genuine plays”, ‘each numbering no less than 25 acts, yet concentrated like the homeopathic pills’ (Teodorescu, 1977, 79)³⁴ (of course, the intention of the authors was to stage a series of dreams). Other texts, such as *Amphitrite* by Gherasim Luca, look rather like theatrical or cinematographic screenplays than like genuine poems. Since poetry was considered an experience among others, a means of man’s liberation and not an aim in itself, it had to be searched everywhere, beyond the stiff conventions of literature.

Meanwhile, following the method of “automatic writing” and according to Lautréamont’s principle that ‘poetry must be written by all, not by one’, which had become the main axiom of the surrealist poetics, the Romanian surrealists produced a series of collective texts in which, like in the case of the famous *Les Champs magnétiques*, the contribution of each author is almost impossible to discern. These productions were meant to prove that poetry was no longer the privilege of a few persons of one’s choice, but could be written by anybody, as it was the most profound experience of the self. Three collective creations of this kind were even written with the participation of all the members of the group, one of them, entitled *Le sable nocturne*, being included in the catalogue of the international exhibition *Le surréalisme en 1947* organized in Paris by Breton and Duchamp. Obviously, beyond their inner incoherence, these creations had as a common theme the liberation of desire, as this definition of the “nocturnal sand” pointed it out: ‘Nocturnal sand: obscure room full of unknown objects that must be traversed in searching for the unstable concretions of a desire that must be desired.’ Also remarkable are the already mentioned “ocular texts” produced by Teodorescu, Păun and Trost, and the poetic aphorisms published by Teodorescu and Naum in 1946 under the title *122 de cadavre* [122 corpses], e. g.: ‘Before shutting the window, break it.’ ‘Your hair is an apple impossible to paint.’ ‘The liberty of poetry is the liberty of ideas bursting out of corpses.’ ‘Only the one who distorts with precision can be considered a poet.’³⁵ (Naum, Teodorescu, 1946)³⁶

³⁴ *translation mine*

³⁵ “Înainte de a închide fereastra, sparge-o.” “Părul tău e un măr imposibil de pictat.” “Libertatea poeziei e libertatea ideilor izbucnind din cadavre.” “Se poate numi poet numai acela care deformează cu precizie.”

As for the proper surrealist poetry published at that time, first of all one must notice the radical experiments of Gherasim Luca and Virgil Teodorescu, who wrote phonetic poems after the model of the Dadaists Hugo Ball, Kurt Schwitters, Tristan Tzara, etc. Poems like *Passionnément* or *Niciodată destul* [*Never enough*], written by Luca in 1947, exploit all the linguistic opportunities of the title-word, by the repetition and transmutation *ad libitum* of its syllables and phonemes, by their recombination with similar ones, and by phonetic plays which often generate absurd puns. Such subversive means of unwonted deconstruction and re-articulation of the poetic discourse were meant to create a new poetic language which was supposed to be pure, *sui generis*, completely liberated from any pragmatic/ utilitarian function. The “prodigious stutter” (Gilles Deleuze) invented by Luca casts a new light on each word and on each phoneme by their fortuitous redistribution within the discourse, so that they permanently generate new significations. Poetry becomes thus an *ars combinatoria*, an incessant play, more or less innocent, with language. For example, the untranslatable poem *Niciodată destul* is developed from the word *proporțional* [proportional], which is decomposed and rearticulated in phrases with possibly subversive meanings, such as those centered in the word *popor* [people], e. g. *un porc de popor* [a piggy people], *rog popor să mori* [I beg you people to die], etc., with possible references to anti-Semitism and to the traumatizing experience of the war:

‘propopopopoporpor porporporporți
 porporțiportți porttiporporporți porporpopor poporpopor
 porporțisorți proposorți proposorți prea mulți morți
 prea multe torțe propoforțe prea multe propoforțe
 propopropormor promoprotozor mori în zori proton
 porporproton care ton protonproprotoni care toni
 protoni propopropriul meu plop ploproprod
 aprodafrod proprafrodiziacprozaicpro popor
 porpor por în cor rog por pentru popor
 popor rog popor să mori
 contrapropopor fără bor la popor
 la cotor un singur por porporporpor
 porporporporți porporțiportți
 porporționporporționapro
 porporționpion prospion popor
 proporspion spion la pion la pian
 prosperi popor protosferă prompt la popor
 porporporpor
 porporporporporporc un porc de popor

³⁶ translation mine

proporționpopor proporționapropro apropro
asta propun propropropopun un porc
de popor proporțional' (Luca, 1947)

In 1940, Virgil Teodorescu wrote a *Poem în leopardă* [*Poem in Leoparda*], undoubtedly his most interesting poetic experiment. Defined by the author as a “dream in Leoparda”, the bilingual poem has a version in “Leoparda” (of course, an invented language like Hlebnikov’s “Zaoum” or Tzara’s “Maori”) and a version in Romanian, e. g.: ‘Sobroe algoa dooy toe fourod woo oon toe Negaru Hora urboe revoulud finoe wilot/ entroe toe sarah dogarabasamahi aroe/ toe strearom prapoi robarago oftanod hatun vehon ion maaring sculoest simprope uneor adaru iot soelof/ anod dalar habai pirtoe guepasarah comienco smalol ynggggoe/ voa woa foot coon oo arbar carbe/ delanot vinwid serpantis especat sabroe toe goo into doas cotts fidusan gresseru’; ‘Within several days you will find your shadow that would grow blind without the North Pole/ between both alternatives are made of diamond/ the big river almost suffocated by so much darkness sticks to your thigh like a lizard when you get up in the morning/ and there immediately begin in the empty forest the carnivore daydreams/ and the trees take the shapes of the ancestors/ killed at their bottom yellow cats assisted by snakes wash their bark in a total self-oblivion’³⁷. (Duda, 1997, 245) Despite the arbitrary character of the invention, an attentive lecture reveals a pretty close correspondence between the two versions, as the poet tried to convince his lecturers that the “Leoparda” really existed, as well as Tzara had maintained that his “negro” poems had been in fact mere translations of poems from Africa and Oceania. After all, the purpose of this enterprise was to find a pure poetic language analogous with the “original language” (*Urgedicht*) searched by the Expressionists, a language meant to signify exclusively on its phonetic level, by the sonority of the words and not by their conventional meaning.

As for the themes specific to surrealist poetry, the most obsessive is, of course, *love*, or rather the *erotic magnetism* which involves all the elements of the universe, including the inanimate objects; the recurrent motives are the *nocturnal journey*, the *city* (seen as a space of miraculous meetings, like in Breton’s *Nadja*), the *impossible metamorphoses* (according to the alchemical principle that anything can be transformed into anything), the *castle* and other Romantic *topoi*, the *maritime flora and fauna* (seductive and, meanwhile, malefic), the *demonic woman*, the *medium*, etc. In comparison with the poetry produced by the first surrealist generation before the war, one can notice now an essential mutation in the way of perceiving the poetic image. Let us consider, for instance, a fragment of the poem *Calul erotic* [*Erotic Horse*] by Gellu

³⁷ translation mine

Naum, published in the volume *Vasco de Gama* (1940)³⁸:

Through this window you can see clearly like through a hoof of glass
that breaks at the first touch of the asphalt
hoof that becomes a flame burns the cities and
the people
hoof that runs on its own, throbbing like
the heart of a bird
hoof that rejoices like a child at the encounter of
the living tree with leeches on its tips
from which the fruits are sucked through the leeches
the good juice of the dream flows through these leeches
they swell up till they swell the suffocated mouths
the fingers search the throat pull it out and put it
near the root of the bread
the root grows huge fills the horizon and from it
millions of enormous butterflies flow
butterflies with houses-like wings
that produce the big winds
butterflies painted on their back with nocturnal scenes
big butterflies that bring about the sleep
that pass their silent antennas through our heads
and suck our dreams
that crunch our face ferociously
and pull out of the contracted chest
hands skilful in cast making³⁹ (*Ibid*, 204-205)

One can notice in these lines the almost complete absence of tropes, since the lyric discourse is no longer a translation of certain ideas, emotions or perceptions in the poetic code, but a close transcription of representations born in the unconscious, that is in the absence of any premeditation. The images do not deliberately substitute anymore preexistent references to the objective

³⁸ *translation mine*

³⁹ Original text in Romanian: “Prin această fereastră se vede bine ca printr-o copită de sticlă/ care se sparge la prima atingere a asfaltului/ copită care devine flacăra arde orașele și/ oamenii/ copită care aleargă singură, zvăcnind ca/ o inimă de pasăre copită care se bucură ca un copil când întâlnește/ pomul viu cu lipitori pe sâni/ din care fructele se sug prin lipitori/ zeama bună a visului curge prin aceste lipitori/ ele se umflă până umflă gurile sufocate/ degetele caută beregata o scot cu grabă și o pun/ lângă rădăcina de pâine/ rădăcina crește imensă umple orizontul și din ea/ curg milioanele de fluturi enormi/ fluturi cu aripile cât casele/ care produc vânturile cele mari/ fluturi pictați pe spate cu scene nocturne/ fluturi mari care aduc somnul/ care își trec antenele tăcute prin capetele noastre/ și ne sug visele/ care ne ronțăie fața cu ferocitate/ și scot din toracele crispat/ mâini pricepute pentru făcut mulaje”.

reality, like in the case of the traditional metaphor, but they must be perceived as realities in themselves. The discourse is built up entirely by the addition of dazzling images born from each other and proliferating *ad libitum*, in the absence of a semantic progression or of a hierarchy of the signifying units; it can be visualized just like a painting⁴⁰ or like a cinematographic screenplay following the logic of a dream, as it produces the same effect as, for instance, the movies of Buñuel and Dalí (*Un chien andalou* and *L'Âge d'or*). There is almost no difference between the poem quoted above and Trost's "ocular texts" (which pretend to transcribe a series of dreams), since in both cases the narrator relates a succession of hallucinatory events perceived exclusively visually, and which are meant to provoke to the reader a shock analogous with the *Stimmung* described by Giorgio de Chirico in his memories and adopted with axiomatic value by Breton in the famous final phrase of the novel *Nadja*: 'Beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all.'

In the same poetical manner, Gellu Naum wrote short fiction (see, for example, the volume *Medium* published in 1945), a very interesting novel called *Zenobia* (1985), and dramatic plays, such as: *Exact în același timp* [*At Exactly the Same Time*], *Insula* [*The Island*], *Ceasornicăria Taus* [*Taus Watchmaker's*], and *Poate Eleonora* [*Maybe Leonore*], the first published in 1945, and the other three in 1979. The emphasis on derision, black humour, and surprise relates these plays either to the Dadaist farces or to the theater of the absurd. Exploiting the practices of psychic automatism, the texts in question deliberately parody sometimes different current conventions, such as mental clichés (as in Ionesco's plays), typical situations, literary myths, etc. *Insula*, for instance, seems to be an ironical rewriting of Robinson Crusoe's adventures. Yet, beyond the comic situations and puns (very similar to Ionesco's plays on words), one can notice the complete disappearance of both coherence and verisimilitude of the plot. Like in other creations of Naum, the text is built up by the arbitrary addition of new situations and characters, so that either the unity, the logic, the climax of the action, or the syntax of the characters have become pointless. It is clear that such a type of scenic discourse was created on the basic principle that in the surrealist theatre/ poetry everything is allowed.

Another interesting poet, although less prolific than his colleagues, Paul Păun, quitted Romania for good and for all in the early fifties after having published two remarkable volumes, *Plămâmul sălbatec* [*Wild Lung*] (1939) and *Marea palidă* [*Pale Sea*] (1945). Undoubtedly, the most interesting and purely surrealist is his last volume, published in the *Colecția Suprarealistă* [*Surrealist Collection*]. Although it still contains metaphors, the only poem in the book is made of a succession of astonishing visual images of dreamy nature, created on

⁴⁰ Otherwise, the author declared that he began to write poetry after he had seen Brauner's first exhibition in Bucharest; his purpose was then "to write paintings".

the principle of “objective hazard,” in which one can immediately recognize the symbols specific to surrealist imagery – the sea, the desert, corpses, carnivorous plants, butterflies, spiders, birds of prey, castles, ghosts, knives, bottles, etc. –, all of them being in fact unconscious projections of the *libido*. The central theme is love, which is dialectically related to death, so that the images have that “convulsive beauty” prescribed by Breton. The poem begins with a self-characterization of the lyric character in unwonted images suggesting at the same time frenzy and desolation, delirious desire and magical attraction of the nothingness⁴¹:

I wear between my lips the life of an egg
and between my still opened eyelids the algae of the cry,
only the desert knows this terrible rain
passing together with the birds through the bones of my face,
only the desert knows this bitter snow
in each opened hand, in the broken shoulders,
in each mouth of the heart.
I still wear on my fingers the smoke, the knife, and the flower,
the skin of the corpse sweet like the arms of the night,
its forehead of a silk stocking,
the tub filled with waves of leaves
where its hands hang down into the sea.
I don't have a more beautiful suit in the summer nights,
I wear its transparent skin on my shoulders,
with the smile drawn over a liquid mask
like the hair leaned against a rock
I drive your body scattered on the knees of the precipice
and the steps I lose are continued in the shadows of the steps.
I wear now in my hands a burning lamp,
a small ship and a chicken's eye,
mounted on a piece of bread dipped into your blood
I whisper the name of fire I whisper the name of death as slowly
as the snake of tear on the skin full of tears
as slowly as their only shape made in the mouth and
fallen on the hands,
I keep in one hand the shape of the name of fire
and in the other the shape of the name of death,
mounted on a piece of bread dipped into your blood

⁴¹ *translation mine*

I look at the reciprocal burning of these strange objects.⁴² (Păun, 1945, 11-12)

The dialectics Eros-Thanatos can be noticed from the first lines, in the structuring of the signifiers in two main semantic series that generate contrasting isotopies: on one hand, the isotopy/desire/ - ‘life of an egg’, ‘opened hand’, ‘mouth of the heart’, ‘the flower’, ‘arms of the night’, ‘silk stocking’, ‘the tub’, ‘burning lamp’, ‘the name of fire’, etc.; on the other hand, the isotopy/extinction/ - ‘the algae of the cry’, ‘the desert’, ‘terrible rain’, ‘bitter snow’, ‘broken shoulders’, ‘the smoke’, ‘the skin of the body’, ‘waves of leaves’, ‘liquid mask’, ‘body scattered on the knees of the precipice’, ‘the name of death’, etc. Almost each image can be characterized by this ambivalence which perfectly illustrates the Bretonian concept of ‘convulsive beauty’, e. g.: ‘I wear between my lips the life of an egg/ and between my still opened eyelids the algae of the cry’; ‘I still wear on my fingers the smoke, the knife, and the flower./ the skin of the corpse sweet like the arms of the night’; ‘like the hair leaned against a rock/ I drive your body scattered on the knees of the precipice’ etc. Besides, many symbols are ambivalent themselves, e. g.: *the sea, the algae, the hair, the rain, the birds, the knife, the blood*, etc. As the title announces, the leitmotif of the poem is the sea, a symbol of the feminine genital organ, but also a projection of the morbid obsession of returning to the womb. The poetic imagery is dominated by elements belonging to the aquatic world – *the algae, the rain, the sea, the rivers, the lakes, the pool, the tub, the boat, the ships, the flooded room, the flooded city*, etc. – and this preponderance of the symbols of the *descent*, feminine *par excellence*, belonging to the “nocturnal regime of the image” (Gilbert Durand), suggests the subject’s passivity and secret obsession of self-denying. The anguish, considered by Freud to be a psychic trauma caused by the child’s separation from its mother at its birth, is cast over the

⁴² Original text in Romanian: “Port între buze viața unui ou/ și între pleoapele încă deschise algele plânsului./ numai pustiul cunoaște această teribilă ploaie/ trecând odată cu păsările prin oasele feței./ numai pustiul cunoaște această zăpadă amară/ în fiecare palmă deschisă, în umerii rupți./ în fiecare gură a inimii./ Port încă în degete fumul, cuțitul și floarea./ pielea cadavrului dulce ca brațele nopții./ fruntea lui de ciorap de mătase./ baia umplută cu valuri de frunze/ unde mâinile lui atârnă în apele mării.// Nu am costum mai frumos, nopțile vara./ port pielea lui transparentă pe umeri./ cu zâmbetul scos peste o mască lichidă/ asemenea părului rezemat de o stâncă/ plimb corpul tău risipit în genunchii prăpastiei/ și pașii pe care îi pierd se continuă cu umbrele pașilor.// Port acum în mâini o lampă de flăcări./ o corabie mică și un ochi de găină./ urcat pe o pâine muiată în sângele tău/ spun încet numele focului/ spun numele morții atât de încet/ cât șarpele lacrimii pe pielea udă de lacrimi/ atât de încet cât numai forma lor făcută în gură și căzută în mâini./ țin într-o mână forma numelui focului/ și în cealaltă forma numelui morții./ urcat pe o pâine muiată în sângele tău/ privesc cum se ard reciproc aceste ciudate obiecte.”

strange, hallucinatory landscapes, similar to those painted by Chirico, Dali, Ernst, Tanguy, etc., with desolating desert spaces populated only by spectra and corpses, sometimes by old, decaying pieces of furniture, with dark rivers on which strange objects and putrescent organs are floating at random, with empty castles haunted by ghosts, and with flooded rooms in which the poet imagines himself wandering aimlessly, in a perpetual useless waiting⁴³:

And yet between us there's a riddled veil,
there's a wonderful pool
raised from all that falls from us, fumes or butterflies
that continue us, climb on us in an incestuous,
suffocating manner,
we open to the tossing eyes two sclerotic eyelids
and to the trembling hands a field of burning rots.
Between us there's an inflammable veil
made of our flesh dusted by dreams,
it covers lakes and mountains, and a forest made of birds,
it enters, prolonged with a fine lace, the mouth of the wild animals,
it soaks a whole hand into the sex of the woods,
with a strange smile and the knife permanently between the shoulders
and the skin that covers nothing but the distance
where the eyes can't be seen anymore
and the hand led to the eyes
grows and flies silently'.⁴⁴ (Păun, 1945, 13-14)

If expectation is the poet's permanent state, there is a secret barrier that inexorably separates him from his sweetheart (it could be an unconscious fear, like in Paul Delvaux's paintings), a feeling of futility constantly haunting him; and this explains the recurrence of the symbols of aridity, of the "catamorphic" symbols (of the fall), and also of the "nictomorphic" symbols (Gilbert Durand) - *the water, the tears, the hair, the blood, the spiders*, etc. -, like in the following lines: "Hidden so many times,/ once by the plaster bandages hanging down of them,/ once by the swarm of spiders and insects inside these bandages/ and once by my pity, dressed in an executioner, in a corpse,/ between you and the

⁴³ *translation mine*

⁴⁴ Original text in Romanian: "Și totuși între noi e un voal ciuruit,/ e o baltă superbă/ crescută din ceea ce cade din noi, arbori sau fluturi/ care ne continuă, care se urcă pe noi într-un mod incestuos,/ asfixiant,/ deschibochilor care se zbat două pleoape scleroase/ și mâinilor care se clatină un câmp de putregaiuri aprinse.// Între noi e un voal inflamabil/ făcut din carnea noastră prăfuită de vise,/ el acoperă lacuri și munți și o pădure făcută din păsări,/ el intră, prelungit cu o fină dantelă, în gura animalelor sălbatice,/ el moaie o mână întregă în sexul pădurilor,/ cu un zâmbet străin și cuțitul permanent între umeri/ și pielea care nu acoperă nimic decât depărtarea/ unde ochii nu se mai văd/ și mâna dusă la ochi/ crește și zboară-n tăcere."

stretched hands that tremble/ the animals fall to the ground filled with rags,/ oxen and big animals fallen from the heights/ crash between you and my stretched hand”⁴⁵. (Păun, 1945, 14)

Threatened by countless dangers, the poet sees himself passing ‘heavily armed with knives, scissors, and a few immense magnifying glasses’⁴⁶ (*Ibid*, 14) (sexual symbols), while his sweetheart remains far away, ‘absent and drowned in laces’⁴⁷. (*Ibid*) The obsession with erotic failure also appears in the alienation of the objects which populate the spaces of the imagery (which appear in totally unfit contexts), and in the reification of the beings, which are transformed into inert, lifeless things, e. g.: ‘I take off my clothes and go to bed with this corpse puppet’⁴⁸. (*Ibid*) The poem ends with a strong feeling of solitude and desolation⁴⁹:

Now on the field there are many beds
of steel, with their pillows and sheets hanging down in the wind,
everybody’s left
or I have to sleep in all these skeletons.
Behind there’s the smoke,
all around, suffocating, the melted landscape
breathes deeply, stops, breathes,
it’s a battle field
where I’m alone
and where somebody must fall at a precise hour
Surrounded by the haze of the nebulas,
with eyes of rain before dawn,
with breasts of kiss,
with lonely mouth, with hopelessly lonely breasts,
with the hair a wall demolished by volleys of shots,
surrounded by sleep,
with the hip of the cushion of nothingness leaned against the mountains,
loved
and so many times, so many times untouched, lost, found,
look how I pass by you with white lips
a small ant opens in the forehead a large field
and threads of blood spoil your beautifully rummaged suit.

Thus, in the city flooded beyond the big oceans,

⁴⁵ *translation mine*

⁴⁶ “înarmat până-n dinți cu cuțite, cu foarfeci și câteva lupe imense”.

⁴⁷ *translation mine*: “absentă și înecată în dantele”.

⁴⁸ *translation mine*: “mă dezbrac și mă culc cu această păpușe cadavru”.

⁴⁹ *translation mine*

your steps flow silently near a single burning flower,
you move your lips, your lips like two permanently mobile puppets
one of the color of the sky, smelling like a watch, the other
of the color of the land that you leave
absolutely empty of any human presence.⁵⁰ (*Ibid*, 20-21)

A phenomenon vast in scope and of decisive impact on the post-war literature, the Romanian surrealism meant a radical renewal of the poetic sensibility and an essential change of the esthetical paradigm. However, it didn't mean only the settling of a new formula of writing, but also a genuine spiritual revolution on all levels of art, culture, and even of existence. Therefore, its reconsideration at its true value after a long period of official marginalization has become nowadays a real necessity.

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⁵⁰ Original text in Romanian: “Pe câmp se întind acum foarte multe paturi/ de fier și cu pernele, cearceafurile atârând între ele bătute de vânt,/ a plecat toată lumea/ sau eu trebuie să dorm în toate aceste schelete./ La spate e fumul,/ de jur împrejur, sufocant, peisajul topit/ răsuflă adânc, se oprește, răsuflă,/ e un teren de duel/ în care sunt singur/ și unde trebuie să cadă cineva la o oră precisă.// Înconjurată de aburul nebuloaselor,/ cu ochii de ploaia dinaintea dimineții,/ cu sânii de sărut,/ cu gura singură, cu sânii singuri pe lume,/ cu părul un zid dărâmat de salve de gloanțe,/ înconjurată de somn,/ cu șoldul din perna neantului rezemată de munți,/ iubită/ și de atâtea ori pierdută, găsită,/ iată cum trec lângă tine cu buzele albe/ o mică furnică deschide în frunte o largă câmpie/ și ațe de sânge îți strică frumos răvășita ținută.// Așa, în orașul inundat până dincolo de marile oceane,/ pașii tăi curg în tăcere lângă o singură floare în flăcări,/ miști buzele, buzele ca două păpuși perpetuu mobile/ una de culoarea cerului, cu miros de ceasornic, cealaltă/ de culoarea pământului pe care îl lași/ absolut gol de orice prezență umană.”

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FRACTAL PERSPECTIVE IN RE-SHAPING CONTEMPORARY EPISTEMOLOGY. LITERARY EXTENSIONS

Nicoleta IFRIM

‘Dunarea de Jos’ University of Galați
nicodasca@yahoo.com

Abstract: Approaching the topic of a crisis in contemporary epistemology, which becomes gradually more acute in the elaboration of the ontological profile’s relational system with the world, the current study suggests the compensating alternative of the fractal episteme / hermeneutics as a *different mode* of relating with the dynamics of contemporary literary writings. The status of Oneness ‘thrown into the world,’ the strategies of knowing one’s self, as well as the Other, the impact on the plurimorphous space of cultural transaction, the fractal structures of writings are points of interest for the present analysis.

Keywords: paradigm change, fractal hermeneutics, contemporary epistemology, the dynamics of the cultural space

Introduction. The poetics of crisis and the compensating alternative of morphogenetic theories

Contemporary epistemology, in all its aspects, seems to be under the unmediated incidence of the *crisis*, witnessing the conflict between the two dominating paradigms, *techno-science*⁵¹ and the science of morphogenesis. Contemporary society has been diachronically preceded by a long history of the *crisis poetics* (if it is only to mention the battle between Antiquity and Modernity or the inter-war ideological rupture) and it is dichotomically divided between two tensionally-conflicting mentalities. The first is focused on the quantitative value of matter, while the second primarily postulates the ineffable superiority of the mental as generator and user of information. The crisis situation is also determined by the latent conflict between the *uniform* and the *plurimorphous*,

⁵¹ The translation of quotations from the Romanian books belongs to us. The term *techno-science* is proposed by Gilbert Hottois, and it is also used by Bachelard and Gille, who write about ‘technical science’. The concept becomes the key-element of Boutot’s study published in 1997.

between *continuous* and *discontinuous*, *reductionism* and *holism*, which advances, at its basis, two different ontological models: man as concrete, self-sufficient individuality (*homo sapiens*) and man seen as an island of relative stability in a chaotic, dynamic and polyfaceted universe (*homo noeticus*). The conflict between mental and material, which leads to the contemporary epistemological crisis, is re-analysed by the Romanian essayist Florin Munteanu in terms of *cooperation* and *competition*, with direct reference to the two socio-cultural spaces, the East and the West:

The East is the world of those who tend to perceive the *similarities* between things, which leads to a holistic perspective, a polysemantic language specific to the attempt to communicate complex perspectives. The context acquires meaning, and the event is more important than its statistic reproduction. The individual is caught in the attempt to experiment with and understand its inner world, that of ineffable experiences, which cannot be expressed by words – and thus they organize the path to a spiritual world [...] This world could be characterized by means of a reinterpretation of the highly controversial catchphrase: *Believe and DO NOT question! Live, feel and DO NOT analyse*, since the research activity leads to another gate, another road, another world, the Western one [...] The West is the world of those who tend to perceive the *differences* between things, which gradually leads to a structural perspective on Reality. Evolution in this cultural space leads to the appearance of an exact language, free of the context and which intermediates the study of the external world, the Material world. An isolated event has no meaning, unless it is included in a statistical thought. We could associate the West with the following motto: *Don't believe! Do research!* (Munteanu, 1999, 33)

In this context, *the competitive status of the Western type* promotes a techno-analysis of the material and the quantitative, in a precisely structured hierarchy, dominated by obvious relations of strength as far as the human relations are concerned. By comparison, *cooperation of the Oriental type*, which includes *in nuce* the constants of morphological science, presupposes a shift of focus from *action* to *contemplation*, to rediscovering the harmony of the self as integrant part of the harmony of

Nature.

The *epistemological crisis* derives from this ideological and methodological confrontation itself: on the one hand, as Boutot (1997) points out, there is modern science, using a quantitative set of technical instruments which proved incapable of capturing the world of forms' dynamics (it can only mould on the exterior, the quantifiable, the *partes extra partes*); on the other hand, there are the morphological theories that wish to offer a viable alternative for the understanding of our century, especially by supporting the belief that form in itself is a qualitative reality which is not subordinated to the demands of positivist sciences. It can be contemplated, perceived and not measured or quantitatively explained. The moment of crisis is equally well illustrated on a cultural level, where we talk about globalisation, crossing cultural boundaries, multiculturalism, unity in diversity versus localization, preserving national specificity, autochtonization. In this context, literature itself, as a space of cultural communication, can be considered either a closed, self-referential, self-sufficient topos, or a complex fractal space, open to intercultural dynamics.

A natural consequence of this perspective is the configuration of a specific techno-ontology, which raises the problem of the status of human condition. As Prigogine states 'the systematic form borrowed by classic physics, its claim to providing a complete and coherent description of the closed Cosmos, banishes man as inhabitant of the world it describes'. (Prigogine, 1984, 130) *De-personalization* also presupposes a concentration of the means of existence and, clearly, its transformation into a scheme. Contemporary / Postmodern man is a man of the horizontal (Hurduzeu, 2002) who is deprived of the transcendental ideal, being grounded in an oppressive pragmatic consumerism: 'The person – the flesh and blood individual, unrepeatable and without compare – is replaced by an abstraction, the universalized man'. (Hurduzeu, 2003, 107) The current sociological theories of micro-groups re-contextualize the Marxist reductionist idea, according to which the individual is the representative of a social group, his actions being restricted by the multiple determinisms that connect him to his social class and to the material conditions of a certain historical period. Contemporary technocentric universe, a 'flattened, finite and self-referential' world (Ovidiu Hurduzeu's view) no longer provides a viable value system for the construction of a personal identity: 'Man is reduced to the feeble

existence of his (physical and mental) body – a body engaged in a frame subjected to technical rationalization’. (Hurduzeu, 2003, 96) Contemporary circumstances themselves hide ‘the levelling practice’ because, as the Romanian essayist noted,

constructing your identity means no more or less than to adhere to an arbitrary essence – femininity, masculinity, homosexuality, Afro-Americanness. Similar to monist divinity, group identity is what guarantees personal identity. You cannot become fulfilled as a result of a free, dialogic relation with someone from outside the group’. (Hurduzeu, 2003, 106)

According to Hurduzeu, new human prototypes appear, legitimized by contemporary society:

The professional victim or the multicultural activist – in the field of cultural and political life, the manager – from transnational corporations – in economy and finance, the Therapist, in the field of personal life, regulated by law and medicine. All three are Technicians (Hurduzeu, 2003, 96).

Thus, the position of the human condition in the universe needs to be reconsidered, in keeping with Pascal’s words:

The entire visible world is no more than an imperceptible trace in the ample bosom of nature. No theory reflects reality; no matter how hard we might try to go with rational analysis beyond imaginary spaces, we succeed only in obtaining atoms and distancing ourselves from reality. We deal with an infinite sphere, whose centre is everywhere and whose surface is nowhere [...]. Man must return to his natural state and ask: who am I?, not: what is around me?, to understand he lost his way [...]. For, in the end, what is man in nature? Nothingness, by comparison with the infinite, an infinite, by comparison with nothingness, a mediator between nothing and everything. An immense abyss prevents him from inferring his limits; the meaning and the principle of any thing are hidden within an impenetrable secret; man is incapable of seeing the nothingness from which it came and the infinite which swallowed him. (Boutot, 1997, 181)

The theories of morphogenesis concern reality in its structural complexity, operating with essentially non-linear methods, capable of

capturing and understanding the diversity that characterizes the world of forms. The rejection of the technicist and utilitarian approach to nature is illustrated by considering forms on the level of organization where they manifest themselves. Morphologic theories promote the original Aristotelian space (as well as the derived ones: the philosophy of Leibniz, Bergson, Deleuze), only as a starting element to which other elements are attributed, lending them, according to Boutot, a mathematical, neo-Aristotelian character. The Aristotelian man (Boutot, 1997) discovers his identity by contemplating the essences, by inferring the intelligible forms; the primordial impulse of the contemporary man is rendered by his wish to transform reality, living and acting in the concrete world. This epistemological mutation explains the movement of classic physics towards mechanical and quantitative aspects, which, according to Descartes, promoted the image of man as a shaper and possessor of nature (Boutot, 1997); on the contrary, the morphological theories, Aristotelian in essence, claim for *the continuist theory of discontinuities*, as Boutot (1997) defined it.

Being preceded by a long tradition for the idea of *continuum*, the theory of morphogeneses, therefore, shapes a new vision of appropriating existence and it, implicitly, updates a change in the epistemological paradigm. While manifesting a special interest in the intrinsic complexity of *forms*, in their fundamental irregularity which is manifest on every level of the observation, the new theories question the specificity of contemporary sciences, stating that the universe is no longer reduced to a simple set of minuscule material particles in interaction with one another; it consists of objects with a singular form and specific laws. In opposition with the unifying tendency of current sciences, the morphological perspective emphasizes the qualitative diversity of the world in all its guises: the phenomenological discontinuity (catastrophe theory – Thom), the auto-organization of spatial and temporal morphologies (the theory of dissipative structures – Prigogine), the irregularity of the chaotic forms (chaos theory – Ruelle), the intrinsic complexity of the fragmentary (fractal theory – Mandelbrot).⁵²

⁵² As Boutot states, catastrophe theory originates in the work of René Thom, who analyses the succession of forms in specific terms of generic stability – instability. Employing gestalt psychology, the researcher builds mathematical models capable of reflecting morphogeneses, i.e. existence, stability, occurrence and disappearance of forms, in one word ‘the spectacle of nature’. The theory starts from the problem of the

The postulate of ‘unity in diversity’ and the fractal perspective in contemporary epistemology

Fractality comes with a different perspective on shaping the forms of Nature and it starts from the observation that the latter cannot be adequately represented only by means of Euclidian linear geometry. Benoît Mandelbrot even believed that many forms in nature are so irregular and fragmented that, by comparison with Euclid’s geometry, nature has a higher complexity level, as well as a qualitatively different one. The term *fractal* was coined by the above mentioned mathematician

conceptual union of two topological spaces with another one, of continuous deformation, which means, actually, identifying a method of analysis for qualitative leaps. The base principle is catastrophe, associated by Thom to any phenomenological discontinuity and updated when a continuous variation of causes determines a discontinuous variation of effects. The relation between form and matter is no longer receives a unilateral interpretation, in the sense that form appears only within the context of a perfectly regulated and continuous matter. By the contrary, form, seen as morphology, is determined by a discontinuity in the qualitative properties of the matter. ‘What is inherent to form is the fact that it expresses itself by a discontinuity of the environment.’ (Thom apud Boutot, *ibidem.*, 24) The theory has interdisciplinary applications in the so-called ‘un-formalizable fields’ by means of traditional mathematical methods such as psychology, ethology etc.

Ilya Prigogine’s theory of dissipative structures deals with ‘collaborative processes’ (Alain Boutot), namely the phenomena of spontaneous spatial and temporal auto-organization of identical elements within a system constituted of a large number of entities and subjected to certain specific external constraints. The dissipative structures modify an initial homogeneous state, one which is not spatially or temporally differentiated, into a heterogeneous, perfectly differentiated one. Besides the above mentioned principle of form’s independence in relation to the substrate, a second characteristic of dissipative structures is the holist principle, which ensures the inter-relational coherence of the system. Its phenomenological specificity is triggered by global constraints imposed by the environment and not by the local state of the elements which constitute the system.

Chaos theory (the term is used for the first time in the 60s by James Yorke who also gave it a mathematical foundation) is formulated by David Ruelle in 1971 and it tries to provide a scientific explanation for irregular forms and chaotic processes in nature (for example, the trajectory of cigarette smoke, of a falling leaf, the chaotic motions in atmosphere or the trail left by a plane in motion). The notion of ‘strange attractor’ comes to solve the problem of non-linear disturbances. A persuasive example is the Lorenz attractor, labelled as the ‘butterfly effect’, which illustrates the sensitive dependence on the initial conditions. In metaphorical terms, its behaviour can be compared to the flapping of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil (the minimal change in initial conditions) provoking a catastrophic tornado in Texas. The detailed description of all these new theories is proposed by Boutot’s study.

in 1975; etymologically, *fractal* comes from the Latin *fractus*, derived from the verb *frangere* (to break, to tear to pieces, to crush). According to Mandelbrot, ‘fractal means fragmented, fractioned, irregular, interrupted. In general, fractal theory is a theory of the fractured, of the crushed, of the granular and dissemination, of porosity.’ (Boutot, 1997, 26) Mandelbrot developed his theory in the 60s and the first synthetic presentation of this theory appears in the essay *Les Objets fractals*, published in 1975 and expanded in 1982 in *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. The mathematician starts from the premise that the language of Nature is not that of linear Euclidian geometry: Earth, Moon, Sky, Atmosphere and Ocean, familiar objects after all, are too irregular to invariably fall under the heading of classic geometry. They are seen as systems, ‘in the sense that they are composed of several, distinctive parts, articulated together, the fractal dimension describing an aspect of this law of articulation.’ (Mandelbrot, 1998, 24) Subsequently, Alain Boutot (1997) will submit the following structuring characteristics of the fractal set: it has a fine structure, with details on every scale of observation; it is too irregular to be described in the language of Euclidian geometry, both locally and globally; it is a self-similar structure (it displays internal homothetia): the part is an analogon of the whole; its fractal structure is larger than the topological one – this is a number which quantifies the degree of irregularity and fragmentation of a geometrical structure or of an object in nature; it is defined by simple, recursive rules.

Particularly interesting are the effects that fractal theory has on the comprehension of existence, postulating discontinuity as source for infinitely diverse behaviours. From this perspective of the *paradigm change*, the contemporary scientific instrument is capable to capture only the linear appearance of the world of forms, registering only the material, the quantitative, the exteriority and the calculable. By the contrary, the fractal perspective favours the *primacy of spiritual contemplation*, since the form of a thing is a reality qualitatively perceptible and marked by a permanent dynamism. Thus, the fractal sight, moving regressively from detail to detail, on an increasingly larger scale, does not lead to an increase of simplicity to the point of identifying the ultimate invariable; rather, it determines an implicit increase of complexity. We are thinking here of the fractal *veridical illusion*, which ‘seems to invite us to believe that every corner of the universe, no matter how small, encloses within it a new universe, at least as complex as the previous.’ (Boutot, 1997, 232)

Starting from this reversal of the traditional major-minor relation, specific fractal ontology is also born, which rests with the status of man and his connections to the world. The human subject is no longer strictly subordinated to the oppressive Centre; the *FracMan* (Dick Oliver) no longer searches for his identity by relating to the exterior; he finds himself in his Self by means of a perpetual implosion. Abolishing the notion of centre results in the institution of a fractal structure apparently out of control which releases the infinite game of meanings. The break with the centre also presupposes the acute retrieval of the fragment and the detail, which become nodal points in the plunge into another, similar game, situated, however, on a secondary level of being. The complexity of the fractal universe does not concern only the phenomenology of space; it also concerns the one of time. Being hostile to any determinist form, the fractal perspective annuls linear temporal chronology: instead of reducing the temporality of a system to the development of the latencies involved in its initial state, it considers evolution as a succession of heterogeneous states qualitatively different from one another, generically subordinated to an *intimate, relational time*. (Prigogine, Stengers, 1984) The latter becomes a carrier of differences, instead of determining the eternal repetition of identical things. Thus, the state of a fractal system at any given moment is not contained (not even implicitly) in its previous state: the difference between the two consists of a qualitative leap generated, first of all, by the recurrence of the structuring laws applied to another one of the system's levels of being. We speak, therefore, of the spatialization of time, of *chronos* become objective property of *topos*, of relational time corresponding to the changes in the internal structure of the fractal system. Nature itself seems to reclaim its fundamental autonomy by cancelling the traditional conditioning between the known object and the knowing subject. Accordingly, Prigogine stated that morphological theories (especially fractal theory – emphasis ours) speak about the world

without going through the Kantian courthouse, without giving centre position [...] to the human subject defined by means of his individual categories, without submitting its statements to the criteria that a certain subject can, legitimately, devise. (Prigogine, 1984, 387)

Anthropocentrism and subjectivism, as patterns of focalising cognition, lose their ideative consistency, becoming non-functional: the human

being finds itself once more irreversibly integrated into Nature, holding neither the status of supreme authority, nor that of ultimate goal. For Prigogine (1984), man and, in general, all living things are no more than islands of relative stability localized in an unpredictable, complex, more or less chaotic universe. The internal structures of this new world are the forms, individualized 'qualities', which are not secondary phenomena occurring on the surface of things. Instead, they become integrated in the essence of being.

Consequently, fractal theory seems to be twice innovative: firstly, due to its matter of study – the world of forms, and, secondly, due to the method chosen – structural, qualitative and non-reductive, which advances a new philosophy of existence, emerging into the newly-occurred approach on cultural interferences as rhizomatic and polymorphous (following Deleuze's and Guattari's philosophical approaches).

Elements of the literary work's fractal hermeneutics and the retrieval of cultural polymorphism

The above mentioned relation between literature and fractality takes the specific form of a cognition mechanism, synthetic mode of the signifying plurality named existence. The fractality of the literary captures the complexity of *ontos* and *cosmos* under its various existential guises, converging towards the perspective of the contemplative sight's original orientation. The categories of the literary: time, space, self are readjusted within a new fractal literary paradigm. Accordingly, time becomes relational, not successorial, recalling Bergsonian duration.

Temporal *infiniteness*⁵³ (Levinas, 1999) of the fractal kind no longer rests under the sign of determination; it develops as the choice space of fracture. Time builds its profile involutively, fragmentation acting regressively from one level to another, which does not mean reduction to temporal elementarity; it means resurrecting the time unit as morphogenetic fragment amplifiable towards implosive complexities. Space, in its turn, abolishes the traditional features of linearity and succession, being definable by the fractal concept of the *multiple ensemble*. Space phenomenology in literature derives from concretizing the geometry of ideal fractal objects; rather than being an entity which inserts itself into the world as in a pre-existing material frame, the subject

⁵³ The term is used by Emmanuel Lévinas in *Totalitate și infinit. Eseu despre exterioritate*, Iași, Polirom, 1999.

operates the insertion itself according to a rule of qualitative arrangement. Thus, we are faced with the configuration of a different type of space, intensively relational, which replaces the traditional extensively ordered topos. The creation of the new topos calls for two fundamental attitudes of the literary self, *availability* and *dis-position*, which are discussed by Ciprian Mihali (2001) in his analysis of Jan Patočka's phenomenology:

Availability as an attitude marked by openness towards and unconditional acceptance of what we receive from the world, by confrontation with the challenges thrown by the events of the world; disposition, which can also be understood as dis-position, the prefix standing here for that which spreads, disseminates. In the world we are among things, they are spread around us and we are ourselves situated in contact with them and spread among them. An original spread of this kind makes it impossible for the world to be given as uniformity of a surface or of a recipient, but rather as a network, in which the terms of the relation and the relation among them presuppose each other and give themselves simultaneously. (Mihali, 2001, 14-5)

Fractally experienced space is characterised by continuous production, by qualitative contents, by experience and personalizing experiment. Within this context, the status of the fractal self in literature is re-debatable in the complementary terms of *holism* and *fragmentarism*. The fractal self's hermeneutic role, its contemplative stance to the world's morphological meanings in its attempt to decipher the interior and the exterior universe becomes concrete due to a plurimorphous discourse within which all words become fractal images of the Real. Its cognitive act excludes norm, category, singularity, being mostly characterized by the seduction of the self's openness to the diversity of forms with which it establishes inter-relations. Within the contemporary cultural space, the self entails an individualistic structure, characterized by an irreconcilable break with the Other and with the Cosmos. The *individuation factor* (Durkheim) generates the caesura, the prevalent frame for the manifestation of the self's dominance seen as a means to differentiate, to make a distinction, which is, after all, a specific trait of Western dualist mentality. The paradigm *anima mundi* is replaced by the immanentist perspective on human existence, which subordinates the self to a *here*

and *now* perceived as force centres. The awareness of alterity as difference produces anguish and uncertainty in the contemporary self, which leads to the necessary escape from one's self and to a grounding in a quotidian which can only offer the illusion of reclaiming identity. Emptied of ontological mysteries, human nature becomes de-sacralized, while contingency is the only acknowledged reality.

However, by adopting a fractal perspective on the cultural-ontological dimension the connection self-cosmos is re-established, reconstructing a singular world

where phenomena are not pinpointed, where time does not establish a strict order of succession for events and existences, where what ceased to be can still exist, where death does not stop a being from existing and from receding into other beings, under the condition that some similarities exist between them.⁵⁴ (Le Breton, 2002, 61-2)

The fractal self reconstructs the *holistic* dimension of existence, integrating its presence in a fluid *continuum*, while human essence is similar to the consistency of cosmos and nature. The individualistic mode of possession (the fall within the body) is no longer co-substantial to it, since the self is rather a knot of relationships than an individual. The notion of 'person' becomes plural once more, being rather synonymous with the metaphorical 'grain of the universe'. Thus, the self reclaims another type of identity, one totally different from the current ontological models which see man as autonomous universe, turned onto itself. The relational nature of the fractal self brings into discussion the complementary notion of *fragmentarism*, seen as manner of ontological organization: the interiority of the *Fracman* (Dick Oliver) is an immense puzzle of fragments implosively updated, as the ontological detail regressively discovers another, as complex as the previous one. The relativity and indeterminacy of the first decades of the modernist episteme or the dispersion, fractality and fragmentarism of the postmodern moments towards the end of the century initiate new perspectives on the self in literature: its nature is reconsidered from the perspective of a discontinuous space-time *continuum* which marks fictional decentring, the character acknowledges fragmentary identity and

⁵⁴ Lucien Febvre's statement refers to the Renaissance man; however, it comes surprisingly close to the meaning of 'The New Philosophy of Nature' – *apud* David Le Breton, *Antropologia corpului și modernitatea*, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2002, pp.61-62

it initiates the process of regaining a sense of wholeness.

On the other hand, the relation between literature and fractal theory is problematic, as it questions the viability of certain critical invariants, already pronounced on the literary domain and, with time, become genuine critical preconceptions. In what follows, we shall try to identify these aspects, and then reconsider them through the lens of the fractal episteme. We start from the premise that a literary work, which is another form generated by the principle of complexity and structural diversity, can be morphogenetically interpreted as a fractal pattern which obeys the specific compositional rules, as defined by Mandelbrot's theory. The five fractal principles (the primacy of detail, non-linearity, the primacy of contemplation, internal homothetia and fractal dimension) find their suggestive expressions and aspects in the field of literature, which pleads for a fractal hermeneutics of the literary.

Approaching literature as a fractal universe, we do not intend to capture the mathematical exactness of the equations which describe this dimension; rather, we intend to emphasize the aesthetic possibilities of the literary fractal space, especially its visual charge which can be perceived by any reader-spectator. In comparison with other reception methods of the literary text, operating with atomary strategies and criteria which lead to a reduction of the imaginary's constants to a minimal number of textual invariants, the fractal approach emphasizes the dynamic complexity of the cultural-creative perspective, no longer being subordinated to a reductionist criterion of analysis. The 'celebration of diversity', to use Boutot's terms (1997), becomes, thus, the main stated purpose of fractal hermeneutics, which increases, rather than decreases, the polyvalence of the imaginary and the multiple poetic hypostases sharing the essence of the protean perspective. These nuclei for the organization of the imaginary cancel the philosophical principle of *identity* as postulated by Émile Meyerson, since, any analytical attempt to interpret the data of reality starts from the premise of the latter's homogeneity, the local experiment revealing a general truth. This viewpoint, which is common to contemporary theories on the reception of the text-cultural product, as well as to the techno-science's paradigm, initiated a paradoxical contestation of reality's complexity and the 'transformation in favour of a cognizable world, governed by a limited number of simple and immutable laws'. (Prigogine, 1984, 210) Thus, the different strategies of entering the literary text ultimately focused on the

discovery (beyond the apparent transformations in the poetic vision) of hidden identities dissimulated in fiction, in other words, on revealing the static nuclei within the work. Hence, the atomism of the investigation methods builds the arrangements of some ideative particles manifesting identically in the space of creation. The resulting effect consists of an implicit tendency to homogenize and unify the signifying polyvalence of the work become an invariable 'pseudo-reality', fact stated by Meyerson (quoted in Boutot) in his attempt to characterize the evolution of science in the 20th century:

By yielding to these two tendencies (time and space identification), we managed, from theory to theory and from identification to identification, to make the world disappear. At first, we explained – or rather, we negated – motion, identifying the antecedent with continuation, and the motion of the universe stopped. What we have left is a space filled with objects. We built the bodies in space, we identified them with space, and the bodies also disappeared. (Boutot, 1997, 211-2)

In other words, the fractal approach to literature starts from the premise that any literary work is structured as a dynamic space of imagistic representation which follows the five principles of fractal self-assembly identified by Mandelbrot in his study on the forms of Nature. Overcoming the static regularity of the reductionist interpreting methods, the new perspective employs the analytical process to the purpose of creating a contemplative descriptivism which no longer explicitates the interior modulations of the literary imaginary; instead, it emphasize them so as to capture the intrinsic diversity in the dynamics of forms. The work, thus, becomes a projection of Mandelbrotian Nature, complex in the multiplicity of its aspects, generating an intrinsic solidarity between cosmos and anthropos; the holographic specificity of fractality entails an interior complementarity between local and global, self and entirety, moment and eternity.

Therefore, the literary work configures a fractal pattern of structuring the imaginary, where holism complements fragmentarism, the part being a synthesizing analogon of the whole and providing interpreting possibilities by means of the detail localized on every level of the critical observation scale.

a. The primacy of the detail and the principle of form autonomy in connection with the substrate

The fractal hermeneutics of the literary work presupposes the observation of the text's interior modulations from the perspective of the revealing detail's omnipresence on the different levels of the structure. The signifying plurality of the details generates, thus, the textual complexity at the level of form, as well as image, so that the text becomes a fractal 'free diversity', which enhances the meanings of the specific perspective by qualitatively differentiating them in terms of *detail*, rather than by means of dominant thematic units. *The fractal interpretative method which promotes a regressive passage from detail to detail*, on an increasingly larger scale, does not lead to an increase in simplicity to the point of identifying the final and invariable textual signifier; instead, it leads to an implicit increase in complexity. We refer here to the fractal *veridical illusion* which 'seems to invite us to believe that every corner of the universe, no matter how small, encloses in it a new universe, at least as complex as the previous'. (Boutot, 1997, 232) Fractality as a method of entering the text no longer employs a reduction to the elementary, since it irreversibly opposes the current philosophy which, according to René Thom, 'makes the analysis of a system through its irreducible components the first step to be taken by the researcher in the process of revealing the nature of the system'. (Boutot, 1997, 57)

b. Non-linearity: fragmentarity and holism

The fractal principle of non-linearity institutes a specific process of exploration within the dynamic world of forms, in contrast with the positivist techno-scientific ideology which perceived the universe as a static continuum with a perfect hierarchy. The change of paradigm determines a reconsideration of the fragment as generic source of discontinuity, as

after half a century, the eruption of *non-linearity* brought a profound change in physics, one which can be compared with the one brought by the quantum revolution or by relativity, revolutions which marked the beginning of the 20th century. Among the numerous consequences of this revolution, one of the most important is the progressive elaboration of a description of Nature in which the separation between the living core and the inert matter is abandoned; this is mostly the result of taking into account non-linearities, sources of some infinitely diverse

behaviours. (Boutot, 1997, 10)

Reconstructing the gestallean distinction between form (discontinuity, complex, fragmentary) and matter (continuity, linear, unitary), fractal philosophy operates with degrees of irregularity and fragmentation occurring in a geometrical structure or in that of an object in nature.

From this perspective, non-linearity is directly related to the re-dynamization of the complexity which contradicts Descartes' rule on the ordered-progressive passage from simple to complex. Moreover, morphologic theories (especially David Ruelle's theory of the strange attractors and Mandelbrot's fractal theory) bring back into discussion the positivist tenet of complexity, which used to be considered an accidental aspect, extrinsic to the system. In other words, in the 'traditional' perspective a system adopts an irregular, discontinuous behaviour when its homogeneous evolution is compromise by the action of the external environment. However, fractal theories promote the principle of substrate-form autonomy, due to which complexity becomes an intrinsic systemic quality. The infinite fragmentary division, i.e. the generative mechanism of the fractals, entails a discontinuous passage from one level to another, which results in a progressive increase in complexity. The metaphoric image of this procedure can be found in Pascal's statement, as quoted by Boutot. Let us presuppose that man were to look for the finest details in the known things. That he would see an acarian – *Acarus Ciro*, for example – in its incomparably smaller parts than its minuscule body: legs with articulations, veins spread across those tiny legs, blood in the veins, humours in the blood, drops in the humours, vapours in the humours; so that afterwards, fragmenting then further, to the limit of his imagination, to imagine a final part, which will make the subject of this speech; he would probably think that he found the smallest particle in the universe. I want to make him see there a new abyss. I want to describe to him more than the visible universe, namely, the immensity which is enclosed in that infinitesimal atom. I want him to discover the animals and, lastly, acarians, where he will distinguish the same things as in the case of those from whom we started. (Boutot, 1997, 232)

**c. The primacy of contemplation and the qualitative spaces:
apophysis as inadequacy of the observed – observer relation or
the paradox of the 'participation without exhaustion'**

Essentially, fractal theory supports the status of the contemplative observer, who no longer aspires to achieve a unitary explanation of

reality, to obtain a supreme truth which would prove its pragmatic self-sufficiency in the analysis of phenomena; by the contrary, it engages into a *description* of the forms of the universe, in which it is integrated as component. Thus, anthropocentrism allows for cosmocentrism, the contemplating self integrating itself in the dynamics of the forms of the real from which it no longer detaches itself deliberately. Starting from the Mandelbrotian definition of fractals as ideal objects which display describable details on any level of analysis, while evading reductionist analyses, the fractal manner of shaping reality demands a retrieval of the world's *qualitative diversity*. As stated by René Thom

we cannot hope *a priori* to integrate all local patterns into a global structure. If it were truly possible to integrate all local diagrams into an immense synthesis, man would be entitled to state that he understands the *ultimate nature of reality*, as he would possess the best global model; I, for one, believe that such a claim is much too exaggerate. On all probability, the age of the great cosmic syntheses has ended, together with the general relativity and it would be useless to try and revive it (Boutot, 1997, 214)

The shaping force of contemplative apophasis, which is characteristic to fractality due to the progressive plunge into the reiterating infinity defining the birth of fractal forms, transfigures the quantitative/ the material into a qualitative generic topos, obtaining a spatial configuration equivalent to the ensemble produced by qualitative features, in other words, a *mundus fractalus*. It is the hypostasis of the contemplating self, who, by transcending the affirmative categories of the real, immerses itself into a *docta ignorantia*, trying to discover the increasingly diversified forms of reality, perceived qualitatively this time. Ego-centrism, as authority point for the perspective of the imaginary, loses its essence as the existential universe (as observed) irretrievably assimilates the self (the observer) who feels now integrated in the uncontainable world, to whose morpho-genesis it participates unconditionally. From a fractal viewpoint, this co-participation self - universe displays three operating qualitative coordinates: the *continuous qualitative analogy* ⁵⁵(the qualitatively measurable spaces project

⁵⁵ As Boutot puts it, ancient philosophers mathematically distinguish between *discontinuous analogy* (where the four terms involved are different: $A/B=C/D$) and

themselves onto infinite and limitless realities), *orientation* – which brings homothetic order to the fractal genesis on the punctual-global coordinate – and the *infinite expansion*, materialized in non-finalization. Therefore, we face an apophatically-qualifying perspective, which differentiates the fractal components, occurring on different levels of observation, a ‘reversed perspective’ which emphasizes the meaning structures of the cultural imaginary, catching the contemplative eye of a self towards a trans-visual horizon, one of iconic essences capable of shaping reality poetically.

If the *analogical* relations determine the qualitative configuration of the figurative forms of the imaginary in connection with the real quantitative objects, the other two dimensions of the co-participatory process between self and universe, *orientation* and *infinite expansion*, individualize the apophatic perspective of the culturally-creative vision (in the sense of a deep incursion into the mystery of the world which can no longer be developed by means of rational-egocentric methods). The structuring pattern seems to be that of the *ascending cascade*, mentioned by Mandelbrot when discussing cosmogony from a fractal viewpoint and stating that the genesis of the universe can be compared to a fractal mechanism of ‘successive agglutinations’ in increasingly larger parts. Reported to the cultural imaginary, the Mandelbrotean model synthesizes the latter’s apophatic coordinate of vision itself, which builds fictional universes by ‘plunging’ (katabasis) in the ‘darkness’ of the world, descending from one existential level to another, which has a paradoxical effect of ‘placement into form’ (anabasis). The more contemplation moved regressively from detail to detail, the more obscured facets of the universe reveal themselves, ‘growing’ into a fractal complexity. The descension – ascension dynamics enters thus under the sign of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, being co-substantial to the one defined by fractal theory as *action* and *potentiality*⁵⁶. The concept of *action* designates the tendency to discover the *realized* fractal facets, by regressive fragmentation, on increasingly lower levels of existence, which finds fulfilment by complementarity in the ascensional, *potential* construction of the un-limitable fractal form, which does not allow a

continuous analogy (where the two median terms are equal: $A/B=B/C$), the latter being employed in modern times by the Mandelbrotean theory.

⁵⁶ Boutot states that fractal theorists employ these two concepts which originate in Aristotelian physics.

definitive closure, and being, therefore, assimilable to the *unrealized*. While debating on the specificity of the *realized/ unrealized* categories, Ovidiu Hurduzeu captures their essence in what we believe to be several suggestive, key-statements so as to define the fractal mechanism of the *ascending cascade*: the *Realized* expresses ‘the desire to make, to produce and to transpose everything into an achievement’; the *unrealized* still bears within itself the nostalgia of realization; however, it is one of maximalist realization, within another regimen of existence – an impossible realization under the conditions of an objectified reality [...]. While being a sum of paradoxes and contradictions, the unrealized is structuring and not a structure. It operates like the wave washing the beach – a perpetual to-and-fro of modulations, losses and retrievals (Hurduzeu, 2003, 82-3)

d. Internal homothetia and the nuclei of self-similarity

The principle of the internal homothetia is defined by Mandelbrotian theory in terms of self-similarity of the fractal form, within which the part is a succeeding image of the whole, synthesizing and reiterating all the characteristic structuring elements of the global fractal form.

This observation, made within the frame of the descriptive process focused on the gulf/peninsula as natural objects generates, according to the Mandelbrotian theory, the generalized principle of the fractal figure’s homothetia, essential element for the definition of the fractal mechanism. It is not only a matter of the simple symmetrical reflection of the whole in the fragment; it concerns the ‘growth’ of the fractal model with every successive fragmentation of its parts, in an intensive direction which moves regressively from level to level, while recuperating with each “placement into form” the generic specificity of the original wholeness. The principle of self-similarity, which, according to Mandelbrot, seems to stand at the basis of all patterns of being, real or ideal, determines Peter Barse to debate on the ‘fractal revolution’, in the sense that the morphogenetic paradigm of the 20th century suggests a radical change of perspective, which eludes the previous images of the techno-science’s autotelic Centre, promoting, in exchange, the ‘growth’ in the complexity of forms by calling on the similar-repetitive fragmentation of the components. In this context of ideas, the literary creation can be seen as a complex fractal, which allows for the principle of internal homothetia to be the organizing thread of the artistic imaginary, both from the perspective of the open dynamics of the textual

variants ‘growing’ one from another in a plurimorphous internal genesis, as well as from the perspective of the homothetic co-substantiality of the intra-textual views which ensure the coherence of the global meaning. Accordingly, with the interpretation of each text, the reader goes deeper into an analytical process actively-restoring the unity of vision, in other words, he follows a retrospective path along which he discovers, in each textual projection, a homothetical manifestation of the original identity of the culturally-creative thought. Such an approach demands a reconsideration of the instruments for entering the text, since ‘the world’ of the work is no longer assimilable as static, linear projection, reducible due to its periodicity of meaning to a finite number of invariants; by the contrary, from a fractal viewpoint, the work surprises by the dynamism of the forms, by the complexity of a homothetic nature.

e.The fractal dimension. Time and space – interior dimensions: fractal complexity and the negation of the chrono-spatial quantitative

In Mandelbrot’s definition of the fractal, the fractal dimension has a very important place, being one of the main characteristics of any fractal object. In the Mandelbrotean acceptance, this dimension represents a number quantifying the degree of irregularity and fragmentation characterizing a geometrical structure of an object in nature, a number which, in the case of Euclidian geometrical objects, consists in their usual dimension. (Mandelbrot, Benoît, 1998, 6)

Making reference, in this context, to the Hausdorff-Bezicovici dimension, to the Minkowski – Bouligand dimension or to the homothetical one – their primary function being that of mathematically quantifying irregularity – the theorizer of the fractals suggests that, actually, these algorithmic variants of the fractal dimension reflect a dimensional discrepancy: a fractal is, by definition, a set whose dimension is strictly superior to the topological one. This yields a particularly relevant aspect for our interpretation, namely that this fractal property necessarily entails the qualitative transposition, in the sense that the chrono-topological data of the real objects is transfigured qualitatively within the process of fractal moulding. Therefore, the Mandelbrotean perspective brings into discussion the revalorization of the temporal and spatial categories, which are no longer viewed in terms of logic and linearity; they are received by intensive transposition, which

confers upon them the status of complex *continuum*, plurimorphously dimensioned. For the modern ‘techno-science’, time plays no part in the evolution of dynamic systems, being nothing more than an external parameter.

The nature of classic dynamics is an indifferent nature, which places the equality sign between all states, a nature without relief, flat and homogeneous, the nightmare of a universal lack of importance. The time of this physics is the frame for the progressive course of an eternal law, valid for any state of the world. (Boutot, 1997, 240)

The fractal perspective modifies this state of facts, rediscovering time by means of the *intensive reality of change* and by considering evolution as a succession of heterogeneous states, different among them in terms of quality. Fractal time has a relational nature, differentiating between a variety of interconnected times with different rhythms, thus assuming an ontological determination, an essential property of reality. In other words, ‘you need to describe the road covered by the system, you need to enumerate the forks encountered and the succession of the fluctuations which determined the real history among so many possible histories’. (Prigogine, 1984, 246) Therefore, we could say that the temporality of fractal forms, instead of being superficial and accidental, is profound and essential, since the mechanisms of the Mandelbrotian organization entail a passage through different temporal-qualitative states, which can no longer be deterministically deduced from one another. The same qualitative transcendence can be noticed in the case of space. The latter, in its turn, annuls the classic features of linearity and succession, and it can be defined by the fractal concept of the *multiple ensemble*. The phenomenology of space now results from the materialization of the geometry of the ideal fractal objects; the subject is not an entity which infiltrates the world as if it were a pre-existing material frame, the former operates the insertion on its own, according to a rule of qualitative arrangement. A different type of space is, thus, configured, one which is relational-intensive and which replaces the traditional ordered-extensive topos. The creation of a new topos requires two fundamental attitudes, which were mentioned above, *availability* and *dis-position*, mentioned by Ciprian Mihali in his analysis of Jan Patočka’s phenomenology: availability as openness and acknowledgement of the world and dis-position as spatial mark of the dissemination of the self in the

objectiveness of the world. Space experienced in a fractal manner is characterized by continuous production, by qualitative contents, by experience and by the personalizing experiment. Consequently, the fractal dimension – which determines at the level of any literary work a transposition of the chrono-spatial coordinates in a qualitative register which determines the loss of their strictly quantifiable topological features – generates, on the level of the culturally-creative vision, a specific perspective which we express in terms of “temporal ubiquity” and “spatial simultaneity.”

Following the footsteps of the fractal episteme, the Romanian postmodern novels overtly practise the game relating Image of the World to textual ideology, playing ‘with regular conventions, the alternation of registers and narrative tones, documentarism, explosive fantasy, textual bricolage’ (Cornea, 1999, 550), all of them re-reading *cosmos* and *ontos* in an ever re-written self-similar narrative. Such Romanian novels as those of Mircea Nedelciu, Stefan Agopian or Gheorghe Crăciun do away with the ‘old-fashioned’ causality and determination, replacing them with

local, fragmentary histories, histories of extraliterary contexts, biographies, etc. The crisis of consensus, caused by the unraveling of unitary criteria of judgment, together with the promotion of communally confined approaches and tastes, lead to an intensification of the canonical battle’.
(Cornea, 1999, 550)

The narrative “broken glass”- of fractal extraction - represents the key-concept in M.Nedelciu’s *Tratament fabulatoriu*, a postmodern metafictional discourse, which gathers different experimental Images of Text – as – Texts in its attempt to re-write the realistic type of prose. Focused on as a literary experiment, the Romanian novel displays programmatic features by playing with the narrative strategies to build up an imaginary construct of utopian orientation. It functions as a compensatory universe by means of which Text eludes reality, transgressing it up to reaching the shelter-topoi protecting the human condition. Luca, the main character, escapes reality to Text, a protecting plurimorphous space for both writer and reader. The game of multiple perspectives points out the representation of World as Text, converting postmodern ideology into a various faceted – homothetic - Image of reality, without pushing up the textual limits. “Randomization” covertly directs the fictional flux as the reader himself functions as character in a

text that imperiously asks for his active involvement: the reader acquires authorial values emerging out of the used participative textual strategies such as parody, intertextuality, game, meta-discourse and self-reference. It is just one example of how image ideology and ideology image fractally relate to each other within the textual intricacies. Nevertheless, the new scientific theories become the roots of writing, radically changing the act of reading too. David Porush, in his “Prigogine and Postmodernism’s Roadshow” says that ‘the literary text is best viewed as the result of the intersection of the author’s mind with a very peculiar technology (a sort of antimechanistic technology) designed in its most advanced forms to capture the evanescent movements and fluctuations of the mind itself. (...) It illustrates how literature generally may act as a self-organizing system, growing willy nilly through bifurcation points towards higher orders of systematic organisation. Far from taking the fun out of reading, this growth towards structure is thrilling and mysterious, since the reader is a participant, urging the novel onward in its headlong rush towards revelation’ (1991, 76). If we look upon postmodern texts as ever *self-emerging* fictions, then we must discuss about their self-organizing function used to re-read and re-write reality. Metafictional in nature, the postmodern discourse endows the fictionalised worlds with fragmented images overtly reflecting their inner structure and aesthetic identity. The quest for truth eludes the phenomenal spaces to enter the epistemological ones, pointing our at least four main features: nonlinearity, self-reflexivity, irreversibility and self-organization. Peter Stoicheff views the text as *dissipative system*, especially the postmodern ones:

A fiction text contains many strategies for metamorphosing the apparent chaos or randomness of phenomenal reality into an order comprehensible to its reader. Usually, a text employs these strategies covertly and thereby sustains the illusion that it does not mediate between reader and world, but opens a neutral window onto that world for the reader. As a consequence, the strategies recede beneath the surface of the text’s significant intensions, to counsel calmly and imperceptibly the reader’s impression of the text’s neutrality as the reading process continues, maintaining what Roland Barthes sceptically terms ‘the totalitarian ideology of the referent’. (Stoicheff, 1991, 85-6)

Disregarding the hierarchies of meaning, the postmodern self-reflexive discourse turns into a labyrinth texture aiming at exposing both the covert structures that allow fiction to masquerade as reality and the processes of manufacturing illusion by revealing its artifice. The continuous game of interpretation and deconstruction is sustained by the metafictional *mise-en-abyme*, creating a pattern that stretches not toward meaning, but around it. In its turn, praxis of significance through which the old unitary Image on world brakes into multiple fragmented glasses ever mirroring themselves. As Peter Stoicheff notices,

our worldly narratives, through which we construct what we think of as reality, are themselves a tissue of previous narrative texts with which they blend and clash, and which we choose to interpret in various ways. [...] A Euclidean narrative produces a Euclidean understanding of a Euclidean world. The metafictional narrative of chaos produces a metafictional understanding of a metafictional or chaotic world. The difference is that in the latter the process of self-interrogation is built into the narrative, freeing it from the tautological determinism that inhabits earlier narratives. (Stoicheff, 1991, 95)

Following Stephanie Sieburth's approach on Clarín's *La Regenta*, Elisabeth Sánchez states that 'the *mise en abyme*, as defined by Dällenbach and reinforced by the specular metaphor, appears to denote the infinite return of identical forms; in this formal regularity it seems to be more comparable to such bizarre human inventions as the Koch curve or the Menger sponge (both fractal ancestors). (Sanchez, 1992, 251-6) Thus,

all elements in the novel are part of a network of relations and not entities complete in themselves. Characters are shown to be merely particular instances of recurring patterns, while the text can be seen to break up into mutually reflecting segments which, like the characters, participate in an interrelated whole. I realize, of course, that all literary texts are networks of relations, but [...] *La Regenta* invites us to become aware of its reflexive structure as well as of the relational nature of its characters (Sanchez, 1996, 6)

In the same critic's view, Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* is based on a

fractal pattern also:

In such a novel as *Pedro Páramo*, where boundaries dissolve and imagined wholes break up into fragments that echo each other and one another without ever quite connecting (except, perhaps, in the mind of the reader), the notion of fractal spaces - spaces that lie in the interstices of our thought categories - is made to order. We might say that Rulfo has produced an artistic object that looks very much like a fractal in its unwieldy surface structure, and that he has intentionally increased the complexity of his work by first breaking the story into bits and pieces, which in turn may contain smaller, self-similar bits and pieces, and then ordering the segments in such a manner that they reveal much more about his story, and in fewer words, than a traditional sequential ordering would. Whereas it is possible to view the novel as a mosaic to be pieced together, or as a broken mirror, I prefer the metaphor of the fractal, precisely because it brings the idea of the mirror into play by inviting readers to look for recursive symmetry, at the same time that it suggests a comparison with the mosaic, whose fractured pieces readers must reorder one by one if they hope to discover a recognizable form hidden within fragments. (Sanchez, 2003, 232)

Hence, for us, the analysis of postmodern metafiction as well as the re-readings of the 'classical' writings leads to the inner mechanisms of how discourse interrogation re-constitutes text and world. On the one hand, the mimetic text makes up the illusion that it generates information about the world, on the other, the metafictional text reveals world constructed nature. Rejecting any hierarchical arrangement of the reality levels, postmodern metafiction generates meaning through dissipative / fractal structures and, sometimes, even local vortices. The latter allows the mixture of time and space within a text which is declared to be fragmentary and discontinuous, thus imposing fractal simultaneity as new ontological order.

Conclusions

Fractal perspective functions as a valid nodal structure for a re-configuration of contemporary epistemology, providing legitimacy, on the one hand, to the initiation of a process which captures the

morphologic complexity of the universe. On the other hand, it provides the contemporary man with a surprising vista of the interstitial cultural laboratory juggling at the moment with inter-relations and principles of creative sub- and super-ordinance, which emphasize the thematic and structural initiating pattern. The schematism, the simple thematic repetitiveness and the progressively-linear dynamics are now questioned, being replaced by a return to the internal morphodynamics of the cultural space by means of the fractal strategies of self-homothetic projection and non-linearity. In other words, the fractality of the imaginary implies, in the wake of the transdisciplinary perspective promoted by Basarab Nicolescu, the structural co-existence of several levels of textual Reality managed by the law of the included middle:

Complex plurality and open unity are two facets of one and the same Reality. Out of the coexistence of complex plurality and open unity comes a new Principle of Relativity: no level of Reality is a privileged place where all the other levels of Reality can be understood. A level of Reality is what it is due to the simultaneous existence of the other levels. (Nicolescu, 1999, 65)

The cultural and epistemological texture thus acknowledged becomes multi- and, especially, inter-referential, engaging on a “pilgrimage through forms”, the latter being inter-related and homothetic, and completely evading the level of *figuration* so as to become engaged in the morphodynamic level of *transfiguration*. (Nicolescu) Grounded in the premises of an inherent intrinsic complexity characterizing the construction of the imaginary/ culture, which continuously re-invents itself by means of self-similar strategies and non-linear dynamizing projection, the hermeneutic process captures the variety of the imaginary profiles implosively connected, which are perfectly coherent in terms of the placement in the interstices of the final unitary fabric. The proposed application to the analysis of the contemporary cultural space dynamics forges the fractal grid in the sense of retrieving an ontological profile (be it fictionalised in the literary narratives or not) fascinated by the dynamic multiplicity of the world’s morphology, by the infinity of co-substantial connections between ontos and cosmos. While being situated amid the game of relations, in an intensive-relational chronotope which ‘comes apart in shreds’ with every contemplating act, the contemporary self reclaims a double identity: the personal, interior one, by means of the

plurimorphous ontic profile implasively updated, as well as the identity of the World which is upheld by the plural identity of the pivotal element-self and which is a 'relations knot' in the great universal panning.

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III. RECENZII

Ioan Fărnuș, *Privind înapoi, cititorul. Ipostaze ale lectorului în proza românească*, Editura Cartea Românească, 2013, 296 p.

Cartea semnată de Ioan Fărnuș, reprezentând teza sa de doctorat, realizată la Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare”, Suceava, sub îndrumarea d-lui prof. univ. dr. Mircea A. Diaconu, este o interesantă explorare a acelei problematice a lecturii și re-lecturii generată de prezența ficționalizată a „cititorului din text”, figură retorică sau strategie narativă indispensabilă unei opere de ficțiune care alege să-și pună sub semnul întrebării propriul statut ontologic. Domeniul de cercetare în care se înscrie merituosul efort al lui Ioan Fărnuș este cel al istoriei literare, însă, așa cum arată autorul, miza este mai amplă, perspectiva diacronică reunind „un *demersul estetizant* (destinat surprinderii etapelor unei tradiții a ficționalizării lectorului) și un altul *istoricizant* (destinat raportării viziunii asupra fenomenului receptării pe care cei patru [autori abordați] o propun la paradigma oficială a unui anumit moment.” (p. 9)

Formația de anglist a autorului (absolvent al specializării Engleză-Română din cadrul Facultății de Litere și Științe ale Comunicării a Universității Suceava) i-a înlesnit o situare metodologică inedită în critica literară românească, permițându-i o fertilă conectare la paradigma internaționalizată a teoriei critice anglo-americane, mai exact la critica *Reader-Response* (cu rădăcini în fenomenologia germană, dar ale cărei multiple ramificații – înspre semiotică, naratologie, psihanaliză, feminism, etc. – au făcut-o, în anii 60–70 ai secolului trecut, extrem de productivă), dar și la mai noile abordări deconstructive și viziunea postmodernă asupra textualității. Într-un subcapitol din prima parte, intitulat „De ce nu avem o teorie a receptării?”, Ioan Fărnuș face o scurtă dar extrem de pertinentă analiză a motivelor pentru care, cu notabila excepție a lui Paul Cornea, critica românească a ignorat sistematic dezvoltările din teoria și critica receptării, în ciuda faptului că opere fondatoare, ca cele ale lui H.R. Jauss și Umberto Eco și, mai recent, Wolfgang Iser sau Jonathan Culler, au fost traduse în limba română.

Privind înapoi către paradigma critico-teoretică a receptării, Ioan Fărnuș își asumă anumite riscuri în încercarea sa de a completa un spațiu critic nevalorificat suficient la noi, însă o face cu admirabilă luciditate și

sinceritate, reușind cu brio să le depășească. I s-ar putea reproșa, evident, faptul că încearcă să resusciteze un repertoriu conceptual ce poate fi considerat desuet și, oricum, incompatibil cu spiritul teoriilor postmoderne pe care, de asemenea, le invocă. Autorul este conștient că recursul la „cititor” ca instrument analitic ar putea fi privit ca o prelungire a „logocentrismului” critico-teoretic denunțat de acestea (până la urmă, a considera cititorul o strategie textuală nu înseamnă decât a reafirma dependența textului de intenția auctorială), cu încrederea sa nefondată în „metodă”, în posibilitatea de a accede la sensul ultim al textului: „pe fondul unei neîncrederi tipic postmoderne față de o critică a răspunsului cititorului, considerată, în momentul actual, depășită ca viziune și conceptual suspicioasă, cum se mai poate scrie despre o tradiție a ficționalizării unui cititor, când însuși conceptul de cititor este atșăzi deconstruit?”. (p. 27) Adoptarea constantă, în cadrul studiului, a unei poziții metacritice contribuie însă considerabil la legitimarea acestui anacronism critico-teoretic. Recuperarea inteligentă a unui concept (cititorul) devenit problematic, resituarea sa într-o paradigmă teoretică dominată de relativism și scepticism, are loc în cadrul unui discurs critic foarte atent la sine însuși, care pune în scenă un dialog productiv și „organic” al diverselor perspective interpretative.

Incursiunea autorului în istoria literaturii române reface un traseu cuprins între perioada pașoptistă și postmodernismul cărtărescian din perspectiva modalităților de ficționalizare și „textualizare” a cititorului, pe care le vede ca mărci ale unei autoreflexivități cu funcție compensatoare: prezența cititorului în text, ca figură retorică, semnalează sentimentul unei anumite slăbiciuni, a incapacității ficțiunii de a proiecta o lume, de a institui o realitate – al impasului în care poate ajunge „codul mimetic”, reglementând paradigma literară oficială (cf. p. 22): cititorul „este chemat în spațiul textului ori de câte ori ficțiunea nu mai are puterea de a se legitima, de a propune lume, ori de câte ori discursuri care vin dinafară forțează limbajul ficțional să se reinventeze [...]”. (p. 25)

Plecând de la reinterpretarea conceptului de istorie literară de către Mircea A. Diaconu, care, în *Poezia postmodernă* (2002), vorbește despre coexistența unei istorii *tari*, „oficializate”, și a uneia *slabe*, marginale sau subterane, Ioan Fărmuș atașează acestei distincții dualitatea constituită din paradigma reprezentățională, „mimetică”, și o alta în care este afirmată conștiința artificiei, în cadrul unei anumite tradiții de ficționalizare a cititorului.

Cei cinci autori discutați în detaliu – Odobescu (Cap. 3, „Recitind poetica tradițională. Un joc cu lectori în *Pseudo-cynegeticos* de Al. Odobescu”), I.L. Caragiale (Cap. 4, „Recitind canonul mimetic. Statutul ontologic al ficțiunii, morbul suspiciunii și fețele complicității în proza lui Caragiale”), Camil Petrescu (Cap. 5, „Reclădind imaginea cititorului. Lectura ca îndeterminare în romanul *Patul lui Procust* de Camil Petrescu”), Mircea Horia Simionescu (Cap. 6, „Prelungiri ale cititorului rezistent. Mircea Horia Simionescu și literatura ca act politic”) și Mircea Cărtărescu (Cap. 7, „Reînnodând firul cu tradiția. Mircea Cărtărescu, «inocența radicală» și întoarcerea la hedonism”) – aparțin atât istoriei literare „tari”, canonice, cât și acestui tip de tradiție secundară, ce-și asumă condiția minoratului într-un mod polemic și subversiv, prin texte în care, așa cum demonstrează autorul, ludicul, carnavalescul, butaforicul, ironia și parodia au menirea de scoate în evidență artificiuul, de a anula iluzia ficțională și de a propune cititorului „situat în istorie” poziția unui „hermeneut deschis spre problematizare” (p. 268). Concluzia autorului este că această tradiție marginală relevă, începând cu perioada pașoptistă, prezența unei „conștiințe (post)moderne a literaturii care abia acum în contemporaneitate, una dominată de discursul postmodernist, iese la suprafață, cunoscându-se pe sine”. (p. 269)

În abordarea lui Ioan Fărnuș, acest filon minor nu relevă neapărat o evoluție în preocuparea pentru ficționalizarea audienței, ci o continuitate; „cititorul din text” este mai mult decât un artificiu retoric, relevanța sa depășind contingenta literar-istorică și înscriindu-se într-o „dimensiune ce ține în cele din urmă de statutul ontologic al ficțiunii” (p. 25), care a însoțit literatura în toate epocile. Ioan Fărnuș discută tipurile de cititori actualizați retoric și narativ în textele celor cinci autori, precum și tipurile de complicitate lectorială pe care fiecare text o instituie, identificând modalitățile specifice prin care fiecare dintre scriitorii abordați se raportează la tradiția respectivă, nepierzând din vedere contextul mai larg al literaturii occidentale, în care prezența continuă a acestei tradiții subterane indică, am putea spune, o criză permanentă a scriiturii. De asemenea, supunându-și propria demonstrație unui test de validitate, fiecare dintre cele cinci capitole care articulează demersul hermeneutic se încheie cu o „lectură de context”, esențialmente intertextuală, în care sunt identificate deschiderile, închiderile și ramificațiile tradiției analizate, în raport cu viziunea literară și practicile textuale ale contemporanilor sau precursorilor. Astfel, pe lângă cei cinci

autori ce constituie corpusul analitic, sunt invocați, pentru o mai convingătoare susținere a demersului istoricizant, și Ion Budai-Deleanu, Negruzzi, Alecsandri, Filimon, Hașdeu și Slavici. Întregul parcurs hermeneutic din cartea lui Ioan Fărmuș are însă o circularitate remarcabilă, istoricitatea practicilor textuale și a codurilor scripturale analizate fiind surprinsă într-o percepție integratoare ce amintește de viziunea lui T.S. Eliot asupra tradiției literare ca ordine simultană, reconfigurată cu fiecare intrare literară „istorică”.

O concluzie importantă a întregii cercetări privește tocmai raportul dintre textualitate și istorie/realitate în cadrul acestei tradiții subterane, a cărei miză este „*instituirea unei conștiințe lucide atât față de Text cât și față de Istorie*” (p. 257). Ficționalizarea lectorului este, până la urmă, parte a „spectacolului interpretării”, în care cititorului i se înscenează o întâlnire transformatoare cu Textul – eveniment deopotrivă subversiv și inițiativ, în care lectura devine (re)scriere, de vreme ce termenii pactului /contractului cu Realitatea/Istoria sunt supuși unei re-negocieri. Este vorba, în fond, conchide autorul, de o schimbare de percepție care „își găsește finalitatea în re-inserarea cititorului în istorie cu un eu lărgit, în sensul camilpetrescian al termenului, acela al unei re-problematizări/renegocieri a poziției acestuia față de lume sau față de text”. (p. 276)

Cu un discurs critic elegant prin naturalețe și limpezime, manevrând dezinvolt și creativ un repertoriu conceptual complex care-i conferă adâncime, studiul lui Ioan Fărmuș se constituie într-un reper important în critica românească actuală.

Cornelia MACSINIUC
Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava, România
corneliamacsiniuc@yahoo.com

***Class and Contemporary British Culture* by Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn. Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire and New York, 255 pages**

Once again, the 2013 *Class and Contemporary British Culture* sets out to reconsider the notion of class. Better said, it goes back on the 20th century social theory's word (Eley, Nield, 2007) that status faded away and became a less antagonistic matter, if not even a somewhat missing one, in the politically correct last century. I eagerly assumed that, according to such assertions, the 21st century world we all live in should benefit from this legacy too. Unfortunately, all these assumptions are shown to be empty promises that span over the two already mentioned centuries (Therborn, 2012). This is particularly true when it comes to reading chapter titles of the sort: "The Revolting Underclass..." (Biressi; Nunn, 2013, 44), "Celebrity Life Stories of Upward Social Mobility" (*Ibid*, 94), "The Upper Classes..." (*Ibid*, 118), etc. Besides straightening things out in this respect, Biressi and Nunn's work addresses the afterlife of class in the social arena of the 21st century United Kingdom. Of course, the book's timeline is mostly that of the last century's late second half. Irrespectively, the critical approach is comparatively new. Conclusively, the reader finds out that people aware of their class are alive and kicking. We know it for a fact because they advertise their standing in the media and mass communication is the primary source of the authorial discourse. If the pedigree of the ideologically charged concept of "class" is obviously cumbersome, the procedure chosen by the two academics that authored the book changes the perspective. Particularly, it shifts the inflection used in voicing the division of society according to money, status, pedigree, etc. to its performance in the media discourse. In fact, the construal of public narratives is analysed from this perspective. I dare say, storytelling (technique), as a means to advance the agenda of (somebody's) culture, is exposed to public examination. In the (so) many words the writers use: 'this book considers how culture works to classify, label and formulate class judgements. It aims to confront the ways in which culture articulates, frames, organises and produces stories about social class, class difference and its various attachments.' (*Ibid*, 1) The political purposes of narration in the media and, commonly, in everyday life, are paid close critical attention.

Brazenly enough for a scientific text, everything starts with the authors themselves. The orders of the British world these two writers experienced first-hand, actually living their lives in the last quarter of the 20th century, are scrutinized and dramatically put together into a compelling narrative. This is the hands-on manner of investigation that helps readers find out more about the sense of class bias two actual Britons proudly confess they have in an academically informed manner. The discourse amounts to an exquisite example of what, once in a while, the authors concede, is writing ‘in the best tradition of cultural studies’ (Biressi, Nunn, 2013, 95), in fact, in the new practice of cultural studies theory. (Hall, Birchall, 2006) Biographical references to the professional career of both of them are used in order to contextualize the debate on the topic: ‘At around the same time as Heather Nunn was working in the City, Anita Biressi began work as a Local Officer in [...] the Department of Health and Social Security.’ (*Ibid.*, 5) I would not know to which extent this is conclusive for the hard-fact findings the text puts forth, yet, in terms of narration proper, it is an effective ploy.

On the one hand, I presume that Biressi and Nunn manage to state what traditionally has been yet another undertone of class judgement, never publicly debated for the sake of social fairness. On the other hand, it may very well be that it is *the* connotation of prejudice, which occurs culturally. Explicitly, it is a matter deeply ingrained in the general customs and beliefs of the British. (Rogaly, Taylor, 2009) To some extent, this intellectual story naturalizes the mostly offensive class-value all public discourses seem to circulate as a means of personal and collective ascendancy. A brief inventory of the habitual juxtaposition of class with contentious words says it all: class-education, class-grievance, class-interest, class-privilege, etc.

One of the notions under scrutiny is, of course, that of Thatcherism. However, this reading of the hackneyed ‘free-markets and small state’ scenario is redeemed, for example, by the geographic pinpointing of the issue in the public discourse. The Southern English county of Essex turns out to be the case in point example of a reliable thatcherite community. Accordingly, the Essex residents endorse low taxation, roll back the frontiers of the state and support privatisation of state-owned industries. Essex “has become known as the home of unthinking new right working-class Conservatism and of the worst excesses of consumerism” (Biressi; Nunn, 2013, 23). Consequently, the

area is entitled to a critical attention that, sometimes, is vaguely mischievous. For example, the media depiction of the ‘Essex Man’ is the trigger of the “comical disgust [...] publicly expressed for the working class.” (*Ibid*, 23)

“Rioting, looting and arson” (*Ibid*, 44) are some of the peculiar social practices the book considers in delineating the big picture of class. The above mentioned are the sensationalist details of the snapshot taken by the contemporary British media. The authors analyse public discourse with a view to corroborating their privately acquired lessons about class. Anyway, the topic of revolt is a matter of passing reflection, listed in an inventory, not thoroughly investigated. The text does not consider dissent proper as much as it itemizes media headlines and, of course spells out the updated bibliography of the field. Yet, the chapter manages to introduce, from a rather bellicose perspective of the underclass, those that inspire the inarticulate insurgency, i.e., those in the ‘top of the class’. (*Ibid*, 69) The topic of the fourth chapter, education, is squeezed in between “capital” and “choice”. Somewhat surprisingly for the East-European reader, the ‘social entrepreneur Jamie Oliver’ (*Ibid*, 70) is the embodiment of organized action on behalf of the greater social good. The best example is his work with dropouts in TV-shows. Indisputably, the allegedly feckless youth of Great Britain, in small numbers though, had a lot to gain from his school’s ‘excellent facilities [...], the smaller classes and the longer-term benefits’. Which, I presume, brings us to the money issue the title chapter frankly mentions. As far as choice is concerned, it is safe to say that the show aired on the national television proves that it is a putative case of mimicry. Everybody suspects one is entitled to make choices, yet a majority feels that proof of that is unattainable.

Luckily, there are a few British citizens flagged as “the ones who got away” (Biressi; Nunn, 2013, 94). I feel entitled to presume that they fled the lower orders of society. Covertly, the text states that ‘upward [...] mobility’ (*Ibid*, 94) is desired, but only possible in particular circumstances. For example, if one is blessed with the ability or the opportunity to take the shortcut of celebrity. We are told that the rags-to-riches story the media is usually in love with, discloses the rhetoric centred on ‘the evacuation of authenticity and realness’ (*Ibid*, 97) infotainment is famous for. Once the story we are told makes it to its climax (I identify in the sixth chapter) “the upper classes” are in the spotlight of ‘visibility, adaptability and change.’ (*Ibid*, 118) The text

touches on nobility and even on the royals – partly due to the already established indebtedness of the whole analysis to the primary source of printed media. There is no escape from the ‘the upper class [...] is in fact far broader, more variegated in character, more resilient and more stable than might be assumed from its depiction [...]’ (*Ibid*, 119) The great and the good everybody is invited to consume on socializing networks or on the screen of the TV-set are part of the inexorable elite. Ultimately, the reader is instructed to concede, those in charge serve a social purpose and have always been able to take in new money and cultural prestige.

But everything boils down to the conjectural anticipation of what is not usually said, particularly in public. The resolution of the sophisticated debate the readers have been thrilled to read up to this point of the plot curve is packaged as if it were under a social ban. The innuendo is academically acknowledged as the rhetoric of class in the Western world. The seventh chapter’s title says it all: “*Are You Thinking What We’re Thinking?: Class, Immigration and Belonging*” (*Ibid*, 142). The taboo of the underclass surfaces once more, but not for long. “Personal (in)security and financial prospects” (*Ibid*, 170) are the underpinnings of the protestant society that gave to the world the market fetish. “Austerity Britain” brings us to the afterword (“We Are All in This Together”) and “back to the future.” (*Ibid*, 170)

To conclude with, *Class and Contemporary British Culture* tells an archetypal story about money and the people in charge of it. The plot is that of the “accumulation, defence, distribution and usage of resources” (*Ibid*, 197) at the time of the credit crunch and other misfortunes in progress. The same is true of the cultural goods the book discloses for the usage of the informed middle-class of professionals with time to read. Various commodities are recorded in this comprehensive narrative that helps readers understand the media coverage of events, if not the world they live in. Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn prove that the academe still has what it takes to phrase the pursuit of resources 21st century readers are embarked on.

Onoriu COLACEL
Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava, România
onoriucolacel@yahoo.com

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***Making the World Safe*, JULIA F. IRWIN,
Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, 273p.**

Julia F. Irwin is Assistant Professor of History at the University of South Florida and offers through her study a model of the most exciting new scholarship about America and the world. In this, she joins the type of fascinating social history and cultural approach revealed by another American female historian, Jill Lapore, whose *Story of America* we have previously reviewed.

Making the World Safe is an untold history of American relief and assistance to foreign civilians in the early twentieth century. It traces how the US government came to realize the value of overseas aid as a tool of diplomacy. At the same time, it examines the lives and mentalities of civic leaders, philanthropists and medical professionals – individuals who embraced foreign assistance as a new way to participate in the international community. The book recounts how ordinary Americans understood, assessed and reassessed new global commitments. It is, in sum, a study of how US citizens and their government defined foreign civilian aid as an American responsibility, of their relief and assistance projects carried out at a heady moment in US international history, and of the multiple political and cultural projects they hoped their humanitarian interventions might achieve. It tells these stories by examining the pivotal role that one organization – a quasi-private organization called the American Red Cross – played in realizing this new commitment to “world aid”.

Subtitled *The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, the study is based on the belief that the uninvestigated history of ARC civilian relief provides an understanding of one of the major ways in which US citizens “engaged with the world and with each other at a critical moment of American international history” (p. 10). The moment is the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, which Irwin identifies as formative years of American global power, a period in which providing assistance overseas became a principal way for Americans to interact with the wider world and to provide a living demonstration of the country's new national identity, following years of

isolationism. Many Americans believed that the United States had to behave as a benevolent world power, a nation ready and willing to direct its resources toward the improvement of international health and welfare. 'By taking steps to reduce suffering in the world, these citizens aspired to live up to that ideal' (p. 3), explains the author of the study, underlining the reasons why "bettering the world" was a task left to private enterprise at the turn of the century: though typically voluntary in character, their assistance nonetheless held profound political significance, fostering global social order, encouraging trade and reducing potential threats to U.S. security. At the same time, by projecting a positive image of the United States, relief served as effective propaganda and an invaluable form of diplomacy, willingly promoted by the federal government. Such considerations constitute arguments for the study's object of analysis and purpose, as stated in the *Introduction*: integrating ARC civilian aid into American social and diplomatic history, as a moment of major cultural significance and as an essential aspect of American informal internationalism.

To begin this story, Chapter I turns to the early nineteenth century to chart the origins of American international humanitarianism, the rise of the International Red Cross Movement and the creation and development of an organization that bridged the two. What we find most revealing at this stage of the analysis is the finding that a particular organization's assistance efforts form part of a long and ongoing tradition of American ideology and practice. ARC's formation in 1881 and its subsequent rise coincided with a surge in overseas missionary activity and the development of a vast American moral empire. In key ways, the organization's relief efforts constituted part of this larger pattern of American cultural expansion and influence. Motivated by ideals of American exceptionalism and benevolence, the personnel assumed a corresponding obligation to aid the world, but diverged from the Protestant missionary tradition in that 'they employed a language of professional obligation and expressed a commitment to physical, rather than spiritual uplift. Under the ARC's auspices, Christian universalism - at least on paper - started to give way to international humanitarianism. The organization's success reflects the beginning of a trend toward the secularization of American missionary ideology, a pattern that grew stronger as the twentieth century progressed.' (p. 9)

The next two chapters examine the ARC's place in the United States in the Great War era. Chapter 2, *Humanitarian Preparedness*, focuses on the eight years prior to the U.S. entry into the war, a period in which the American presidency and State Departments, as well as members of the business, social scientific and philanthropic communities are shown to have supported the organization's actions. The author notices however that it was not until US entry into the Great War that the ARC's foreign assistance garnered wide enthusiasm among the American public. In this line, Chapter 3, entitled *Mobilizing a Volunteer Army*, explores the organization's meteoric growth during 1917 and 1918. It analyzes how its leaders sold the ARC to the public and worked to define foreign assistance as a new wartime obligation, while considering the extent to which individual Americans consented to this new set of international responsibilities.

The subsequent two chapters turn to civilian relief efforts in Great War – era Europe. Chapter 4, *Relieving Europe*, examines the ARC's work in Western Europe in the period of US involvement in the war, revealing, beyond material relief, major comprehensive health and welfare projects, including anti-epidemic campaigns or nursing education. Chapter 5, *Rebuilding Europe*, turns to peacetime efforts, where personnel remained for more than four years after the Armistice. The reader will be informed that, while in the early postwar months, the ARC redirected the majority of their funds and personnel to Central Europe, declining public enthusiasm for foreign aid and international involvement soon limited the organization's ability to administer generous assistance. It is considered that, in an attempt to adapt to the hostile postwar climate, enduring proponents of American humanitarian engagement refocused their efforts entirely on European children, the group they saw as most likely to win public support and most in need of assistance. In fact, both chapters call attention to the ways that the ARC served varied diplomatic and cultural agendas of the U.S. government and the American public. These chapters consider, in a most revealing manner, how officials relied on the organization to complement their larger goals of winning the war, preserving the peace, and achieving order and stability abroad. They also explore how American health and welfare professionals embraced assistance to achieve wholesale change in European society. Finally, they consider the ways that individual Americans conceived of international humanitarian activities.

Chapter 6 sets out to provide answers to the question *A World Made Safe?* and subsequently trace humanitarian activities pursued across the globe during the interwar years and the aftermath of World War II. At the same time, it illustrates how changes in both the international system and the American state significantly altered the role that the ARC's civilian aid played in U.S. foreign relations. The *Epilogue* reflects on the very nature of this organization's civilian aid as a form of foreign relations, alongside American military interventions, diplomatic maneuvering and financial investments. *A New Manifest Destiny Revisited* symbolically sends back to the book's *Introduction* and its fundamental theoretical premises for the whole approach: the statement of Edward Devine, a leading American economist and philanthropist of the Great War era, who, in 1917, boarding on an ARC volunteer ship to the French war zone, proclaimed a new Manifest Destiny for the United States, while replacing George Washington's famous appeal to isolationism and "indefinite expansion" with a policy of "indefinitely expanding brotherhood". Through the provision of emergency material aid and intellectual and technical expertise to civilians in Europe and throughout the world, Devine and his fellow Americans hoped to achieve one of the nation's avowed goals: 'Together, they would make the world safe.' (p. 2)

The extraordinary academic value of Irwin's analysis comes, on the one hand, from recognizing that this approach to world affairs was never purely altruistic and that humanitarian interventionism advanced U.S. national interests, while representing a profoundly political activity, for reasons mentioned above. Demonstrating scholarly skill and objectivity, the author of the study observes that 'when ARC supporters and personnel assumed an obligation to intervene in and alter the lives of foreign others, they echoed the logic at the heart of American missionary activity, dollar diplomacy, and territorial governance – the belief that as Americans, they possessed both the responsibility and the unique capability to make the world a better, more civilized place.' (p. 209) On the other end of the spectrum, the book successfully demonstrates that American foreign aid efforts were neither entirely self-serving nor simply a veiled attempt at social control. Based on the belief that historical assessments which center on the inherent power dynamics of humanitarian actions risk 'smearing aid as indistinguishable from imperialism' (p.211), Irwin concludes that, in the early twentieth century,

millions of Americans advanced a benevolent and compassionate vision of their nation and its place in the world, a vision they labored to achieve through foreign aid activities. The author is more than right to assume that the implications of this international humanitarian awakening, with its inherent complexities, are essential to the broader history of American foreign relations.

Fascinating, deeply researched and full of personal stories of Red Cross rank-and-file, *Making the World Safe* is a narrative of American global power and influence but also an impressive, complex cultural study on humanitarianism, as a compassionate form of engagement with the world. This is a book of great contemporary relevance, written with clarity and sensibility, about far more than emergency housing, food provisioning or health care.

Ana-Cristina CHIRILĂ (ȘERBAN)
Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava, România
anacristinaserban@yahoo.fr

IV. NOTE DESPRE AUTORI

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Luminița-Elena TURCU, PhD is Associate Professor of literature at the Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences of the University of Suceava. One of the books she authored is *The Spell of Darkness: The Rise and Evolution of the English Gothic Novel* (2002). Her research interests and publication area include Anglo-American literary and cultural studies, with special emphasis on Gothic fiction.

l_turcu@yahoo.com

Magdalena MURAWSKA is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociolinguistics and Discourse Studies in the Faculty of English at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan in Poland. Her main research interests lie in the field of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Her PhD dissertation concerned patient imaging in case reports from British and American medical journals, with particular attention to the presentation of the patient's experience of illness. She has published a number of papers devoted to the discourse of case reports from specialist medical journals.

mmurawska@wa.amu.edu.pl

Name-Parvin SULTANA is recently a research scholar at the Centre for Political Studies in School of Social Sciences with the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India. Currently completing her MPhil on the federalisation process and regional planning. Her work focuses on particular institution of India as well as on issues of political economy, feminism, and liberal interpretations of Islam.

parvin.jnu@gmail.com

Nadja REINHARD, Dipl.-Ing., philosophy, medieval and modern literary studies in Cologne and Düsseldorf, MA, PhD in German literary studies 2011, *Moral und irony in Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener. Paratext und palimpsest in his ‚Satyr writings‘* (Wallstein 2013). Since October 2010 research associate and lecturer at the Institut of German philology/Modern literary studies, Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf. Publications on German literature from the 18th to 20th century (e.g. Kleist, Fontane, Kafka, Thomas Mann).

nadja.reinhard@phil.HHU.de

Ana-Maria POPESCU is Lecturer at the Faculty of Letters, University of Pitești and PhD in Humanities (Romanian Academy of Sciences). Her main areas of interest are Culture/ Civilisation/ Mentalities; Contrastive Studies;

Theoretical and Applied Linguistics, Contemporary English (Morphosyntax, Semantics and Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis and Conversation Analysis), English for Specific Purposes (Technical and Scientific English).

anamaria_stoica_1sa@yahoo.com

Simona ANTOFI is Professor at the Department of Romanian Language, Literature and Journalism, Faculty of Letters, “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați and one of the directors in charge of the Research Centre *Intercultural Communication and Literature*. She currently teaches such courses as *Cultural Identity and Multiculturalism*, *Cultural Specificity and Identity in South-Eastern Europe*, and *Balkanism*, within the framework of the master programme, as well as *Romanian Culture and National Identity*, and *Intercultural Communication* as part of the journalism (undergraduate) curriculum. Areas of research: Romanian Literature, Comparative Literature, Cultural Identity and Multiculturalism, Identity Constructs in Romanian Literature.

simoantofi@yahoo.com

Sabina FÎNARU is Associate Professor at the Department of Romanian Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences, where she has been teaching courses on the History of Romanian Literature, Trends in European Criticism, and Latin. Between 2000 and 2002, she taught Romanian Language and Civilization at Delhi University (India). She is Director of the Inter Litteras Research Center – Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava and author of the books *Eliade prin Eliade [Eliade through Eliade]* (3rd edition, Bucharest, 2006), *Literatura română de la început* (Suceava, 2005), *Curs de limba latină cu elemente de literatură, cultură și civilizație* (Suceava, 2004), as well as of numerous articles and studies.

sabinafinaru@litere.usv.ro

Ovidiu Morar, PhD, is Associate Professor of literature at the Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences of the University of Suceava. He is the author of the books *Avatarurile suprarealismului românesc* (2003), *Avangardismul românesc* (2005) and *Scriitori evrei din România* (2006). His research interests and publication areas include Romanian literature, literary theory, and cultural studies.

ovidiumorar10@yahoo.com

Nicoleta IFRIM is PhD in Romanian literature, lecturer at the “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galați, Department of Literature, Language and Journalism. She coordinates the university courses of Romanian literature (Eminescu, Creanga, Caragiale), the Inter-War Romanian literature and Theory of literature. The areas of interest are the study of Romanian literature in its relation to the

European culture, the metamorphosis of the literary discourse due to the diachronic flow of ideas and creative patterns of writing, as well as the ways of re-reading literary texts through the mirror of Postmodern interpretation strategies.

nicodasca@yahoo.com

Cornelia Macsiniuc, Ph.D. is Associate Professor of literature at the Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences at the University of Suceava. She is the author of, among other books, *Towards a Poetics of Reading. Poststructuralist Perspectives* (Institutul European, 2002). Her research interests and publication areas include English literature, cultural studies, literary and cultural theory, and utopian studies.

corneliamacsiniuc@yahoo.com

Onoriu COLĂCEL Ph.D., is a lecturer at the Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences of “Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, the Department of Foreign Languages. His fields of interest are Contemporary English Literature, Literary Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism and Theories of Reading. He currently lectures on Contemporary English Literature and Cultural Studies.

onoriucolacel@yahoo.com

Ana-Cristina CHIRILĂ (ȘERBAN) is PhD Candidate at The Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences. Areas of research: Translation Studies, Tennessee Williams, and the Dramatic Discourse.

anacristinaserban@yahoo.fr