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CORP ȘI TEXT/ CORPUL CA TEXT (II)

THE BODY (LANGUAGE) OF "The Saboteur" OBSTRUCTIONISM AND BANDITRY IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT

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Abstract: The Pandemic sandbox video-game "The Saboteur", released by Electronic Arts Games in 2009, addresses the pervasive 21st-century terrorism concern. Factually, it is the same old grand-narrative of the (Western) world under siege. The game is worthy of a 2013 reassessment because of its candid elaboration on terrorism. The gamer is exposed to the video transubstantiation of the (terrorist) body into the site for the inscription of devious socio-cultural practices. The virtual corporeality is the embodiment of agency and politically motivated violence. The wide currency of the topic makes it particularly inflammatory, while playing such (political) games, a vocabulary of dissent and repression advances the ends of *our* beliefs and values versus *theirs*. The armed struggle behind whatever enemy's lines rings the bell of familiar, on-going alarms. Conclusively, "The Saboteur" attempts to commit the issue of terrorism to the customary (violent) practices of the contemporary culture, as they are conveyed by the embodiment of the male ethos in digital media.

Key words: terrorism, video game industry, pop culture, public discourse, socio-cultural practices, male ethos, proxemics

Currently, the threat of politically motivated criminal actions (Chomsky, 2003) looms over the daily life and the public discourse, respectively. In Western democracies, the grand-narrative of the siege is always at hand and shapes the news story-telling (Fiske, 2005). The media coverage of events circulates a fashionable vernacular (Jourdan, Tuite, 2006), consisting out of proper things to say, all easily identifiable and fulfilling the expectations of the average audience. Namely, uncalled for violence, treacherous conduct and worthy of contempt, yet sometimes fascinating, radicals are featured. Yet, the notion of aggression turns out to be, alongside despicable bloodshed, an anti-bourgeois testimonial, perpetrated by the barbarians from outside the gates, when raiding our enclosure. Their devious behaviour fuels the terrorism-concern which coins media sweeping-statements and spills over into the public information flow.

Anyway, everything boils down to the hero who exudes pride and virility. The digital environment, much like the social one, is built on the 'embodiment […] investigated as a central component of the public practices used to build action within situated human interaction'. (Goodwin, 2003, 20) The virtual corporeality is the embodiment of agency and gameplay. The pictures in motion of the hero always consist in the same number of frames which depict a muscular physique in action. The easily identifiable sequence of body shots is the site for the (re)inscription of the male ethos in the contemporary pop culture, as conveyed by the digital media. This is the case of the Pandemic sandbox video-game "The Saboteur", marketed by Electronic Arts Games in 2009. The sandbox game 'represents an open fictional environment in which the player has a great deal of choice'. (Tavinor, 2009, 2) The game is worthy of a 2013 reassessment because of its most candid elaboration on terrorism, 'the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change'. (Hoffman 2006, 40) Namely, the EA release addresses the question of armed struggle, during the II World War, behind enemy's lines. Bombings, kidnappings and assassinations of the German occupiers – and, generally, obstructionism against the Vichy puppet government in the 1940s France – they all are the romanticised agenda of the French freedom fighters in the Rèsistance. Yet, the cultural meaning delivered to the audience is the comparison between the II World War and the contemporary Free-World, between guerrilla war and plain terrorism. The interplay of binary oppositions, which keeps together the story, escalates in the guesswork of the 21st century media counterstrategies tackling politically motivated military action.

However, everything amounts to highly symbolic exploits. They are conspicuous, illicit acts which succeed in catching the imagination of the gamer. Of course, the topic brings to mind the jargon of the industrialized nations' backlash on "rogue-states" and "asymmetrical threats". These labels are circulated to the extent to which they politicise public narratives and culturally legitimate social action. As it is the case with all major social anxieties, the digital entertainment industry diffuses apprehensions when staging the re-enactment of improper behaviour. Approaching terrorism as a means to get the adrenaline of the players going is a risky choice, brazenly offered by "The Saboteur". Of course that it refrains from actually delivering screen shots of entrails and organs but dismembered bodies rocket to the sky each time the bomber, for example, successfully booby-traps a car.

The wide currency of the topic makes it particularly inflammatory, a vocabulary of dissent and repression advances the ends of *our* beliefs and values versus *theirs* while playing such (political) games. The game under scrutiny is of interest because of its controversial subject matter that addresses historic events bound to have a knock-on effect on the message of the videogame. The

standard in the industry is to provide an aesthetically formalised version of the social environment that results in the benchmark against which the targeted audience, i.e. the youth, judges, for instance, the past. The claim that the end-user is not ultimately watching an event (on the contrary, s/he is supposed to be a story agent who acts on the probabilities of various choices) is farfetched. Controlling the narrative in open-world games is a matter of retracing what, in a predetermined course of events, has already been settled about the avatar's fate. The productive mission of the player is to buy into alleged free-will representations and, in the process of doing so, to have his/her beliefs reinforced by second-hand, virtual know-how. Implicitly, sharply divergent appraisals of ideology are encapsulated in the computer game, which openly shows the means and procedure of inflicting harm or injury upon accidental bystanders. At any rate, "The Saboteur" deters possible 9/11 associations on account that religious overtones are entirely overlooked. Therefore, only the skills of the 2001 tragedy are implicitly quoted, while its message is never considered, which, probably, makes the video-game safe enough for the Western audience.

I intend to discuss the cultural mediation of such issues, 'as computer games have moved from subculture to mainstream industry.' (Richtel, 2005) Nowadays, the gaming experience is accepted in terms of an entertaining and formative social practice. As such, it is one of the contemporary pop culture's success stories, most effective as far as the public response to its discourse is concerned.

Appropriately, this industry is hypercompetitive and copy-cat titles are commonplace. I mean that, commonly, each computer-game complies with its convention, while the occasional breakthrough is promptly cloned. As a result, each reasonably popular game is representative for its genre and the instalment under scrutiny fits the profile. The game strives to summarize the iconic markers of a likely box-office hit. It targets a supposedly adult audience, prone to buy into the trappings of manliness displayed by the 'hell-bent Irishman' (*TS,* 11) whose first person shoes the gamer fills. Physical strength and audacity, aggressiveness and lack of emotional reaction define the machismo of our bomber. His exquisite figure (Utterbeck, 2004) climbing the Haussmann architecture of Paris ('every building with a nearby handhold can be scaled' *TS,* 9) summarizes the idea of energetic manhood. The material frame of the hero verges on bodily deformation because he is silhouetted against exclusively street walking males. The expatriate Sean Devlin displays greater ability than any other men to look physically attractive – for the most part when moving upwards. The leather jacket, the tight pants, the sculptured torso, they all impersonate traditional manliness. His ascent on the outside of buildings, without ropes or protection whatsoever, using only available small protrusions, is a gimmick meant to recall of the comic books superheroes of 20th century. The male body, in motion, projected on the monitor and perceived as if filmed

by a hand-held camera, is a meaningful cultural code insistently circulated by the video game. His visual identity is delivered by a sequence of frames that cover the (diegetic) time it takes to plant a bomb or sneak in a Nazi encampment. In fact, it is a graphic device of digital narration, faking to be taken in a single, continuous shot of the usually ascending man.

He is not a member of an irregular paramilitary unit; he operates on his own and is only 'reluctantly convinced to apply deadly force alongside the French Resistance and British SOE' (*TS,* 7). Conspicuously, 'Sean finally has a way to send his nemesis to the unholy afterlife…and if a few hundred goose steppers are killed along the way, Sean can live with that' (*TS,* 7). The virtual reality of the gameplay dramatically triggers the self-recognition of the naïve end-user. What is more, the subject matter of the game is particularly relevant for the replacement of 'spectatorship' and 'representation' by 'simulation' and 'immersion' (Dovey, Kennedy, 2006, 3). Through the reproduction of specific practices one is invited to explore what is improbable or not allowed in actual social environments. Behaviours disapproved of, because considered offensive, are commonplace in "The Saboteur", as it is the case with most, if not all, of the game industry titles.

The moral discourse and response to its stimuli are brought into play by the narrative of the game. Responsibility is negotiated in relation with individual freedom and law (that of the German versus that of the Allies). Although the hero's 'whiskey aftershave' (*TS,* 9) is ever present, his headquarter is in a cabaret, (with obvious debauchery undertones), the game contextualises notions of honour and guilt. Sean Devlin lost his 'life of daredevil racing, gorgeous women' (*TS,* 7) and became the champion of the French cause. His portrayal tries to gradually shift the conviction that 'the milieu of terrorists is invariably morally squalid, when it is not merely criminal' (Burleigh, 2009, X). The gameplay pictures the saboteur in a manner that overemphasizes his dishonest, underhand performance, which results in the death of many – mostly German soldiers and, occasionally, French civilians. If pointless, such cruelty would suggest immorality. Fortunately, it is not the case, considering the somewhat dull happy-ending, meant to visually counteract the fact that 'the German-army occupation has stripped the world of its life and color' (*TS,* 7). Once Sean rescues the 'good people of France' (*TS,* 7), 'color gradually returns to the world' (*TS,* 7).The consequence of the protagonist's performance is ground-breaking, bringing about reprisal against occupiers and deliverance for the occupied.

Irrespective of the storyline in "The Saboteur", there is a sense of wide-ranging dissatisfaction with the 'narrative coherence' of video games. The issue is perceived by both theorists/ludologists and the general public/gamers. Explicitly,

what may be satisfactory for ego-shooters and all types of games that

focus on physical actions of the player's avatar (such as running, jumping, shooting and fighting) remains disappointing for games or game-like experiences that aim at unfolding a complete story with a certain narrative coherence without having to rely on noninteractive cut-scenes for interweaving successive playable game levels. (Schäfer, 2009, 143)

"The Saboteur" is heavily indebted to similar cinematic intermissions that articulate the story, introducing episodes and characters, acting as cohesive devices. They are likely to mend the dead ends of the account but do not manage to explain away the narrative inconsistencies. The plot needs such noninteractive cut scenes, which function as authorial voice-overs.

Yet, I think that the link between them and the lighting/colouring of the setting brings something new to the discussion about the audience-pleasing strategies usually employed by the industry. Basically, the milieu signals the outcome of Sean's sabotage, by giving up the nightly finish of the visuals, always shadowy and grey, in favour a vivid, cartoonish colour scheme. Shiny hues are merged to create visual effects of a cheerful, unclouded French universe, ranging from the metropolis to the seaside. The soft, warm, reflected light of the characters and surroundings is an overstatement that amounts to the graphic identity of the game.

The immersive quality of the medium – which strives to reach transparency (Salen, Zimmerman, 2004), so that the end-user remains unaware of the cultural performance s/he undertakes – is undercut by means of this conspicuous turn from movielike verisimilitude. This game over-interprets its own status of image forming device, of an ideologically charged lens which reads the gross diversion set up by the landscape. It performs as an optical gadget that shifts from an annoyingly murky setting to a gloriously shimmering one. The graphic interface is straightforward, which leads to user-friendliness, yet the self-evidence of the medium is damaged. Factually, the naturalness of the engagement with the software is questioned, i. e., the player grasps its contrived makeup whenever the colour scheme changes through the wipe transition effect. Plainly, one frame is inconsistently replaced by another and the gamer comes to terms with this event instead of going on playing. As such, perceptual and memory knowledge, determiners of causal relations in the consumption of video games (Jahn-Sudmann, Stockmann, 2008), are constantly interrogated in terms of narrative coherence.

Irrespectively, the 'enlightenment' is the tell-tale sign that Sean Devlin cleansed an area of German soldiers. This naïve lighting of the urban backdrop, against which the exploits of the saboteur take place, is the trademark of the game. The procedure signals a 'black-and-colourful' perception of the simulated world. Importantly, the frame of mind the artwork conveys is uncompromisingly confrontational. The images are filtered both technically and

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ideologically, 'us' versus 'them', the evil (Nazi) versus the good (Irish desperado), dull versus bright, etc. Surprisingly, the binary mind-set is openly challenged by Sean who is openly mischievous if not degenerate. Anyhow, his impending triumph outweighs the crimes against law and normative morals. His actions are supposed to cause uncertainty and confusion in occupied France and, accordingly, they themselves are somewhat hazy. Winners and losers are historically treated unequally and "The Saboteur" makes its bid too, on the verified account that the winner takes all. The victor's righteousness is beyond doubt, considering that [he], 'change[d] the city of Paris with [his] acts of defiance and encourage[d] citizens to fight back against the occupation' (*TS,* cover).

The non-propositional contents are significant for the player to the extent to which they rely on the cultural competence to codify sensory awareness into meaningful cultural narrative. The gamer undertakes a performance as advertised and represented by his/her avatar and the virtual medium. Namely, the game elicits specific behaviour, 'sweet jumps are met with a nice, satisfying cut to a cinematic camera angle – not to mention some more long-lasting rewards.' (*TS,* 10) Likewise, it vaguely reprimands morally improper actions, 'Violence! Sweet violence! Stirring up trouble only works if you can deal with crowds, and Mayhem is the Perk to do it.' (*TS,* 13) The management of the hero is a matter of other, understated measures too. It may very well refer to the ordering of events or to the way they are promoted by voice-over or overt first person narration. Thus, the manipulation of the protagonist involves actual play opportunities and the degree of cultural familiarity implicit in the ready-made tasks, 'Interested in some extra missions? Pressing the […] button turns on or off markers for bonus objectives.' (*TS*, 12) The agency in the video game is a matter of body representation which, except for packaging the ethos of manliness, conveys cultural meaning when staging movement. The gesture is 'tied to the physical, semiotic, social and cultural properties of the environment within which it is embedded.' (Goodwin, 2003, 24)

Most of the times, the circumstances correspond to recognisable social facts, so that the play-actor faces a fill-in the gaps procedure meant to validate the mostly graphic narrative. The player's skills with the controls impersonate the camerawork, quick and sudden or careful manoeuvring determines the comprehension of the inhabited virtual world. The story is typically told by the movement of the camera that complements occasional cut scenes – distinct sequences of shots the player views as a spectator. They usually introduce future developments of the plot or better explain what has already happened. In conclusion, they give insight into the failure of the digital story-telling while trying to mend its inconsistencies. In fact, we deal with the first person anecdote of an over the shoulder perspective on the simulated world. The experience of

the gamer is a rehearsal of the body language displayed by the avatar. The gesture of the hero is also the movement of the camera, previously described as the perspective out of which the story is told. So, in other words, this is the narrative technique and, ultimately, the cultural procedure of the plot. And the degree to which they both express the message, so that it is effortlessly understood by the average end-user, makes or breaks the appeal of "The Saboteur".

Moreover, the promoted culture of sabotage is informative of what sociology has already analysed under the name of proxemics – the study of the way individuals naturally place themselves when interacting. The manner space is perceived and employed in social circumstances is, probably, one of the most challenging cultural issues "The Saboteur" tackles. Particularly, its narrative magnifies this usage of distance and placement, as they are set up by the terrorist routine. The sanctioned behaviour of Sean is either to creep furtively or to blend in with the crowd. The player needs to constantly keep it in mind, under the threat of mission failure. The onlookers follow the same rules of engaging the protagonist and act in accordance with their status of vigilantes in the panopticon of the video game. The gamer structures the virtual environment by means of his/her intercourse with other characters who, inadvertently, watch over the city of Paris. Their only job is to police the urban setting and the suspicion meter featured on the screen turns red if the gamer does not follow the proxemics enforced by the convention. Therefore, facing the world replicates nonverbal codes of behaviour, overemphasised whenever the professional bearing of the terrorist is impersonated by the gamer. Considering his/her interactive input (decision-making, conflicting opportunities, etc.) the game is an instance of verifying values and beliefs in a success driven setting.

"The Saboteur" discusses the ability to exercise free will in the face of rules enforceable by the authority. This conflict places the tale in the tradition of grand narratives, while the actual unfolding of events does not strike the audience as particularly philosophical. It is much more a matter of rummaging through an open world, making the most out of its randomly discovered perks. At least, this is the case if the player is not strictly following the hierarchical mission solving routine, which demands adherence to one sequence of events, i.e. to a distinct cause and effect episode in the story. The free-play experience replicates features of the social world (the black market, garages, safe houses) which focus on dramatic hypotheses about racing, demolitions, explosives, etc.

In the unfolding of the video story, the must-do and the free-choice circumstances add up to a predictable gaming strategy for the average, computer-literate audience. As it is the case with all open-world games, "The Saboteur" employs the above-mentioned approach in order to achieve interactivity. Deciding story denouement rather than pretending identification with one character (i.e., the protagonist) is the desired and the last consequence

of compelling gameplay.

> In fact 'decoding' or learning is foregrounded in the playing of computer games. Playing requires this decoding of its structure or system (of levels, of architectural organization, of scoring systems, timing of events, of non-player characters' actions and interactions, etc.). (Dovey, Kennedy, 2006, 7)

Theorists of digital humanities (Kocurek, 2012) circumscribe the pervasiveness of violence motifs in video games to contextualising devices of the broader social environment. The immersive quality of cultural consumption while playing is strengthened by the 'moral panic' (Kocurek, 2012) these controversial references trigger. Namely, characters' dealings are contentious, no matter if they are plot motivated or not. They serve to decode and thus organize events within the logic of scoring and perk systems, of stats, maps and journal mementos. Such usual paraphernalia is always present and conveys meaning, irrespective of the specific felony the protagonist indulges in, terrorism, theft or disorderly conduct.

"The Saboteur" attempts to commit the topic of terrorism to the ordinary violent practices of the contemporary popular culture, as they are acknowledged by the media discourse. The otherwise sensitive matter is demythologised, particularly by means of overlooking the religious drive of current terrorism, as it is the case with the II World War setting of the game. The belligerence of 'culturally accepted narratives of violence, such as military or police violence, or the western' (Kocurek, 2012) is shown to be the rationalizing scheme by which terror carves out a place for itself amongst other, more reputable offences. Conclusively, the game does its bid to better the public image of terrorism, suggesting other available branding such as obstructionism, guerrilla warfare, or, the worst case scenario, armed robbery. Sean Devlin is an assemblage of body shots acting as a narrative device which advertises the thrills of the saboteur's life and, tacitly, the culture of violence. This testimonial is the by-product of the attempt to collect together the frames and join them in the cultural order of the video sequence characterizing Sean Devlin.

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TRANSGRESSIVE SEXUALITY AND THE POLITICS OF FEMALE BODY IN EARLY MODERNITY: A STUDY ON THE SUBVERSIVE BODY OF THE DUCHESS IN WEBSTER'S *THE DUCHESS OF MALFI*

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Abstract: The modalities of conceptualizing corporeality shifted dramatically in the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. The early modern body in drama was a stage in itself where political, religious, cultural and medical discourses intersected and merged. The paper intends to explore the contemporary medical, socio-cultural and theatrical obsession with the female body, which bordered on male voyeurism and complex politics involving the fantasy of controlling female sexuality. By studying together the interpretive conventions of the conduct manuals, the scaffolds of punishment, and the anatomy theatres, the paper argues that the tortured body of the Duchess in Webster's Jacobean tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*, can be understood as part of a subversive strategy employed by the playwright. In the conclusion, the paper proposes that, the play highlighted that the psycho-somatic modalities of conceptualizing gender and the one-sex model were no longer viable, and more importantly, that sexuality is flexible. Above all, Webster's contemporary audience, the paper surmises, witnessed an epistemological shift in the empirical understanding of woman's body and identity.

Key Words: corporeality, Jacobean tragedy, Webster, woman's body.

Introduction: The body, which was once a marginalized object in traditional literary scholarship, has emerged as a crucial category of critical inquiry in the past two decades. In the early modern period, the body was the fundamental image of self, society and nation. Owing to the fact that, at that age the popular stage was most prolific, the body in the theatre was a site for the operation of power and the exercise of meaning. Interestingly, there was a significant growth of public executions, theatrically show-casing physical brutality, in the later sixteenth century. Again, the contemporary cultural and intellectual ethos of having the secrets of the anatomized cadaver ripped open revealed the anxiety embedded in the multiple discourses of the body with its pervasive sense of fragmentation. In addition, as displayed in common conduct manuals, there was the overwhelming socio-cultural concern with unraveling and regulating the female body. Such medical, socio-cultural and theatrical obsession with the female body bordered on voyeurism and complex politics involving the fantasy of controlling female sexuality.

Clearly, the modalities of conceptualizing corporeality shifted dramatically in the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages. The early modern body in drama was a stage in itself where political, religious, cultural and medical discourses intersected and merged. In the contemporary culture of stringent regime of male investigation, the vulnerability of the woman's body and issues of transgressive female sexuality remained very important. By studying together the interpretive conventions of the conduct manuals, the scaffolds of punishment, and the anatomy theatres, the paper intends to argue that the tortured female bodies in early modern plays can be understood as part of a subversive strategy employed by the contemporary playwrights, like Shakespeare, Webster and Tourneur. The paper thus proposes that incarcerated female characters, like the Duchess in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, played a significant role in complicating and critiquing social and aesthetic attitudes towards the female body and sexuality.

Before starting my study on the transgressive female sexuality and the politics of the early modern female body in *The Duchess of Malfi*, I would like to give a very brief synopsis of the selected text, my research plan and methodology, and, few relevant criticisms in the past decade on the topic.

The paper focuses especially on John Webster's play, *The Duchess of Malfi*, published in 1623. The macabre Jacobean drama dealt with the Duchess of Malfi's secret, self-willed marriage beneath her class, that is, her steward, Antonio. Her brothers, Ferdinand and the Cardinal, upon learning about the clandestine marriage, bizarrely exacted revenge on her along with her husband and three children. The Duchess tried to escape by feigning a pilgrimage, but she was apprehended by Ferdinand's men and imprisoned, where he tried to drive her to despair and madness. Finally, the Duchess was strangulated to death by his appointed man, Bosola, who later avenged himself by killing the two brothers.

Approaching Webster's text from a feminist historical perspective, the paper posits that reading *The Duchess of Malfi* in the contemporary context of the growing interest and fascination with the female body extends the fundamental premise of feminism, that, gender is a crucial category of critical analysis. This study begins by deconstructing the ideology of the body politic and hierarchical social structure, starting from the standpoint that the constructs of gender, morality and sexuality in the text and contemporary society were highly fraught and fragile. The patriarchal emblem books, the sadistic and erotic overtones of the anatomical texts and the rituals of punishment of female deviants corroborated the basic early modern patriarchal precept that, social power emanated from God the Father, through King the lord, to every man, in whose domain was the woman. As, Saint Paul ascertained the hierarchies of gender – "I will that ye knowe, that Christ is the head of euerie man: and the man is the womans head." (Cor. 11.3) The paper, thereby, intends to study how

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Webster's text deconstructs not only the profound patriarchal and hierarchical social ideologies, but also the popular idea of discipline, punishment and control of the transgressive female bodies and sexualities. The same construct of the politics of the body is subverted by the poignant dramatization of the Duchess' torture, imprisonment and murder, culminating in the severance, rather than justification, of multiple interlinked bonds of sovereignty, family and kinship.

Critics concentrating on the role of the subversive body of the Duchess in *The Duchess of Malfi* in the last decade had illuminated us on various nuances of sexuality, morality, feminist historical ideologies and political issues. However, a brief overview makes clear that none of them dealt with her body from the perspective of contemporary overwhelming scientific and socio-political interest of the human body, and the female body, in particular.

For instance, Theodora Jankowski in her interesting article "Defining/Confining the Duchess, Negotiating the Female Body in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*," discusses the Duchess' use of sexuality in terms of her "body natural" and "body politic", arguing that, 'despite the character's failure to create a successful means by which she can rule as a woman sovereign, she challenges Jacobean society's views regarding the representation of the female body and woman's sexuality.' (Jankowski, 1990, 222) While agreeing with Jankowski's emphasis on the serious ramifications of Ferdinand's desire to control both the political and natural body of the Duchess, I intend to move beyond that reading by interlinking Ferdinand's control of his sister's body with the early modern anxiety about control of unruly female bodies and sexualties, as reflected both in the anatomy theatres and the public punishments of scolds and skimmingtons. In another illuminating essay on sexual issues in the play, "'Troubled with the Mother': Longings, Purgings, and the Maternal Body in *Bartholomew Fair* and *The Duchess of Malfi*", Lori Haslem takes a new stance on male perception of female sexuality, and states that the play 'develops a thematic association between the digestive process and the course of pregnancy.' (Haslem, 1995, 451) My paper intends to carry the argument forward by showing further how the play explored and subverted several connections between male conceptions of female speech, gastronomic tastes and sexual appetites and the female body.

Many scholars have also argued that the stance that the Jacobean perception of female sexuality implied greater political overtones. Notably, Laura Behling's article "'S/He Scandles our Proceedings': The Anxiety of Alternative Sexualities in *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi*" and Frank Whigam's essay "Incest and Ideology: *The Duchess of Malfi*" both point out the political ramifications of the Duchess' sexuality (in Kastan and Stallybrass, 1991). Behling rightly proposes that "what causes the most anxious moments in Webster's stagecraft are challenges to sexual authority, and the dis-ordering of traditional sex and gender relations and hence, political power bases." (*Ibid*, 25)

Whigam's article takes an equally relevant historical position on sexuality, claiming that the Duchess and Ferdinand's relationship represent 'the friction between the dominant social order and emergent pressures toward social change' and can be read 'in light of anthropological notions of incest.' (*Ibid*, 263) He rightly argues that 'the problem of mobility of identity is palpably at the center of the cultural consciousness [. . .] the class-endogamy pressure specifies an outer frontier of licit marriage, which the duchess trespasses, just as the incest taboo marks the inner wilderness, where Ferdinand longs to dwell.' (*Ibid*, 265-6) Again, both Behling and Whigham evade the interlinking of the text with other contemporary issues relating transgressive female sexuality and the female body, apart from the incest taboo.

Besides, many critics have thoughtfully argued that Webster challenged contemporary mores of gender and morality, and this paper undoubtedly agrees with their stance, albeit without oversimplifying the subversive nature of the dramatist's work. For instance, Linda Woodbridge, in her pioneering study, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620*, states that, Webster overturns anti-feminist stereotypes by approving a lusty widow (259-61) and, Kathleen Mcluskie, in her article, "Dramatic and Sexual Politics: The Case of Webster's Duchess", similarly, suggests that the playwright questions the patriarchal "ideology of oppression." (1985, 77-91)

Again, Sara Jayne Steen's in her thought-provoking historical criticism of the play, "The Crime of Marriage: Arbella Stuart and *The Duchess of Malfi*", not only convincingly links the Duchess to Arabella Stuart (1575 - 1615), popularly seen as the Duchess' contemporary real-life parallel, but contends that 'responses to Stuart suggest a more complex historical interpretation is in order, one that more fully acknowledges the misogynistic tensions within the early seventeenth- century codes of gender and morality.' (1991, 62) Clearly, her focus is on the Jacobean political and social responses to the crime of secret marriages, while my study concentrates on the fact that more than the secret endogamous marriage, it was the actualization of female sexual desires that was threatening to the Jacobean patriarchy.

Lastly, among the feminist criticisms of the play, Christy Desmet's "'Neither Maid, Widow, nor Wife': Rhetoric of the Woman Controversy in *Measure for Measure* and *The Duchess of Malfi*," is notable (1991). Using theories borrowed from John Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, Desmet concentrates on the Duchess' two bodies, that of body politic and body natural, and focuses, in part, on her correlation with historical occurences. She concludes that the portrayal of the Duchess as a pawn in Ferdinand's desire to maintain his own aristocratic identity underscores the fact that 'a patriarchal culture seeks to define the female ruler out of existence.' (*Ibid*, 86) Finally, raising similar larger socio-

feminist issues, Dympna Callaghan in her provocative book, *Woman and Gender in Renaissance Tragedy*, claims that her analysis 'the gender opposition is probably the most significant dynamic of Renaissance tragedy'. She concludes by explaining how femininity is often punished in contemporary tragedies with violence and sadistic eroticism, and how transgressive female characters there frequently serve to demystify the assumption that "man"is at the centre of his universe.' (1989, 63) This paper takes Callaghan's apt claim as the starting point of its study on transgressive female sexuality that, the gender opposition is arguably the most significant dynamic of Renaissance tragedy.

The paper is divided into four sub-parts. The first part introduces us to the importance of the early modern body. Here, we study the crucial positioning of the body amidst the contemporary rituals of punishment, anatomy theatres and emblem books. The second part of the paper focuses on the female body as a feminized landscape, which has been entered and gazed upon, in the voyeuristic, scientific and patriarchal culture of the sermons and anatomical texts in the early modern age. In the third part of the paper, we study *The Duchess of Malfi* within the paradigm of the discursive construction of the seventeenth century female body in terms of body politic, and the contemporary socio-cultural concepts of boundary, invasion and contamination. The suppression of the female mouth in the context of the male desire for and control of the female bodies thereby seems important. The fourth part of the study deals with the subversive politics of the Duchess' imprisoned body at multiple levels. Finally, in the conclusion, we examine how in the very terms of the early modern forms of embodiments, such untamed bodies as those of the Duchess' highlight that sexuality is flexible, and that the notion of gender and sexuality are precarious constructs loosely based on a set of hierarchical physiological symbolisms.

I. The significance of the early-modern body

To study the importance of the early-modern body, it is crucial to position it within the contemporary political, socio-cultural and scientific context. Understanding the role of the Elizabethan concept of body politic, public trials and executions and, the anatomy theatres hence becomes imperative.

Sovereign power, in the Tudor age, was inscribed on the body. The politically initiated concept of the King's two bodies – body natural and body politic – was constantly reinvigorated. The nation was made synonymous with the bodies of its Kings and Queens. Shakespeare's history play, *Richard III* (1592) makes clear how royal spectacles were deliberately constructed, when Richard appeared before the London crowd on a balcony 'betwixt two clergymen', to be greeted with prearranged cheers from terrorized citizens. The organic and psychic wholeness of the body was a perfect metaphor for the social module of the Elizabethan and Jacobean World Order, striving for integration and cohesion between the different social classes. Dramatists, thus,

acted as intelligencers to the nation, not only seeing through the cult of monarchial magnificence to the realities of changing social order, but also subjecting the court and state to a more radical critique.

Interestingly, there was a significant growth of public executions – by disemboweling, dismembering and quartering, in the later sixteenth century.[1] To stabilize their power, the Tudor monarchs tried to organize seemingly unambiguous public punishments by controlling the spectacles of trials and executions. Holinshed's *Chronicles*, explained and justified such spectacular display of physical brutality (Hollinshed, 1987). It was under the Tudors that executions were turned into theatrical set-pieces and so they appear in plays such as Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592) and Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611). Therefore, the spectacle of Ferdinand ordering Bosola to kill his disobedient sister in *The Duchess of Malfi* has familiar contemporary overtones.

Simultaneously, both in early modern Italy and in London, public anatomy lessons had developed into ritualized ceremonies.[2] Crooke's *Microcosmographia* (1615) and Vesalius's *Fabrica* (1542) were not only the founding masterpieces of modern Western medicine, but also key documents in the larger cultural history of its period[3]. Approaching from different ends of the spectrum, the executioner and the anatomist seemed to meet over the outstretched body of the convict. 'Dead bodies', as Webster's Cardinal Monticelso reminds Vittoria in her trial scene, in with thinly veiled menace in *White Devil* –

are begged at gallows,
And wrought upon by surgeons, to teach man

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[1] Records of public executions during the sixteenth century are incomplete. Laurence estimates that 72, 000 persons were executed under the reigns of the Tudors, but specific figures are difficult to come by for individual monarchs. The death penalty was in effect for heretics from 1382 to 1677; the number of offences punishable by death steadily increased from the thirteenth through the eighteenth century. Hanging, disemboweling, beheading and dismembering were typical throughout the century for those guilty of treason. See John Laurence, *A History of Capital Punishment*, Port Washington, Kennikat, 1932.

[2] For a detailed study on the anatomized human body, which is the physical body of the convict, see Jonathan Sawday's essay, "The Fate of Marsyas: Dissecting the Renaissance Body", in Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn's *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture* c.1540-1660, London, Reaktion, 1990, pp. 111-35, and also Sawday's remarkable book, *The Body Emblazoned: Dissection and the Human Body in Renaissance Culture*, London and New York, Routledge, 1996.

[3] See Helkiah Crooke, *Microcosmographia*, *A Description of the Body of Man*, published in London in 1615 and Andreas Vesalius, *De corporis humani fabrica*, Basel, 1542.

Wherein he is imperfect. (*III. ii 96-98*)

The mutilated body, then, in a parallel study of the scaffolds of punishment and anatomy theatres, became an important reminder of mortality and the limitations of power. Literary dissection of the theatrical bodies, and especially the female bodies, added another layer of complexity to the scene by further probing the multiple socio-scientific paradigms. Throughout *The Duchess of Malfi*, we find a skeptical impulse to access the interior of the body in an effort to control the Duchess' sexuality. When in the torture scene, that is IV.I, Bosola prayed Ferdinand:

> Faith, end here;
> And go no farther in your cruelty …,
> Ferdinand retorted:
> Damn her! That body of hers…
> I will…
> have her meat serv'd up by bawds and ruffians …

Ferdinand's political and sexual revenge, in a way, then, led him to open and strangle the Duchess' body. In many other contemporary plays like *King Lear*, too, we find instances of dismemberment and torture. Lear acts out the dissection of Regan's imaginary body –

> Then let them 'anatomize' Regan; see what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard-hearts? (*III.vi.33 - 6*)

Like Ferdinand, the old patriarch too felt that by dissecting the other's body, he can analyze the root of her evil nature. Anatomizing, according to the contemporary scientific and social lexicon, implicated divesting the Duchess and Regan of their exterior and, more importantly, revealed the naked truth about their real selves.This paper intends to examine how the multiple nuances of the subversive female bodies, as that of the Duchess in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, challenge our assumptions of the body as a fundamental image of integrated and hierarchical society and a coherent self.

II. The female body in the patriarchal culture of sermons and anatomical texts in the Elizabethan and Jacobean age

Gender was produced and maintained in many different sites in early modern England, most notably in the popular sermons, conduct manuals, anatomical treatises and literature. Sexuality, hence, was an area of struggle of power. And especially so, in that culture of dissection wherein lurked the constant potential of violence.

The ideology that sustained authority, both in state and in the family, was based on patriarchalism. Many sixteenth and seventeenth century plays, therefore, focused on the problem of patriarchal authority in household and state alike – notably, in tragedies, histories and comedies alike, as in *The Duchess of Malfi*, *Henry IV* (1597) and *The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599), respectively.

Again, as objects of subjugation, women were uniquely identified with

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anatomy. Here, it would be wrong to underestimate the degree to which anatomical books reflected and shaped common views about gender and sexuality. In Crooke's popular anatomy *Microcosmographia* (1615), men and women both have bodies, but the woman's body is sexed, earthbound, mortal and of nature (Newman, 1991, 3- 4).[4] Anatomization was a strategy for managing femininity and controlling its uses. Evidently then, anatomical books, written to illustrate the body biologically, represented social behaviour. In other words, anatomy codes considerably influenced the profoundly constructed character of sexual difference based on the body. Thus, the female social status was presented as the natural and unchangeable one. In short, even the female cadaver became a site where male fantasies and desire for power were actualized.

Notably, the speakers of these anatomical, medical and ideological texts, as well as of marriage sermons, were almost invariably men. In Protestant teacher, Thomas Gataker's sermon "A Wife Indeed", woman's body was seen in terms of a series of prosthetic parts and, the 'body whereunto it is fastened' was that of the husband's (Gataker, q. in Newman, Ibid, 7- 8). A rhetorical reliance on binary oppositions easily polarized "male" and "female", and then ranked "male" highly. Modern commentators on Renaissance ideas about sexual difference, as Sawday states, have become increasingly indebted to the 'one-sex' model of understanding early modern biology, to the extent of even arguing that prior to the eighteenth century, there was only one sex, that of the male (*Ibid*, 213- 4). As discussed earlier, popular anatomical books clearly empowered the masculine gaze. The female body was mostly interpreted as a failed male body, as lacking heat, as the pathetic obverse of the male and as a voracious mouth. In contrast to their male counterparts, the artistic representations of the female body made no emphasis on her inherent strength, tenacity or power. Evidently, then, early modern patriarchy required that female bodies and sexualities be socially portrayed as inferior and incomplete. So, Ferdinand repeatedly construed the Duchess' feminine status as a lacking status, as he confesses:

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[4] For a more vivid and pictorial description of the rhetorical reliance on the early modern binary oppositions of the easily polarized 'male' and 'female' worlds, see Newman's replication of the title page of Crooke's *Microcosmographia*, 2 and Vesalius's *Fabrica*, 4. In this thought-provoking book, Newman shows how female subjectivity, both the construction of the gendered subject and the ideology of women's subjection to men, was fashioned in Elizabethan and Jacobean England. I am indebted to Newman's study for illuminating me about the fact that the woman's body in contemporary age symbolized both the fragility of the human frame as well as the power to inspire desire, and how, drama, as spectacle, provides a peculiarly useful locus for analyzing the management of femininity.

> And women like that part, which like the lamprey
> Hath nev'r a bone in't. (*I.ii. 257-8*)

The use of words, like "poniard", which occurs in this same speech, designating a tapered, thrusting knife, and 'lamprey' referring to the phallic symbols of the tongue and the penis, are unambiguous sexual innuendos. As Jankowski rightly explains, Ferdinand's reference to such sexual innuendos implied his desire for more intimate sexual knowledge (*Ibid*, 229). The body, thus, existed as an integral part of the gendered discourses, and can be therefore seen as the primary object of social production and inscription.

Quite ironically, the female body, while not literally present on the Renaissance stage, was constantly constructed in masculine discourses in ways that reinforced larger patriarchal institutions and practices. Characteristically, all the female roles in the early modern plays relied heavily upon the bodies of the performers. Highlighting the sexual immaturity and precociousness of the boy actors, the dramas ridiculed the posturing of heroes – the highly constructed and fictive nature of heroic manliness. Moreover, by showing male actors in female subject positions within a symbolic system of order, that is the order of the stage, Elizabethan theatre productions seemed to suggest that the conceptions of male and female are semiotic constructs.[5] Texts, like *The Duchess of Malfi*, I argue, repeatedly dismantled that seemingly stable, biased and hierarchical notion of masculinity and femininity as represented by male and female bodies.

III. *The Duchess of Malfi* in the context of the 17th-century construction of the female body in terms of body politic, boundary, invasion, and contamination

Webster's play participated in the discursive construction of women in the early-modern period. In terms of the contemporary political ideologies, the play revealed the contradictions of the notion of a female ruler, explored in the way the Duchess used her body natural and body politic. She attempted to secure herself politically by divorcing her natural body from her political one, owing to her private second marriage that existed simultaneously with her public life as a ruler. In this double position, consequently, the Duchess became an uneasy and threatening figure. The male sensibilities of the eroticized political venue of Malfi could no longer accommodate the female duchess.

Significantly, the cover of Vesalius' *Fabrica* (1543) portrayed a woman's body displaced in the theatre of anatomy – the focal point – her

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[5] For a detailed study on the significance of the boy actors playing female roles in the contemporary dramas, read Lisa Jardine's interesting chapter, "Boy Actors, Female Roles and Elizabethan Eroticism", in Kastan and Stallybrass (eds.), 1991, *Staging the Renaissance*, 57- 67.

opened womb.[6] Many contemporary dramas like, Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Shakespeare's *Othello* (1603), and *King Lear* (1606), also attempted to anatomize female sexuality. Thus, the womb or uterus was an object sought after with an almost ferocious intensity not only in the early modern anatomy theatres but also in the anatomical imagery of the theatre itself. Besides, Bosola's and Ferdinand's anxieties regarding the fertile body of the Duchess, and the former's surmising about her 'swell'd' stomach, in Act II, scene iii , seems quite understandable in the context of the contemporary male imaginative voyages into the reserved interiors of the female body. Interestingly, while discussing the significance of the Duchess' pregnant body, Janet Adelman's comment about Hermione's pregnancy in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* is quite relevant, as she points out that in its fullness, the pregnant body becomes 'the register of male emptiness.' (Adelman, 1992, 193- 6) Therefore, to extend Adelman's argument, one can say that Ferdinand is perhaps troubled by the knowledge of the bountiness and fertility of his sister's body as a symbol. This existential knowledge about the corporeal power of the pregnant and reproducing woman makes the Duchess more vulnerable to her skeptical brother.

Clearly then, in its obsession with the hidden sexual interior, the theatre was an effective factory for male fantasies and an active arena for male voyeurism. With the explosion of the margins of all maps – cosmographical, geographical and biological – the female body became the last frontier in the quest for total knowledge. The stage became the primary locus for the playing out of these cultural obsessions, being perfectly designed to serve this function: its very roundedness and visibility made it the most effective medium for exploring the question of specularity and boundary confusion. Besides, the fact that the boundary conditions of the stage debarred women from its compass only intensified the fascination with "woman as mystery". In other words, at the boundaries of the world the explorers faced the borders of discourse, gender and sexuality – brefely, the limits of all systems of meaning available to them.

Significantly, the human body as a model represented a conspicuous bounded system. Owing to the contemporary analogy of body structure and social structure, the precarious boundaries of the bodily frame, therefore, symbolized the threatened boundaries of society. Mary Douglas in her seminal work, *Purity and Danger*, brilliantly analyzed the concepts of pollution and taboo in contemporary society. 'Many ideas about sexual dangers', she explains, 'are better interpreted as symbols of the relations between parts of society, as

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[6] For a better understanding of Andreas Vesalius' Fabrica, see Chapter 4, "Execution, Anatomy and Infamy: Inside the Renaissance Anatomy Theatre", in Sawday's *The Body Emblazoned*, 65-78.

mirroring designs of hierarchy and symmetry which apply in the larger social system.'[7] In *The Duchess of Malfi*, hence, we find the Aragonian brothers deliberating on the impure and infected blood in their sister's body after they learn about the latter's secret marriage. As Ferdinand blatantly says:

Apply desperate physic, […]

To purge infected blood, such as hers. (*II.v.23-6*)

In an interesting study on the common sentiments and responses aroused by the crime of secret marriage of Arabella Staurt (1575-1816), seen as a contemporary real-life parallel of the Duchess, Steen notes that a Jacobean pamphlet writer branded Stuart a descendant of Eve, an unruly woman who had 'touched pleasures in order to transgress.' (quoted In Steene, Ibid. 68) Further, in a more blatantly sexist response, Dudley Carleton wrote in his court news to Thomas Edmondes, the English ambassador at Paris: 'I should tell you some newes of a secret mariage betwixt my Lord Beauchamps' yonger sonne and the Lady Arbella, for which the poore gentleman doth pennance in the tower, and the Ladies hott bloud that could not lue withowt a husband must be cooled in some remote place in ye countrie.' (*Ibid*, note 27) These accusations of Stuart's 'hot blood', like that of Ferdinand's reference to his sister's 'infected blood', revealed more misogynistic than royalist fears, alluding to contemporary ideologies of body pollution.

Moreover, figures of incest and ingestion also blurred all contemporary concepts designating the social and sexual purity. In Webster's play, Ferdinand's incestuous feelings towards his twin sister is evident from his numerous remarks, as in his most famous injunction – 'Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young'. The incestuous desires of the brother obviously complicate not only the relationship between the twins, but also, other sexual issues pertaining to the control of both the natural and the political body of the Duchess. Ironically, as Whigham rightly points out, the incestuous desires of Ferdinand were as scandalous as his sister's secret marriage as both can be seen as contemporary social taboos. (Whigham, *Ibid*, 265- 66) However, as the play dramatized, in accordance with the contemporary rituals of punishment, it was invariably more often the female body that was found blameworthy and made culpable.

Therefore, in the light of Renaissance social standards, Webster problematized the issue of purity and contamination by interlinking it with other

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[7] Mary Douglas provides an interesting definition of the polling individual: "A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed…" in Ch.6, "Powers and Dangers", of her influential book on *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, London, 1984, 113.

issues of sexual difference and control. The Duchess clearly asserts her freedom of choice in her soliloquy following her conversation with her brothers, when they strictly advise her against remarriage:

> If all my royal kindred
> Lay in my way unto marriage
> I'll make them my low foot-steps. (*I.ii.262- 4*)

Again, as Whigham notes that, the Duchess' social mobility offended Ferdinand the most, who was frightened by the contamination of his ascriptive social rank (*Ibid*). However, Whigham's argument fails to explain why in the very first act of the play Ferdinand instructs against his sister's remarriage, without mentioning anything about rank/class. Perhaps her brothers wanted the Duchess to remain faithful to her first husband's memory so as to promote the socio-political image of her as a female aristocrat exemplifying self-restraint of the body. This view is supported by Ferdinand's reaction after learning about the Duchess' second marriage:

> Thou art undone:
> And thou hast ta'en that messy sheet of lead
> That hid thy husband's bones … (*III. ii. 103-5*)

So, I argue that it is not only the case of contamination that the twin -- brother feared, rather he was more perplexed by the fact that the remarriage signified a pleasure – seeking and sexually gratifying experience. Negating her brothers' order of having a cloistered and celibate life, the title character in this play, rather enjoyed a sexually fulfilling life, subverting Jacobean discourses of female sexual pleasure and desire. Most dangerously, the Duchess thereby embodied a woman in control of her own sexual desires.

The paper further proposes that Ferdinand also seemed to be troubled by the inversion of the socially accepted relationship of eroticized dependency, where the woman/wife/sister was always subordinate in position with respect to the man / husband / brother. Significantly, in the contemporary age the term "servant", as Wall points out, could be applied to people of many parts of the social spectrum, like apprentices, secretaries, and stewards. She adds "as such, their central identification was a household 'dependent.'" (Wall, 2002, 263, note 43) So, not only did the Duchess alter the ranks of social dependency, but also granted her favourite household male subordinate an enviable subject-position. Ferdinand feared the political repercussions of that altered gender and social dynamics. Yet, he confesses to Bosola after the Duchess' murder that the text belies other more complex issues involved in his wrath over her re-marriage:

> Only I must confess, I had a hope,
> Had she continu'd a widow, to have gain'd
> An infinite mass of treasure by her death
> And that was the main cause; her marriage,
> That drew a stream of gall quite through my heart; (*IV.ii.280-4*)

The Duchess' wooing, desiring and marrying a steward of her own choice, against that of her male siblings, more disturbigly threatened the organically unified and homoeroticized domestic and royal body.

As an obverse subject, therefore, the female body could not be granted any autonomy. Female sexual autonomy was thus, again, explicitly linked to disturbances of social and political order. Sexual lewdness was almost tantamount to social lewdness, and vice versa. Consequently, that was the logic behind the valorization of the chaste virgin and the denigration of the incestuous or, the adulteress, or the raped woman. Lodovico voices contemporary disgust and contempt for Vittoria, in apt terms of her polluted body:

> O thou glorious strumpet,
> Could I divide thy breath from this pure air
> When't leaves thy body … (*The White Devil*, *V.vi.204-7*)

The central female character in *The Duchess of Malfi*, like those in *The White Devil*, can be seen as a deviant exemplar of the impure woman upon whose tainted body men created the concept of 'whore'.

The female voice, too, like t female body and sexuality, was a closely guarded subject. Hence, the voyeuristic focus was always on the female mouth, conceived as a potential threat to the patriarchal set of values. In the public rituals enacted against scolds, shrews and those against adulteresses, both forms of behaviour were punished similarly with skimmingtons or the charivari. All these social policing measures were, in other words, spectacular attempts at disciplining unbridled female sexuality. As Wall informs us, charivari referred to the shaming rituals designed to enforce community standards that involved a procession filled with discordant rough music that was directed at either a cuckold or, a scold. (*Ibid*, note 18) This reminds us of Ferdinand's similar perverse tactics of shaming his sister by appointing a group of madmen in the bizarre torture scene of the play.

The particular obsession with the female mouth could be deduced from the analogy that, an open mouth and immodest speech are tantamount to open genitals and immodest acts. Or, according to another analogy superbly elaborated by Mazzio, as associations between the tongue and the penis became more explicit in the 16th and 17th centuries, the imagined relationship between rhetorical and sexual performance became more viable. (*Ibid*, 59) In Webster's play, therefore, it is the articulation of her desires that made the Duchess more transgressive as she argued for the recognition of the needs of her body—

> Why should only I
> Of all the other princesses of the world
> Be cas'd up, like a holy relic? I have youth
> And a little beauty. (*III.ii.127-30*)

Her strong rhetoric seems disturbing in the context of the contemporary eroticized and heavily gendered symbolisms of discursive penetration, which

made oratory, or discourse, a predominantly male domain. It is in the same scene, therefore, that Ferdinand orders his sister:

> …cut out thine own tongue
> Lest it bewray him (Antonio). (*III.ii.109- 10*)

These references also serve to justify Ferdinand's technique of asserting his power over his sister by verbally dismembering her body. As labelling marginalizes women by giving them the "names" of those who live on the margins of the acceptable society – whores or witches – enabled early modern patriarchy to relegate these women on the fringes of the acceptable boundaries of society. Hence, in *The Duchess of Malfi*, the body of the Duchess is repeatedly feminized by discursive acts of penetration, both in terms of the male anatomical gaze and the varied verbal sexual threats.

Thus, by localizing that which was threatening, for instance, her discourse/ mouth, Ferdinand enabled his fantasy of control by verbally abusing her. However, the Duchess paradoxically combated the wrath of madness and torture of her brothers through her matured and more logical rhetoric till her death. The Jacobean patriarchy necessitated other representations of her sins, as the female voraciousness, to inevitably encode a logic of revenge. Like in *Antony and Cleopatra*, in this play too, female sexuality and appetite are inextricably linked. Cleopatra and the Duchess all courted a reputation for prowess in matters of food consumption and sexual conquest. While the latter fed on the 'apricocks', Bosola made two noteworthy observations as 'How greedily she eats them!' (*II.i.150*), and a little later, 'most vulturous eating of the appricocks.' (*II.ii.2*) Cleopatra similarly desired:

> …moody food
> Of us that trade in love. (*II.v.1-2*)

Feasting, therefore, seemed gluttonous for the early moderns as its gastronomic pleasures were too easily translated into sexual gratification and sensual pleasure. Caesar, like Ferdinand in the other two plays, failed to entertain the carnal appetite of Cleopatra and was thereby threatened by the challenge she represented to male desire for control of female bodies and appetites.

Webster's detailed portrayal of the body - that eats, drinks, copulates, expands with pregnancy and gives birth - summoned up anxieties and suspicions toward this body. The Duchess' concern with her bodily appearance made her character all the more palpable, as she confessed during her pregnancy,

> Your arm Antonio, do I not grow fat?
> I am exceeding short-winded. (*II.i. 111-12*)

She also had realistic body frailties, including impetuous appetites for food and sexual love. Thus, through these simultaneously processes of demystifications of contemporary notions about the royal and female bodies, the playwright highlighted that the human body essentially remained the same in all classes. It

was the varied socio-cultural, political and sexual nuances that established these psycho-somatic classifications.

IV. Subversive politics of the Duchess' imprisoned body at multiple levels

Webster further presented an ironic commentary of the subtleties of the contemporary discipline and punishment of the errant body as he poignantly dramatized the strangulation and death scene of the Duchess. As Karen Cunningham emphasized, despite official efforts to direct all aspects of the political trials and punishments toward the single theme of the monarch's glory, a victim's body sometimes resisted.[8] Laurence provided a popular historical account of Fisher's boiled head – which instead of decaying, turned "fresher and fresher", even after his execution, in 1535. (Laurence, Ibid) The spectacle of torture, hence, had an ambivalent impact on the audience – the condemned, the traitor, or the accused 'other' often became the hero of the political show. In *The Duchess of Malfi*, too, the Duchess heroically welcomed her end by ceremoniously putting off her 'last woman's fault':

> Come violent death,
> Serve for mandragora to make me sleep… (*IV.ii.234-5*)

She literally starved herself to death, as she declared:

> The Church enjoins fasting
> I'll starve myself to death. (*IV.i.75- 6*)

The central character, thereby, subsumed her own murder in that artifice of self-fashioning whose magnificence was inseparable from its humility –

> They that enter there
> Must go upon their knees… (233- 4)

Thus, through his brilliant staging of female corporeal suffering in the death scene, Webster added a new dimension to the contemporary rituals of torture and punishment as the Duchess transcended mortal class distinctions and gender hierarchies to immortal fame and dignity.

More importantly, the breaking of the unity of the tightly conceived body symbolisms and hierarchies implied that *The Duchess of Malfi* perhaps pointed towards a world of breaking conventions. The Duchess wooed and married her household steward in an inversion of tight Jacobean male/ female

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[8] In Karen Cunningham's discussion of the unsettling duplicities of the spectacles of public torture and punishment in early modern age and in Marlovian drama, we find elaborate historical accounts of the unique cases of state sanctioned violence. In this context, she highlights on the mystification of the corpse of the criminal, which, as she rightly deduces, complicated the moral and the political significance of the contemporary drama of death. See, Cunningham, "Renaissance Execution and Marlovian Elocution: The Drama of Death", *PMLA* 105, 2, 1990, 219-23.

roles and class restrictions. She proclaimed her unconventional behaviour with:

> I am going into a wilderness,
> Where I shall find nor path, nor friendly clew
> To be my guide. (*I.i.365-8*)

Again, Bosola – hired by Ferdinand as spy and avenger of his sister's marriage – switches allegiance and, takes revenge against the Aragonian brothers. From a structural point of view, order was violated when the title protagonist dies one act before the play's ending. Webster also signalled the generic usurpation of the Duchess as she dominated the catastrophe of the concluding heroics of self-fashioning. Further, he made the main vehicle of his radical argument a woman who self-consciously dressed her defiance of both rank and gender norms in the heroic rhetoric of male chivalry. By its exact reversals of the earlier wedding ritual, the Duchess's dying gesture, therefore, became an emblematic recapitulation of one of the play's insistent themes – the critique of worldly rank, status and spectacle. Her very acceptance of her martyrdom in the kneeling posture of the obedient wife carved upon her first husband's tomb, converted that image of domestic piety into a martyr's gesture of heroic singularity. And significantly, at the end of the play, the Duchess' eldest son by Antonio, rather than her first husband, inherited her rank, overturning Webster's historical source and perhaps validating her unorthodox marriage. Remarkably, the anarchy signaled towards the end of the play was quite uncannily similar to the tempestuous and anarchical state of England at the wake of the Civil War, nearly two decades later.

V. Conclusion

The importance of the study of the tortured Duchess' body in *The Duchess of Malfi* lies in its highlighting radical means of expressiong the body. Webster's play signalled quite prophetically that the psycho-somatic modalities of conceptualizing gender and the one-sex model were no longer viable. Through our investigation of the Jacobean period's emergent forms of sexuality which were at once structured and disrupted by multiple forms of embodiment, we learn that sexuality is flexible. Furthermore, when read within a rich interdisciplinary socio-political framework, the play challenges the notion of morality and sexuality that is determined by a set of implicitly hierarchical physiological symbolisms.

The paper also proposes that the Duchess in this play brilliantly exploits the utterly transgressive status of her subversive body in terms of an effective mode of self-fashioning. She forges an identity of her own, challenging various societal and sexual boundaries. Thus, the same conceptual model of body symbolism, which was in vogue roughly from the fifteenth century till the end of seventeenth century, instead of conforming to the standard concepts of organic and social wholeness, here became an effective tool of subversive self-fashioning of the individuated female.

Thus, the study concludes with the proposition that, such a reading of the central female character in Webster's play highlights that, despite the claims of numerous contemporary conduct books, chronicles of public punishment and anatomical treatises, corporeal difference with all its notions of morbid eroticism cannot exclusively define prove sexual difference. The play demystified the pervading assumption that, the male body was at the centre of logic and meaning. To the contemporary audience, therefore, the paper surmises, that signaled an epistemological shift in the empirical understanding of the body and identity. Or, in other words, this implied a fundamental reordering of knowledge. Above all, the paper contends that, the play underscores the way in which in the Jacobean age, like that in every historical period, our mutable ideas of sexuality and gender as well as femininity and masculinity have been interestingly shaped by multiple socio-political changes, religious sermons, medical interventions and literature.

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MODALITĂŢI DE REPREZENTARE A CORPORALITĂŢII
ÎN CREAŢIA LUI BECKETT ŞI ANTONIONI

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Abstract: Beckett's metaphysical theatre and Antonioni's cinematographic work dealing with human alienation in modern society mark an important stage in the artistic evolution in the latter half of the 20th century. One of their aesthetic innovations regards the manner in which heroes are conceived as both of them shift the focus from the traditional character delineation to corporeality which becomes a major means of expressing human condition and destiny. The transformation of the body into a meaningful sign of interiority led to the establishment of a new artistic paradigm that constitutes the purpose of our analysis.
Keywords: Beckett, Antonioni, corporeality, representation, comparison.

Teatrul metafizic conceput de Samuel Beckett şi filmul alienării omului în societatea modernă realizat de Michelangelo Antonioni produc mutaţii majore ale esteticii teatrale şi cinematografice în a doua jumătate a secolului al XX-lea. Una dintre inovaţiile artistice vizate de cei doi mari creatori priveşte categoria personajului care îşi pierde atributele tradiţionale devenind un personaj-corp, simulacru al sufletului şi marcă a destinului uman. Transformarea corpului într-un centru purtător de semnificaţii şi a corporalităţii într-un semn al interiorităţii fiinţei a condus la instaurarea unei noi paradigme artistice a personajului ce va face obiectul analizei noastre.

În cazul operei dramatice a lui Beckett, corpul-personaj beneficiază de reprezentări insolite în tangenţă cu estetica urâtului, transpusă într-un limbaj scenic fizic şi concret, prin intermediul căruia conştiinţa artistului meditează asupra condiţiei tragice a omului, pradă „monstrului bicefal al mântuirii şi damnării care este Timpul."[9] Ca atare, universul ficţional beckettian valorifică valenţele multiple ale corpului-ruină, relevând invariabil „o infralume" suferind de amnezie, cecitate sau paralizie, aşa cum o demonstrează galeria de bătrâni solitari în monodrame sau cuplurile Vladimir-Estragon, Pozzo-Lucky (*Aşteptându-l pe Godot*), Hamm-Clov, Nagg şi Nell (*Sfârşit de partidă*), Winnie

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[9] Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, traducere din engleză de Vlad Russo, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas, 2004, p.9.

şi Willie (*O, ce zile frumoase*). Reprezentarea neputinţei în diverse forme (decrepitudine, dificultate motrică, neîndemânare, căderi groteşti etc.) se înscrie în registrul negativ al corporalităţii căreia îi revine rolul de a ilustra spectacolul atroce al existenţei în aşteptarea morţii:

> Estragon (*oprindu-se*): Destul. Sunt obosit.
>
> Vladimir (*oprindu-se*): Nu suntem în formă. Să facem, totuşi, câteva respiraţii.
>
> Estragon: Nu mai vreau să respir.
>
> Vladimir: Ai dreptate. (*Pauză*) Să facem, totuşi, arborele, pentru echilibru.
>
> Estragon: Arborele?
>
> (*Vladimir face arborele, clătinându-se.*)
>
> Vladimir: (*oprindu-se*): E rândul tău.
>
> (*Estragon face arborele, clătinându-se.*)
>
> Estragon: Crezi că Dumnezeu mă vede?
>
> Vladimir: Trebuie să închizi ochii.
>
> (*Estragon închide ochii, se clatină şi mai tare.*)
>
> Estragon (*oprindu-se, ridicând pumnii, strigând cât îl ţine gura*): Doamne, ai milă de mine!
>
> Vladimir (*vexat*): Şi eu?
>
> Estragon (*acelaşi joc*): De mine! Fie-ţi milă! De mine! (*Intră Pozzo şi Lucky. Pozzo a devenit orb. Lucky e împovărat ca în primul act. Funia, ca în primul act, dar mult mai scurtă, ca să-i permită lui Pozzo s-o urmeze mai comod. Lucky are pălărie nouă. La vederea lui Estragon şi a lui Vladimir, el se opreşte. Pozzo, continuându-şi drumul, se ciocneşte de el. Vladimir şi Estragon se dau înapoi.*)
>
> Pozzo: (*agăţându-se de Lucky care, sub această nouă povară, se clatină*): Ce s-a întâmplat? Cine a strigat?
>
> (*Lucky cade, lăsând să-i scape tot, şi trântindu-l pe Pozzo în cădere. Rămân amândoi lungiţi, fără mişcare, în mijlocul bagajelor.*)
>
> Estragon: E Godot?
>
> Vladimir: Pică la fix![10]

Existând întotdeauna o corespondenţă directă între esenţă şi aparenţă în textul beckettian, didascaliile completează semnificaţiile discursului scenic, dialog sau monolog, schiţând portrete rudimentare prin intermediul unor notaţii sumare şi al detaliului concret. Astfel, reţinem că bătrânul din *Atunci* este „un chip palid,"

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[10] Samuel Beckett, *Aşteptându-l pe Godot*, traducere de Gellu Naum, Bucureşti, Editura Univers şi Teatrul Naţional „I. L. Caragiale", 1970, pp. 73-74.

încadrat de „părul lung, alb, căzut peste urechi,"[11] iar varianta sa din *Solo*, povestitorul, are „părul alb, ciufulit, cămaşă de noapte lungă, ciorapi albi căzuţi."[12] De regulă, descrierile corporale nu au rolul de a individualiza, ci de a contura un personaj serial (în *Du-te-vino*, Flo, Vi şi Ru sunt „cât mai asemănătoare, diferenţiate doar prin culoare"[13]) sau emblematic, prototip al speciei (silueta în negru din *Eu nu*), în concordanţă cu tematica operei sale care, potrivit lui Eugen Ionescu, ilustrează scenic interogaţiile conştiinţei în raport cu propria sa existenţă „omul va muri; omul are limite; omul nu-şi acceptă destinul, şi totuşi are un destin; care este semnificaţia acestui destin? Care este semnificaţia faptului că omul nu poate da o semnificaţie destinului său etc.?"[14]

Întrucât corpul nu mai asigură unitatea şi identitatea eului, îşi face apariţia corpul-fragment care uneori dobândeşte calitatea de personaj antagonist al dramei. În *Eu nu*, „Gura" imensă reconstituie povestea unei vieţi nefericite şi însingurate al cărei unic martor este un personaj mut, chinuit de adevărurile revelate, iar în *Act fără cuvinte I*, o mână invizibilă deplasează continuu obiectele pe care vrea să le atingă un protagonist tăcut, torturându-i aşteptările. Alteori, utilizarea vocii *off* constituie unul din procedeele preferate de Beckett în monodrame pentru a ilustra scenic procesul alienării de sine, de propriul corp, mimica şi grimasele personajelor devenind indici ai dramei petrecute în interioritatea unei conştiinţe care, nemaiputând să se perceapă ca integralitate în prezent, rămâne ancorată printre meandrele lacunare ale trecutului. De pildă, Henry din *Cenuşă* îşi caută unitatea pierdută în propria sa biografie expusă cu stridenţă de vocile exterioare, aşa cum, în *Spune Joe,* personajul îndură cruzimea unei voci feminine ce îi reaminteşte de o culpă de neiertat din trecut.

Reducţia extremă a personalităţii la imaginea unui corp purtând însemnele timpului inexorabil transformă personajul într-un obiect concret, parte integrantă a unui univers reificat. În viziunea dramaturgului, trupul şi obiectul exterior alcătuiesc o unitate ale cărei elemente componente sunt indisolubil legate: Hamm şi scaunul său de paralitic, Nagg şi Nell şi pubelele în care vieţuiesc (*Sfârşit de partidă*), Winnie şi movila de nisip (*O, ce zile frumoase*). De remarcat este faptul că o astfel de asociere dintre corp şi obiectul recipient al corpului dobândeşte funcţie conotativă sugerând degradarea biologică, regresia fiinţei, implacabilul drum către moarte. La nivel de discurs, cotrastul dintre dorinţele personajelor (Winnie ar vrea să zboare, Hamm îşi

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[11] *Idem*, *Atunci*, în româneşte de Ludmila Patlanjoglu şi Adrana Bittel, în *Secolul 20*, Revistă de Sinteză editată de Uniunea Sriitorilor din R. S. România, nr. 298-299-300, 1985, p. 75.

[12] *Idem*, *Solo*, p. 86.

[13] *Idem*, *Du-te-vino*, p. 105.

[14] Eugène Ionesco, *Între viaţă şi vis, Convorbiri cu Claude Bonnefoy*, traducere din franceză de Simona Cioculescu, Bucureşti, Editura Humanitas, 1999, p.118.

imaginează că va fugi pe o plută) şi propria lor imobilitate accentuează tragicul propriei lor condiţii.

Victimă a neputinţei fizice, corpul reificat nu poate fi decât dependent de prezenţa celuilalt, împreună constituind un tandem necesar, dar şi o formă de convieţuire torturantă (Clov ameninţă că îl va părăsi pe Hamm, creându-i o perpetuă angoasă; Pozzo îl conduce pe Lucky, legat de o funie şi pocnind din bici). Deşi private de orice liant, cuplurile beckettiene, parodieri ale relaţiei stăpân-sclav, poartă povara dependenţei reciproce a unor protagonişti alienaţi, rătăciţi în existenţă, prizonieri ai unei situaţii fără de ieşire. Indiferent de ipostazele sale, solitarul din monodrame sau trăind singurătatea ontologică alături de un partener, personajul-corp beckettian devine modalitatea scenică fundamentală de reprezentare a suferinţei într-o creaţie care s-ar putea încadra în ceea ce George Banu consideră a fi „teatrul de imagine". Cu alte cuvinte, un asemenea teatru „fascinează graţie sectretului cu care spectatorul se confruntă şi încearcă să-l descifreze". Un teatru „seducător şi inconfortabil" care „incită spectatorul la libertatea discontinuităţii, la privirea globală şi înţelegere episodică," imaginea fiind decodată nu „în totalitate," „ci în mod fragmentar , pe baza unui dialog personal hrănit de fantasme, proiecţii, pulsiuni."[15]

În ceea ce priveşte filmul lui Antonioni, prioritatea acordată corpului-personaj permite analogii cu estetica dramaturgului irlandez, dar şi diferenţe specifice notabile. În *Aventura* (1960), *Noaptea* (1961) şi *Eclipsa* (1962), considerată trilogie a incomunicabilităţii şi alienării, cineastul nu transformă corpul într-un semn al agresiunii timpului asupra fiinţei perisabile, ci al interiorităţii personajelor, al mişcării insondabile a conştiinţelor. Ca şi Beckett, el aduce în prim plan un cuplu de protagonişti, reunind două entităţi separate, aflate în imposibilitatea racordării reciproce a eurilor, însă interesul prioritar îl constituie studiul relaţiei dintre bărbat şi femeie, fiind întotdeauna preocupat să înţeleagă misterul feminităţii. Cercetând minuţios alchimia sentimentului de iubire, Antonioni revelă, cu obiectivitatea analistului, manifestările sufletului feminin, într-o scriitură filmică a trăirilor imperceptibile ce îl plasează alături de marii cineaşti ai intimităţii.

Viziunea sa asupra fragilităţii raporturilor umane ca şi asupra incompatibilităţii simţămintelor se concretizează într-o artă cinematografică personală care polemizează cu tema „sufletelor-pereche", deschizând astfel noi direcţii de evoluţie a filmului. Din acest punct de vedere, opera regizorului italian poate fi încadrată în ceea ce A. Codoban numeşte drept „mitologie a corporeismului,"[16] a cărei caracteristică esenţială rezidă în fenomenul de

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[15] George Banu, *Ultimul sfert de secol teatral, O panoramă subiectivă*, Piteşti, Editura Paralela 45, 2003, pp.15-16.

[16] Aurel Codoban, *Amurgul iubirii, De la iubirea pasiune la comunicarea corporală*, Cluj, Editura Idea Design & Print, 2004, p. 89.

„dezvrăjire a iubirii occidentale"[17]. Dintre titlurile menţionate mai sus, alegem filmul *Eclipsa*, pe care îl vom analiza detaliat în continuare, ca exemplu ilustrativ al acestui tip de mitologie.

În ca din prima secvenţă, care ne introduce într-un apartament dintr-un cartier de la marginea Romei servind drept scenă a despărţirii protagoniştilor, Vittoria şi Riccardo, Antonioni contrariază aşteptările receptorului. Faptul că incipitul filmului este mut timp de câteva minute demonstrează că, de la bun început, regizorul mizează pe un efect psihologic, urmărind să stârnească curiozitatea spectatorului şi să întârzie răspunsurile la întrebările pe care şi le pune în mod legitim. Unde sunt personajele? Ce anume se întâmplă? Lipsit de repere, receptorul este nevoit să „înfrunte" ceea ce Barthes numeşte „încâlceala limbajului,"[18] adică să decodeze structura semnificantă a operei găsind el însuşi un sens la ceea ce i se prezintă drept enigmă cu o mare artă a gradaţiei, a timpilor aparent morţi, a trenării într-un statism ce pare că îşi este suficient sieşi. Această violare a filmului ca poveste spectaculosă, a filmului naraţiune este tocmai ceea ce constituie arta lui Antonioni, expresie cinematografică a ceea ce nu se întâmplă, a invizibilului dincolo de evenimentul explicit, a tăcerilor sugestive în care doar obiectele-semn şi personajele-corpuri vorbesc un limbaj pe care spectatorul trebuie să şi-l apropie.

Dar cum se concretizează acest tip de limbaj? Modalitatea în care debutează filmul reprezintă o primă exemplificare a ceea ce s-ar putea numi corporalitate şi obiectualizarea personajelor în viziunea artistică a lui Antonioni. Respectiv un cadru static ne înfăţişează, în amorsă, o veioză aprinsă, aflată în partea stângă a imaginii, şi un şir de cărţi ce ocupă partea de jos în dreapta, sugerând astfel un mediu intelectual. O pată albă poziţionată deasupra cărţilor atrage privirea stârnind o nedumerire pe care aparatul de filmat, printr-un travelling uşor spre dreapta, o dezambiguizează lent dezvăluind, în sfârşit, silueta unui bărbat aşezat (Riccardo), cu braţul sprijinit de cărţi. Deşi descoperim fiinţa umană în acest decor, ea nu face notă discordantă cu obiectele din jur, ci, inexpresivă şi nemişcată, devine element component al unui microunivers reificat. La fel de sugestivă este poziţionarea obiectelor în planul următor, de pildă, micul obelisc suprapus peste faţa bărbatului, lampa aprinsă în fundal sau ventilatorul în mişcare din partea dreaptă a cadrului, toate cele trei elemente inducând, prin prezenţa lor pregnantă comparativ cu cea a bărbatului, senzaţia de dominare împletită cu un sentiment de nelinişte. Recunoaştem aici modalitatea de „punere în prezenţă a personajelor", trăsătură esenţială a artei regizorului italian, care se traduce „printr-o lungă, aproape monotonă, fixare a

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[17] *Ibidem*, p 95.
[18] Roland Barthes, *Fragmente dintr-un discurs îndrăgostit,* în *Romanul scriiturii*, *Antologie*, Selecţie de texte şi traducere de Adriana Babeţi şi Delia Şepeţean-Vasiliu, Bucureşti, Editura Univers, 1987, p. 230.

lor într-unul şi acelaşi cadru".[19]

Camera de filmat nu întârzie să dezvăluie ţinta privirii bărbatului, numai că o face printr-un racord neobişnuit, ce atestă din nou subtilitatea şi originalitatea stilistică a lui Antonioni. Spectatorul se aşteaptă în mod firesc ca obiectul privirii să fie o altă persoană, premisă necesară pentru un dialog lămuritor asupra a ceea ce se petrece. În schimb, nu i se arată decât imaginea unei femei văzute din spate (Vittoria) care, după ce priveşte câteva clipe printre draperiile ce maschează o fereastră, se întoarce cu privirea coborâtă într-un punct nevăzut. Este o demonstraţie a tehnicii autorului de a pune în valoare „polisemia unui plan-secvenţă" menit, printr-o „răbdătoare examinare a personajului,"[20] să transmită semnalele multiple ale absenţei comunicării dintre personajele reduse la condiţia de corpuri-obiecte pierdute printre lucruri. Impresia de separare, de disjuncţie a cuplului este cu atât mai intensă cu cât Vittoria şi Riccardo apar în cadre diferite, ca şi când ar fi izolaţi în parcelele unui spaţiu închis, fără putinţa apropierii, a regăsirii reciproce.

După cum s-a observat, regizorul creează o scriitura cinematografică în care se pleacă de la obiect înspre protagonişti, exteriorul devenind un semn intens conotativ al interiorităţii. Încadrarea corpurilor umane în mediul ambiant, raporturile geometrice dintre ele şi lucruri, imobilismul sau deplasarea lor în spaţiu deţin rolul semnificantului, un semnificant complex care are capacitatea de a transfera în domeniul vizibilului un semnificat invizibil – trăirea umană, ascunsul fiinţei. Din acest motiv o descifrare a personajelor nu se poate face decât având în vedere felul în care spaţiul este oglindit şi cum, la rândul său, oglindeşte fiinţa.

În cadrele următoare, obiectele şi mesajele tactile transmit în aceeaşi manieră subtilă noi informaţii despre protagonişti, spectatorul fiind nevoit sa participe la actul estetic pentru a-i întregi sensul cu propriile sale semnificaţii. Scrumiera înţesată cu resturi de ţigară, încadrată de rama unui tablou, indică un eveniment intens deja consumat, iar mica statuetă non-figurativă, ce pare să simbolizeze un obiect falic, trimite la prezenţa bărbatului ignorată de către femeie. Secvenţa în sine este grăitoare întrucât stabileşte un contrast evident între personaje. Femeia interacţionează cu lucrurile (de exemplu, înlocuieşte scrumiera cu statueta), în timp ce bărbatul rămâne inert, lipsit de reacţie, întărind convingerea spectatorului că ea este cea care deţine puterea de a schimba starea de fapt.

Recursul la comunicarea atitudinală prin valorificarea limbajului non-verbal în detrimentul derulării explicite a istoriei este de asemenea privilegiat de cineast pentru a compune partitura stărilor de spirit ale personajelor. În absenţa cuvântului, mimica, mişcarea şi gesturile corporale construiesc un ansamblu

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[19] Ioan Lazăr, *Cum se face un film*, Bucureşti, Editura Cartea Românească, 1986, p. 327
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 327

vizual rafinat cu valoare de resort al povestirii. Un exemplu edificator se detaşează în secvenţele centrate pe eroină (interpretată de Monica Vitti), al cărei joc complex vorbeşte de la sine. O vedem, aparent indiferentă, contemplând un tablou, în timp ce partenerul, a cărui expresie indică agasarea sau nerăbdarea, o urmăreşte atent. Un travelling uşor înapoi permite comutarea camerei de pe figura bărbatului pe imaginea gambelor femeii, sugerând o frământare imperceptibilă, ulterior amplificată într-o succesiune de mişcări. Protagonista se îndreaptă în grabă spre fereastră, pare-se în dorinţa de a evada dintr-un spaţiu apăsător, ridică draperia şi îşi contemplă imaginea reflectată, ca şi cum şi-ar străpunge propria-i conştiinţă. Încordarea interioară, dialogul cu sine transpar în gestul ei ulterior de ghemuire pe divan, cu spatele la partenerul care o priveşte mut. După acest hiat meditativ, femeia întoarce capul şi, privind cu hotărâre în direcţia până atunci evitată, se ridică dispusă să vorbească, explorarea deplină a limbajului corporal ajutând spectatorul să înţeleagă că va asista la confruntarea personajelor.

Intenţia eroinei de a se adresa bărbatului este semnalată de cadrul care îi înfăţişează simultan, pentru prima oară intervenind dialogul şi realizându-se racordul privirilor. Deşi limbajul verbal dobândeşte o pondere importantă în economia imaginilor, expectanţele spectatorului continuă să fie contrazise. Neexpresive, seci, ambigue, incapabile să comunice adevărul, cuvintele nu fac decât să adauge ceea ce poate spectatorul a intuit deja (Vittoria hotărăşte să-şi părăsească iubitul, Riccardo, mulţumindu-se să-i spună că se simte nefericită). Din punctul de vedere al spectatorului curios, dornic să afle mai multe amănunte, motivarea rupturii este incompletă lasându-i senzaţia de gest gratuit, accentuat de banalitatea comportamentului personajelor (dovadă cadrul care ne dezvăluie expresia imună, îngheţată a protagonistului, în timp ce Vittoria pleacă exasperată). Dar este o impresie de moment deoarece regizorul introduce un element surpriză scoţând în evidenţă imprevizibilitatea reacţiilor umane. Drept urmare, vom asista la o schimbare subită a conduitei bărbatului care reuşeşte să-şi domine frustrarea şi, ca un ultim omagiu adus femeii, o însoţeşte până unde locuieşte, după care dispare din poveste. După cum s-a remarcat, ca şi în teatrul lui Beckett unde totul pare „golit de orice expresie, de orice conţinut"[21], filmul lui Antonioni nu expune o întâmplare dramatică în accepţiunea clasică a termenului, care presupune parcurgerea unor evenimente ieşite din comun de către nişte personaje, la rândul lor, aflate în confruntare. În ciuda acestui fapt, încărcătura dramatică şi tensiunea sunt mereu prezente trezind interesul spectatorului prin mijloace de expresie specifice artei cineastului.

În acelaşi context se poate înscrie şi secvenţa care ne prezintă pe Vittoria în vizită la o prietenă revenită dintr-o călătorie în Africa, unde, din nou, corpul semnificant şi atitudinea faţă de lucruri devin modalităţi de portretizare.

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[21] Eugène Ionesco, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

În contrast cu imaginea precedentă a unei eroine copleşite de spleen şi insatisfacţie, de această dată îi descoperim disponibilitatea de a simţi intens, de a se bucura. Artefactele africane, simboluri ale unei lumi sălbatice şi exotice, constituie stimulul schimbării stărilor sale afective având capacitatea de a o proiecta mental dincolo de realitatea incomodă a prezentului. Precum personajele lui Beckett, Vittoria nutreşte dorinţa de evadare din sinele oprimat într-un alt spaţiu în care fericirea să fie posibilă, justificându-se astfel în ochii spectatorului curiozitatea şi plăcerea cu care atinge obiectele (spre exemplu, laba enormă de elefant pe post de picior de masă), insistenţa cu care priveşte imaginea zăpezilor de pe Kilimanjaro, dar mai ales abandonarea propriei sale fiinţe în frenezia dansului tribal. Experienţa trăită în ziua următoare la bordul unui mic avion, simbol prin excelenţă al eliberării, încheie, ca o coda, aventura eroinei. Avionul nu ajunge prea departe, ci aterizează pe aerodromul din Verona, unde, în locul orizontului african, Vittoria se mărgineşte să savureze, pentru câteva clipe, liniştea şi imensitatea peisajului deschis. Motivul Africii îl regăsim în prezenţa celor doi negri aşteptând în faţa unui bar, a căror letargie semnalează spectatorului că visul eroinei s-a prăbuşit. Amintind de abulia personajelor beckettiene, protagonista lui Antonioni nu poate săvârşi gestul necesar materializării propriilor sale aspiraţii.

În rezonanţă cu estetica corporalităţii negative explorate de Beckett, secvenţele care îl aduc în prim plan pe Alain Delon în rolul brokerului Piero radiografiază bursa din Roma, unul din marile simboluri ale societăţii capitaliste şi totodată spaţiu de descătuşare a energiilor masculine. Camera de filmat urmăreşte, din toate unghiurile posibile şi cu îngroşări caricaturale, manifestările unui corp-personaj colectiv, ale cărui elemente componente reacţionează frenetic la mişcările cifrelor de pe un panou enorm, într-o succesiune de planuri cu menirea de a surprinde o frescă variată a expresiilor şi reacţiilor umane. Antonioni creează astfel metafora visului capitalist, redat cu ascuţimea satirei care îmbină forţa de sugestie a elementelor vizuale şi sonore: o îngrămădeală viermuitoare de corpuri uniformizate, o expoziţie de feţe schimonosite, de gesturi mecanice, groteşti, agresive pe un fundal de zgomote în crescendo, de vorbe descompuse în strigăte.

Revenind la Roma, Vittoria asistă la căderea bursei, devenind martora unei drame paroxistice prin care cineastul scoate în evidenţă depersonalizarea şi dezumanizarea societăţii materialiste, subjugate de pasiunea pentru câştigul lejer. Trecând de la general la particular în aceeaşi cheie critică, regizorul se concentrează asupra relaţiei dintre mamă şi fiică, oferindu-ne o altă variantă a înstrăinării şi rupturii afective, de altfel, tema majoră a filmului. Să amintim că această idee fusese deja evocată într-o altă secvenţă când mama Vittoriei, preocupată să se îmbogăţească prin speculaţii bursiere, rămâne impasibilă la nevoia de comunicare şi apropiere a fiicei sale. În contextul falimentului generalizat, care constituie centrul de interes al secvenţelor dedicate prăbuşirii

bursei, noncomunicabilitatea devine un laitmotiv puternic. În acest sens putem interpreta atitudinea Vittoriei care, întrebată de mama sa dacă va lua masa împreună cu Riccardo, îi răspunde afirmativ oferind spectatorului satisfacţia de a cunoaşte realitatea. Înţelegem astfel că, în lumea alienată zugrăvită de cineast, adevărul îşi pierde consistenţa pulverizându-se în simulacre.

Satira societăţii se completează cu secvenţa în care Vittoria urmăreşte, poate din curiozitate, poate din milă, un bătrân victimă a evenimentului bursier abia consumat. Cu insistenţă pe gestul anodin, camera îi reconstituie cu fidelitate traseul fără să indice vreo reacţie sau trăire ieşită din comun (mai întâi la o farmacie pentru a-şi cumpăra un medicament şi apoi la o terasă unde comandă apă minerală în timp ce notează ceva). Absent, prizonier al propriei singurătăţi, bătrânul pleacă lăsând în urmă o filă ce stârneşte curiozitatea eroinei. Însă, spre surprinderea ei şi implicit a spectatorului, fila respectivă nu conţine nici o confesiune, ci doar câteva flori desenate, ceea ce ne sugerează că, într-o lume populată de corpuri-personaje, accesul la intimitatea celuilalt nu este permis şi nu se pot stabili punţi de legătură între euri.

Însă episodul urmăririi bătrânului este simptomatic şi din alt punct de vedere pentru că, sub impactul neputinţei de a relaţiona cu o altă fiinţă, Vittoria îl reîntâlneşte pe Piero, făcându-se astfel trecerea la cea de-a doua parte a filmului, axată pe sentimentul care se încheagă între cei doi protagonişti. Tema erotică se dezvoltă progresiv, evoluând de la hazardul întâlnirilor la o căutare expresă, evidentă în secveţa automobilului, care pune în lumină arta lui Antonioni de a revela nu numai înlăuntrul personajelor, dar şi de a propulsa acţiunea prin explorarea semanticii corpului. Succesiunea de gesturi executate de actor îndeplineşte astfel o funcţie diegetică, expresivitatea şi capacitatea de sugestie a imaginii înlocuind spectaculosul cu semnificativul: Piero se urcă în maşină, porneşte motorul cu siguranţa celui care îşi stăpâneşte jucăria-obiect, apoi, după câteva clipe de ezitare şi de reflecţie, aruncă ţigara încă neaprinsă şi demarează în viteză, spre o destinaţie ce se dovedeşte a fi locuinţa Vittoriei.

Imaginile ulterioare, elemente importante ale naraţiunii filmice, surprind comportamentul masculin şi feminin în jocul seducţiei pe parcursul căruia corpul devine personajul central: dacă gesturile bărbatului indică strategia de tatonare a terenului ce urmează a fi cucerit, cele ale femeii sugerează şiretenia şi eschivarea (Vittoria îl urmăreşte după perdele până i se oferă ocazia să iasă din ascundere, respectiv până apare un vecin în stare de ebrietate căruia îi răspunde la salut, mimând apoi surpriza de a-l vedea pe Piero). Odată cu joncţiunea celor două personaje în acelaşi cadru şi a dialogului care se înfiripă în aceeaşi manieră a derizoriului aparent, spectatorul îşi dă seama că etapa preliminară a iubirii s-a sfârşit aşteptându-se în mod natural la o progresie dramatică a evenimentelor.

Numai că, provocând tendinţele empatice ale receptorului, Antonioni refuză trama tradiţională şi rezolvările previzibile preferând să valorifice nivelul

conotativ al istoriei filmice pentru a incita reflecţia. Privit din acest unghi, episodul care ne prezintă furtul maşinii lui Piero culminând cu descoperirea şocantă a unui cadavru introduce un semnal tragic ce nu poate fi trecut cu vederea. Deşi de acum înainte diegeza filmului se concentrează asupra încercărilor celor doi protagonişti de a se abandona iubirii într-o suită de imagini care se sustrag în mod evident abordărilor romantice sau senzuale, un semn de întrebare persistă tot timpul în subtext. Este iubirea lor sortită pieirii aşa cum sugerează motivul morţii din secvenţa deja amintită sau îi vindecă de boala propriului sine, de singurătate? Devenită emblemă a artei cineastului, ambiguitatea caracterizează deopotrivă deznodământul filmului. Promisiunea îndrăgostiţilor de a se revedea „Mâine şi poimâine. Şi în ziua următoare. Şi astăzi în acelaşi loc la aceeaşi oră" rămâne în suspans deoarece nici unul dintre ei nu va fi prezent la „locul obişnuit" de întâlnire. După cum anticipează însuşi titlul-metaforă, personajele principale dispar în umbră, se eclipsează, ca o confirmare a alienării şi dezagregării eului în lumea contemporană.

Finalul operează o schimbare de perspectivă de la povestea unor individualităţi la existenţă în general prin intermediul unei succesiuni de cadre statice într-o scriitură cinematografică în care, inseparabile, corpurile animate şi inanimate devin imagini-semne ale unui spectacol banal (o bonă plimbând un cărucior, câteva persoane aşteptând un autobuz, copiii din cartier la joacă, un jocheu şi un cal etc.), marcat subtil de trecererea timpului (autobuzul vine şi pleacă dimineaţa şi seara). De povestea Vittoriei şi a lui Piero nu ne mai aminteşte decât locul lor de întâlnire, străjuit de o clădire neterminată, aflată o intersecţie martoră a iubirii consumate. Aparatul de filmat părăseşte clădirea absorbită complet de întunericul nopţii şi, printr-un travelling lateral spre stânga, se fixează asupra unui bec stradal evanescent, în timp ce auzim sunetele grave ale unui pian. Impersonalitatea imaginii nocturne cu care filmul se încheie reia semnificaţia titlului la o scară generalizatoare justificând calitatea atribuită cineastului de maestru al „spaţiilor vide şi deconectate".[22] Până la urmă, eliminat din peisaj, omul devine şi el o amintire.

În concluzie, atât Beckett cât şi Antonioni inaugurează un nou cod artistic care neagă convenţiile tradiţionale. Preocupaţi să înfăţişeze banalul existenţei, evenimentul nespectaculos, realitatea în esenţa ei crudă, ambii creatori acordă prioritate corporalităţii ca mijloc de expresie teatrală şi filmică. Pentru primul, corpul-personaj devine protagonistul condiţiei umane tragice, semnul scenic concret al involuţiei biologice a fiinţei în drumul său către neant. Alienarea insului faţă de celălalt ca şi faţă de sinele său muribund este redată prin procesul de exteriorizare a conştiinţei (vocea *off*) sau de reificare a fiinţei (unitatea dintre corpul neputincios şi obiectul suport). Al doilea studiază

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[22] Jean-Louis Leutrat, *Cinematograful de-a lungul vremii: O istorie*, traducere din franceză de Cornel Matei, Bucureşti, Editura All Educational, 1995, p. 81

interioritatea personajelor plecând de la limbajul trupului şi al relaţiei sale cu obiectul. Dacă în contextul „mitologiei corporeismului" specifice secolului al XX-lea, iubirea se defineşte ca atracţie pentru „altul meu corp", ca un „somatopsihism" în care „corpul simte senzual" substituind sufletul care „simte sentimental"[23], Antonioni concepe iubirea ca refuz al celuilalt într-un dublu aspect, al sentimentului şi al senzaţiei, evidenţiind incapacitatea eului de a se depăşi pe sine pentru a intra în experienţa alterităţii. Din acest motiv, eroticul în viziunea sa nu este altceva decât o experienţă nevrotică, nefericită, o oboseală de sine conducând inevitabil la destrămarea cuplului. În universul filmografiei sale ca şi în cel al teatrului beckettian, orice încercare de apropiere a eurilor fragile eşuează, personajele rămânând condamnate la izolare, la statutul de corp-obiect printre alte corpuri-obiecte.

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[23] A. Codoban, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91

WRITING ON THE SHAME OF THE FLAT NOSE, SHORT HEIGHT AND "BLACK" SKIN

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Abstract: Black is not beautiful. In fact, there is no such thing as "black beauty". A nose is a nose when it is sharp, as sharp as the Brahmins'; otherwise, it does not qualify to be a nose at all. The women in the house and the men in the field will talk about the skin colour and the shape of the nose of a new-born baby. If the baby happens to be born "black", this will result in a gradation closer to the lower side. If that baby is adorned with a flat nose, the chances are that it will be a baby that deserves to be born in the house of an enemy. The "black" flat-nosed baby grows up to be a short man (women excluded), and he grows up at his own risk. He is never thought of as someone capable of being anything close to a "normal" human being. He becomes an object of hatred and, at the most, an object of pity. In this paper, the author attempts at reading some select pieces of oral and written literature of the Misings, a group of Mongoloid people that speak a Tibeto-Burman language and live in the eastern part of the Indian state of Assam. They sing and pray the glory of a beautiful body with reference to their political history and to the cultural implications of that political history.

Keywords: body, the Misings, "black" skin, flat-nosed, shame, prejudice.

The Misings, an Indo-Mongoloid group of people, live in the eastern region of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, India, with habitations scattered now in eight districts of the state: Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sibsager, Jorhat, Golaghat, and Sonitpur. Several centuries have passed since they migrated from the eastern Himalayan regions in Tibet and Siang valley of present-day Arunachal Pradesh in the hoary past and finally settled in the fertile Brahmaputra valley in Assam, India. After their migration to Assam, the Misings followed mainly the course of the Brahmaputra, gradually spreading to other stretches of land lying on the banks of its tributaries like the Dihing, Disang, Dikhow, Subansiri, Ranganadi, Dikrong, etc. They are, therefore, basically a riparian tribe, but erosions of the Brahmaputra River have forced part of the Misings to move to other places, away from rivers. This population is concentrated in the districts of Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and in the Majuli subdivision of the Jorhat district. A small population of Misings is to be found in Arunachal Pradesh, too.

For the Misings, the nose is an important part of the face in terms of its

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role in a balancing, enriching, and as an artistic act. It plays the role of the divider that has the power to decide between the common and the uncommon, the ordinary and the extraordinary. For a man, it is a question of identification with an advanced and powerful race. For a woman, it is the question of belonging to a rare class of people more sought after, more adored, and more discussed. The sharp nose has an elevating power - a power that everyone wishes for. If one doesn't have it, one has to make a compromise with oneself as well as with others. If one is enlightened enough, one keeps stretching the tip of the nose to get it longer and more pointed until it becomes a habit. The hard work has some definite advantages. The child with a sharp nose turns into a person with the asset of a lifetime. He grows up to be an adult, and he gets the attention that the flat-nosed young man only wishes for. He exposes his nose in front of a camera or under his sunglasses, proud and confident. Likewise, the sharp-nosed young woman is the woman to look up at and to adorn with all kinds of riches. If not a material gain, it at least guarantees an escape from the shame of a flat nose and the quiet lifelong struggle to keep discussions about one's nose under check. Hundreds of jokes and satires, the vitriol and the lampoons on one's physical features will be relentlessly harsh on that flat nose. One needs to get a sharp nose.

Skin colour is of equal importance. The colour of the skin is in fact intimately bound up with the discourse of labour. The light brown skin is earmarked for non-physical professions. The light brown man is fit to live in a city and do clerical, administrative or any such intellectual jobs. He is fit to be a member of the Parliament or of the state assembly. In fact, pre-poll discussions of the physical attraction in terms of trustworthiness and honesty reflect an obvious bias towards light brown skins. Many candidates have been seen to edit their pictures to appear light brown to enhance their chances in the polls.

As for women, the light brown skin is the dream they cherish for ever. Weekly village markets are filled with cosmetic products of all kinds. Along with hair oil products, the cosmetics that promise fair skin are sold the most. The sales of hair oil products are on decline for the reason that the fascination for dark long hair is no longer as it used to be a decade ago. Women working in the house, women working in the fields, and women working in the office - everybody wants to be fair because fair skin sells in the marriage market. Fair skin is eulogized, appreciated, and openly glorified.

Yet, when it comes to men, the greatest asset is height. If a man is flat-nosed and dark-skinned, and yet he is tall, the doors of success are open to him. Height is a symbol of manliness, perfection, and strength in the mentalities of this population. The tall man is more deserving, more attractive, and more qualified. He is someone to be proud of. He is intimidating, and he is fit to defend the family in times of horror. His broad shoulders are more supportive. If she grabs a tall man, a woman can find lifetime solace since any tall man is

viewed as a born leader. Everyone looks up at him, both literally and metaphorically. A tall height is the dream of a teenager and the pride of a family.

Almost ninety per cent of the Mising people live in villages and work in paddy fields. Folk songs are their medium of poetic expressions as they are associated with the pains and sorrows of their private lives. They are songs mostly related to the trouble of separation and the craving for the reunion with the beloved. At times they sing about their dreams of a beautiful lady or a handsome man. In most of these songs, the image of a fair-skinned lady dominates. In contrast, none of the folk songs attested till date has been associated with the praise of "black" or dark skin. Women's face is compared to that of the moon and the refreshing beam that it emanates. Sometimes the singer is astonished with the fact that the brightness of his beloved's face eclipses the light of the moon. When the male singer is lost in the woods and wanders around in utter darkness, he is shown the way out by the light that comes from his beloved's face.

Oral narratives of the Misings are fraught with villains that are inescapably. Short and flat-nosed people are comic characters. The dark step-mother and step-father as well as the dark monster that lives in the forest are all causing trouble to the fair-skinned, honest, and meek orphans. But the fair-skinned virtuous people are able to get out of the clutch of those cruel creatures. They may not share the brutal physical force of the dark-skinned villains, but they have the intelligence to beat them in the long run. The good forces of nature, the dead ancestors, and the creators of the world are all in favour of these fair-skinned heroes. They are victorious in the end. They will command the respect of the evil creatures finally. The dark and black-skinned monster, which thrives on the blood of the poor and the helpless, is punished too by leeches, mosquitoes, and snakes.

On the other hand, the short and flat-nosed person is less than a human being. He is imperfect but he is not evil as such. He is a matter of laughter and jokes. He is loveable in the sense that he makes people laugh as his little hands and short legs, his flat nose with the nostrils wide open are all issues of comedy. People look at them not with contempt, but with intently naughty eyes. They are not thought to be capable of holding a serious political position. They are not leaders as such, but creatures of fun that they can mock at intelligently and laugh at their firework at times.

There is a group of authors writing in Mising at the moment and their aim is not to gain a general audience but to establish a linguistic and cultural identity for the community. Although the number of such writings is meager, there has been a conscious effort at increasing and inspiring such attempts by some cultural and political groups of late. For the last couple of decades, the Mising literary society has been publishing poems, short stories, and novellas

on their own account so as to motivate the authors who write in Mising. Most of the poets writing in Mising utter their loss of the beloved or their worship of a haughty woman of matchless beauty who happens to be extremely wealthy. The poets are invariably in love with fair-skinned women and, in addition to the traditional imagery of the moon, the fair-skinned woman is now the adored daughter of an affluent man who possesses a luxury car. The poet stands on one side of the road, watches the car whistling and leaving behind a cloud of dust, and sighs at the glowing face that sparkles through its window. He goes back home and becomes restless, sharing his pangs with a short and flat-nosed friend who stands by him all this time. But the desires of the poet will be crushed very soon as his fair-skinned lady gets married to a wealthy man's son, who is himself (unsurprisingly) fair. The short and flat-nosed friend will pick some tricks out of his funny little head to help the poet. Things get complicated because a dark-skinned woman who is old and cunning and happens to be the fair-skinned lady's distant relative has wily designs of her own. She whispers poisons to the father, and the poet's chances of marrying the girl grow thinner and thinner. Yet, these new poets love happy endings. The wishes of the honest but poor, unfortunate but talented, fair-skinned young man or the poet himself will be granted by some divine design. The black and evil are put to shame with a sudden blow. They can never actually redeem themselves as the only thing left for them is to repent for their sins.

To understand the development of this concept of physical beauty among the Misings we need to keep in mind the history of their socio-cultural life. In the first phase, they were the inhabitants of north-western China; in the second phase, they were the hill-dwellers in the Upper Siang area of contemporary Arunachal Pradesh, and in the third phase, they came down to the plains of Assam and came into contact with their Indo-Aryan neighbours, adopting their religion, language, and polity. During the 15th century, as Neo-*Vaishnavism*, which was preached by Srimanta Sankardeva, emerged in Assam, the Misings, like many other tribal groups of the region, came under its influence. Of course, they did not accept it in totality at first, but they incorporated gradually some of its basic beliefs and practices.

The adoption of Hinduism led to the emergence of the *Bhakatiya* cult, which is an admixture of Mising traditional religious practices, Neo-*Vaisnavism* and *Tantricism*. Moreover, it led to the formation of a new group of priests and religious leaders known as the *Bhakats* and *Sattuals*. The Misings, after their migration down to the plains of Assam, were subjected to the influence of some *Vaishnava* monasteries of upper Assam. The Misings were specifically influenced by the religious preceptors and some elderly Misings were incorporated into their fold. They were taught the *Vaishnava* hymns and devotion to the Hindu god Hari. In the *Bhakatiya* cult, the *Bhakats* and *Sattulas* were the patrons and the proselytizers, and all religious functions were

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preformed with their help. The *Bhakats* who were more diligent in reciting the *Vaishnava* hymns and had knowledge about ritual procedures became *Sattuals*. The *Sattulas* came to be invited to preside over every Mising rituals except on the more traditional types during which the Neo-*Vaishnava* rites were not observed at all.

With the passage of time, the Mising followers considered the Neo-*Vaishnava* rites as the manifestation of the highest form of adoration. These rites did not get into the cultural habits of the Misings. Some strict religious disciplines such as avoidance of liquor, meat, fish, and association with the opposite sex were more relaxed in the case of the Misings. Allegations have been made that some elderly Misings were allured to the doctrines of these *Vaishnava Satras* and that they were robbed in to being disciples of these *Satras* for the incorporation of more numbers of Mising people within its cult and for the increase of religious tax collection from the Mising devotees.

This new system, with the *Bhakats* and the *Sattuals* from the Hindu sects, replaced the traditional *Mibu* or Mising shamans who otherwise used to direct all Mising rituals and festivals. This process of transformation of religious practices from the tribal forms to the worship of Hinduism ultimately paved the way for the abolition of some more traditional beliefs and practices. The Hindu practices have completely overshadowed the traditional practices of the Misings. Along with the traditional religious practices of the Misings, brought from the hills of Arunachal Pradesh, the more starkly East Asian physical features began to be object of suspicion and question. The Indo-Aryan physical features of the *Bhakats* and *Sattuals* began to be of more value and glorification. The political power and the social significance that these *Bhakats* and *Sattuals* received at the hands of the common Mising people created a fresh perspective upon oneself. The insignificant self that decided to abolish its own practices started to look down upon itself in those areas where it was perceived to be different from the powerful *other*. The glorified *other* became the object of fascination and the standard of judgment.

Another interesting aspect of the Mising socio-cultural life is the advent of Western education. According to the Census of India from 2001, the overall literacy rate of the Mising community was bigger than sixty per cent. It was two per cent ahead of the national literacy rate of fifty eight per cent. Many primary, secondary, higher secondary schools and colleges have been founded in areas dominated by the Misings. The youth receive Western education and each year a good number of them graduate from these colleges and a go on studying at postgraduate level. Leaving the traditional ways of life, the educated Mising youths work nowadays in schools, colleges, and universities as teaching and non-teaching staff. They are also working as government officials in responsibility posts and as professionals in various multinational companies or in non-governmental organizations. Movies that come from Hollywood and

Bollywood set the standards of taste. A Brad Pitt or an Angelina Jolie is the new talk of boys. A Salman Khan or a Katrina Kaif is the new fashion star. What they say, how they dress, and what they look like build the epitome of standard taste. They are the new images to copy and consume.

As a result, traditional beliefs, values, norms of life, and fashion preferences are losing ground to a more Euro-centric ethos. The latter is getting more and more attention as it appears still more fascinating. Mising youths imitate the styles that come from Bollywood. Thus, they discover themselves to be different and that causes a huge problem. The difference in terms of the food they eat, the house they live in, the roads they drive on may be easier to overcome than the difference in terms of their own body. The image of the body as given by the Bollywood standard, as well as its deep and widespread circulation, does not fit the traditional body canon of the Misings. Their difference is their nemesis. The Mising youth are anxious aspirants of that Indo-European physical feature that is denied to them by nature. They have begun to hate themselves, hide themselves, and degrade their native selves.

The Misings' shame of the flat nose, short height, and their "black" skin is much more a psychological prison than a political truth. The one who suffers most is the teenager fighting for an identity. The aggressions of the soul and the denials of the peers battle for an equilibrium. As he looks at the long way ahead of him, the Mising teenager evaluates himself, judges his chances of prosperity, and decides on his frame of mind. He meets other people and looks for their appreciation. However, the people around him give him his due according to the standards of judgment prevailing for so long. He goes back home and looks in the mirror and the reflected image of his body confirms the truth of their evaluation. If he happens to be a flat-nosed, short, and dark-skinned man, he is left with two options - either to tolerate a lifelong humiliation, or to revolt against the system of judgment that has the potential to kill a man from within. Not many of the Misings will take the second option since they are up against the whole society and the very soul of that society. They are up against their own beloveds, their own families, and their own parents. If a woman happens to be so, things are going to be more difficult and more humiliating as she is left with one option only. She is supposed to smile at everyone, follow what others dictate, and try to be of use when the world is busy working in the daylight and to shed tears when it gets dark.

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BODIES OUT OF BOUNDS: EMBODYING THE MONSTER IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *SEXING THE CHERRY*

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Abstract: This paper explores aspects of bodily transgression and female monstrosity by looking at the construction of identity in Jeanette Winterson's "Sexing the Cherry". The analysis gyrates around feminist sociological approaches regarding the meanings inscribed upon the female flesh and tackles avatars and representations of the body: the size, aesthetics and strength of Dog-Woman's body illustrate versions of active, transgressive and defiant femininity. I will pinpoint arguments in support of the idea that this novel is ultimately a novel about "limitless" bodies as metaphors for regeneration and for a feminist "persistence of memory."

Keywords: the grotesque body, the abject, transgression, limit, identity, femininity, motherhood, the "Other".

Winterson's fiction appears to be tributary to a feminist agenda which advocates the insertion of the female body into the text as a way of returning 'to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display' and whose 'immense bodily territories have been kept under seal'. (Cixous, 880) The long muffled female voice breaks out and explodes into the text through fictional bodies that are constantly used as objective correlatives for some sort of transgression: Dog Woman's huge body in *Sexing the Cherry* signals her infringement of Puritanical rules and her celebration of the female flesh is a strategy to foreground transgressive aspects of active femininity. Gilbert and Gubar famously charged: 'The woman who speaks out is branded an "active monster"; the woman who remains silent risks madness'. (Gilbert and Gubar, 2022)

In Jeanette Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, the discourses of gender rely on notions of abjection and the grotesque: the female body is monstrous, over-sized, carnivalized, which is why the aim of this paper is to delve into dimensions of the grotesque female body as a site of transgression and as a locus of feminist revolt.

Sexing the Cherry is fashioned with a strong sense of size and limit. Interiority and exteriority clash for hegemony, in a permanent limbo of 'mass and energy', the two essential forces that Winterson also acknowledges in her recent autobiography, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* In this book,

she repeatedly returns to the idea of limit, mostly in the Freudian context of her relationship with her mother, who was obsessed with the Apocalypse and had a strong belief in the afterlife. Despite her rebellion against the stifling Puritanism of her mother's ways, Winterson writes fiction that is permeated by deeply religious undertones in its permanent re-assertion of the superiority of mind over matter. Mrs. Winterson, her mother, is described as a woman riddled with emotional strife that is so intense it seems to outpour from her body, a body she despises for its ephemerality. The author goes as far as admitting that in *Sexing the Cherry*, she 'invented a character called Dog-Woman; a giantess who lives on the river Thames. She suffers because she is too big for her world. She was another reading of my mother.'[24]

There is a genuine "aesthetics of the threshold", a celebration of body liminality in Winterson, where inside and outside turn "inside out" in the Mobius strip reversibility that Grosz believes to be characteristic of the body. Talking from a feminist phenomenological point of view, Grosz argues that the surface of the body is a 'privileged surface' that allows stimuli to come both from the inside and from the outside, at which point an 'interface of the inside and the outside' is created. (35-36)

According to Lisa Moore, in Winterson's *Sexing the Cherry*, 'the protagonists either move between and among gender and sexual identifications (Jordan), or simply exceed them (Dog Woman)' (116). In the interplays of gender and the body, Dog Woman situates herself neither within the male or female sex, just like she is neither masculine nor feminine as a gender. Her body is sexed female, yet possesses the attributes of maleness because of its astounding strength. She is able to send an elephant up in the air and unscrupulously behead her enemies just through a single stroke, yet she is aware of female gender prerequisites and performs them religiously. She performs gender like an act, from wearing a 'ribbon in her hair' and understanding what it means to be a "good woman" to ways of eating: 'And then he bit into his and spurted juice right over himself. Cautiously I bit into mine, but in a more ladylike fashion.'[25] This paints an awkward picture of gender imbalance and demystifies the idea of a clear-cut line between genders, or even the idea of a gender binary, being the definition of the monstrous female. Andrew Hock-Soon claims that the monster fractures the reality of the self from within the subject, ultimately describing the self as a complex social, cultural, linguistic and

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[24] Jeanette Winterson, 2012. *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal*, London, Vintage, p. 38. All further references to this book will point to this edition and will be abbreviated WBH, followed by the page number.

[25] Jeanette Winterson, 1990. *Sexing the Cherry*, New York, Vintage, p. 24. All further references to this book will point to this edition and will be abbreviated SC, followed by the page number.

ideological construction that subjugates "something" fundamental within the self, something that cannot be erased and returns to fragment this construction. He calls such moments 'moments of the monster.' (Hock-soon, 1-2) Using Lacanian terminology, he goes on to argue that, given the visibility of deviant bodies and the fact that they do not conform to the Symbolic normative, they are immediately coded as monstrous. Moreover, citing the Freudian law of the father, the critic locates the origin of the monster in the paradoxical clash between bodies and the law. Attempting a definition, he contends that 'monstrosity is often a struggle with, or a traumatic experience of, what is known in the Lacanian model, as the Void.' (Hock-soon, 1-2) The monster, Hock-soon seems to suggest, is a surplus creation; it arises from a breach between the natural and the human artificial, between the instinctual and the civilized. A sign of excess, monstrosity is related to neither the human nor the ab-human, it combines the two, being often placed at their junction or simply outside them.

Dog Woman might be illustrative of Bakhtin's concept of the grotesque as being embodied in the Kerch terracotta figurines, examples of the natural processes that shape a woman's body. In many ways, she is similar to these figurines: huge, hideous, "unfeminine" according to traditional standards, she describes herself in the following way: 'How hideous am I? My nose is flat, my eyebrows are heavy. I have only a few teeth and those are a poor show, being black and broken. I had smallpox when I was a girl and the caves in my face are home enough for fleas.' (SC, 24)

But rather than evoking fertility, like the terracotta figures, she is an image of destruction, violence, power, and her bodily functions are highlighted in realistic detail, and often associated with imagery of the pit. The holes on her face are deep enough to host fleas, her sexual organs are too big for any man, and her gigantic size enables her peers to view her as a "mountain". Her body is "grotto-esque", evoking whatever is 'low, hidden, earthly, dark, material, immanent, visceral. As bodily metaphor, the grotesque cave tends to look like (and in the most gross, metaphorical sense be identified with) the cavernous anatomical female body.' (Russo, 1)

Not only does Dog-Woman's body conjure up the tropes of darkness and immensity, it is also a musky and dirty domain which she openly admits to be unclean: "I hate to wash, for it exposes the skin to contamination." (SC, 35) This belief she has may seem just a natural aspect of the historical context to which Winterson tries to stay true, but it carries much more complex social inscriptions. Dog-Woman's body is written upon, it's a synecdoche of the need for social delimitation of boundaries; its uncleanliness signals not only her biological liability of reproduction, her bodily capacity for becoming a murky ground of breeding, but also a socially liminal place, where boundaries have been broken. Mary Douglas points out that the body is a model which can stand

for any bounded system. Its limits can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious: 'The body is a complex structure […] We cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.' (142)

Purity, in Dog-Woman's opinion, only exists in correlation with an authentic and elevating feeling of love. This sacrifice, which she apparently holds very dear, is an important one; both the heart and the body need to be purged for "the sacred" to enter: 'Eventually I decided that true love must be clean love, so I boiled myself a cake of soap...' (SC 35) Mary Douglas argues that states of transition are dangerous because they cannot be defined. Thus, to be in the margins, either as a phoetus or as an outcast, is to be in contact with danger, because no clear definition can be provided to define people in such a situation (Douglas, 118-121). Just like Dog-Woman associates cleanliness of body with cleanliness of feeling, the Puritanic 17th century notion of cleanliness extended far beyond bodily functions to a moral and religious ground. Although she discusses Puritanism in America, therefore the context is different, Kathleen Brown outlines some interesting facts regarding corruption that could also apply to British society as reflected in Winterson's England. In early American culture, uncleanliness was not necessarily associated with matter, but with sexual wrongdoing, because it combined immorality with bodily filth. She explains that English speakers around the Atlantic basin imputed cleanliness to the female body, specifically referring to her sexual abstinence:

> In New England, ministers seeking to protect Puritan ideals for spiritual community invoked the unchaste female body as a source of sexual sin that could ultimately bring about the demise of the entire Puritan experiment. Cleanliness in the moral sense depended on female virtue, expressed in the dedicated performance of domestic labor necessary to produce civilized European bodies as well as in female sexual restraint. (Brown, 60)

Sin and body are almost inseparable in Dog-Woman's accounts of the Puritanic practices, where the domestic and depraved female bodies are very clearly demarcated in a highly hypocritical, patriarchal and backward rhetoric of sin. Her steadfast and vehement disparagement of the Puritanic ways is asserted and reasserted as she establishes bonds with the wives of Puritan men, whom she genuinely pities for their dull sexual life. 'I heard from his wife that he makes love to her through a hole in the sheet. "Does he not kiss you?" "He has never kissed me", she answered, "for fear of lust."' (SC, 27)

Her contemporary version, an unnamed environmental activist who is suffering from bodily dismorphism and bulimia, believes she is a monster trapped in a thin body, a fat woman in a light body, Dog-Woman's transposition

into the modern world: 'I was a monster in a carpeted egg.' (SC, 124) She imagines her body swelling out of proportion, until the house she lives in splits apart: 'There I go, my shoulders pushing into the corners of the room, my head uncurling and smashing the windows. Shards of glass everywhere, the garden trodden in a single footprint. Micromegas, 200 miles high. But there is no Rabelaisian dimension for rage.' (SC, 124)

This is an instance of a grotesque, transgressive body which outgrows not only itself, but its home as well, bursting into the world as a metaphor of the repressed interior which leaks into the exterior. As Bakhtin points out, this body ingests the world and is ingested by the world: 'The grotesque body, as we have often stressed, is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed. It is continually built, created and build and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world.' (317)

According to this theory, Dog-Woman's body is an eternal body which oozes into the present world in the form of the woman activist. It's a body which is indeed too magnificent to come to an end and thus, as Bakhtin observes, it multiplies and ensures its endurance: 'If I have a spirit, a soul, any name will do, then it won't be single, it will be multiple. Its dimension will not be one of confinement but one of space. It may inhabit numerous changing decaying bodies in the future and in the past.' (SC, 126)

However, the woman activist of the present day could also be read in relation to the displacement of outside and inside. In Dog-Woman's case, the ferocity of her inner self matches her outer appearance; inside parallels outside. On the other hand, her alter ego's awkward embodiment is truly the domain of liminality: she is now attractive, after losing weight, yet she doesn't feel so; she looks small, yet she feels monstrously huge; she fights for what she believes in, but she is only considered a mad woman: 'I may not look like a monster any more but I couldn't hide it for long. I'd break out, splitting my dress, throwing the dishes at the milkman if he leered at me and said "Hello, darling".' (SC, 127) In *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body,* after sketching a brief history of the body in Western philosophy , Susan Bordo concludes that:

> what remains the constant element throughout historical variation is the construction of body as something apart from the true self (whether conceived as soul, mind, spirit, will, creativity, freedom) and as undermining the best efforts of that self. That which is notbody is the highest, the best, the noblest, the closest to God; that which is body is the albatross, the heavy drag on self-realization. (5)

The implication of this expands further, to the female body: in an "if a=b and b=c then a=c" type of logic, Bordo advocates the thesis that the female body is negativity itself, in its many forms: the body itself is identified with the woman

because it is mothers who are the caretakers of the flesh, it is mothers who raise children and thus tend to the body of their children, while men stand aloof. If the body, as demonstrated above, is the equivalent of the "low" aspects of the self, then women represent that which is opposite to the intellect. They stand for a material, fleshy reality, their bodies speaking the language of provocation, even when women are silent or verbalize the opposite. On the other hand, when female bodies do not respond to male advances, they are seen as teasing or mocking men. (5-6) This ideology, Bordo claims, creates guilt and shame over bodies and is externalized through different forms of body punishment such as anorexia. (8) A similar point is made by Sherry Ortner in her investigation on what she calls "the universality of female subordination". Her essay, entitled quite interestingly "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?" starts by considering three aspects: the second-class status of women in all societies and the evidence which supports this; ideologies, symbolizations and social-structural arrangements pertaining to women; and practical observations of women's activities, power, ideology that go against cultural ideology. Mostly interested in the first level of the matter, Ortner demonstrates that every culture makes a distinction between nature and culture, especially through the discourses of purity and pollution. If purity can be effected by humans over the polluting forces of nature, then culture identifies itself as distinct and superior to nature. Drawing a parallel between the binaries nature-culture and female-male, Ortner advances a theory which corroborates Bordo's statements quoted above:

> Returning now to the issue of women, their pan-cultural second-class status could be accounted for, quite simply, by postulating that women are being identified or symbolically associated with nature, as opposed to men, who are identified with culture. Since it is always culture's project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it "natural" to subordinate, not to say oppress, them. Yet although this argument can be shown to have considerable force, it seems to oversimplify the case. The formulation I would like to defend and elaborate on in the following section, then, is that women are seen "merely" as being closer to nature than men. That is, culture (still equated relatively unambiguously with men) recognizes that women are active participants in its special processes, but at the same time sees them as being more rooted in, or having more direct affinity with, nature. (73)

The activist's eating disorders are not just the domain of cultural pressure; in fact, the need to lose weight is regulated by religious discourse, being an internalization of distorted Christian values that has led to perfection being sought not in spiritual terms but in cultural terms (Manlowe 74). The fact that women were affirmed as inferior to men in Christian theology is a foregone conclusion. But the fact that their body becomes a site of redemption from sin

through eating disorders sheds a different light on the misogyny of Christian doctrines. Manlowe suggests that as an act of redemption from her "sinful" female body, a woman with an eating disorder will attempt to destroy the female characteristics of her body, including her round hips, stomach, and breasts (Manlowe, 74). She also suggests that those qualities 'that make a good Christian are the same qualities that make a female "feminine" [...] self-sacrifice…submission to an all-powerful male (or God pictured as a male), reliance on external authority for direction, distrust of one's experience as authoritative in itself, and the belief that a male saviour will redeem.' (Manlowe, 61)

Following a psychological approach, the activist's body in its weight fluctuations becomes a marked site of psychic distress, being read as 'the corporeal presencing of other, presumably more intrinsic, incorporeal qualities or characteristics— the signifying of latency and lack. Fat equals reckless excess, prodigality, indulgence, lack of restraint, violation of order and space, transgression of boundary.' (Braziel and Lebresco, 3)

The source of this woman's bodily incompatibility can be found in the Wintersonian outlook regarding physical and emotional development. Her autobiography is speckled with episodes of bodily discordance, mostly starring her almost disembodied mother, but also herself. Admitting that "we end up being the wrong size for our world" during the roller-coaster process of emotional growth, she confesses that she "used to have an anger so big it would fill any house" and that she used to feel so hopeless that she was 'like Tom Thumb who has to hide under a chair so as not to be trodden on.' (WBH, 34) Subsequently, she expounds on the tight-knit connection between real human experience and the symbolical meaning of size in fairy tales, which ultimately teach us a sensible moral:

> The fairy tales warn us that there is no such thing as standard size – that is an illusion of industrial life[…] no, size is both particular and subject to change. It seems to me that being the right size for your world – and knowing that both you and your world are not by any means fixed dimensions – is a valuable clue to learning how to live. (WBH, 35)

May this explain her preference for fantastic narratives? Are the monstrous bodies in her novels an allegory of female experience, of the struggle to find the "right", socially acceptable body, which is at ease with its inner life and in a balanced relationship with its intensity? Although Dog-Woman is at the foreground of the narrative as the Brobdingnagian, dreadful heroine, it is in fact her present self that truly lives out a traumatic bodily experience. Dog-Woman may be huge, powerful, atrociously and ruthlessly in love with justice, but her size is not a hindrance, rather a tool in her relentless fight against the Puritans. Size enables her to give vent to her most compelling opinions, and her body is congruous with her flamboyant personality. The activist, however, is ridiculed

and not taken seriously in spite of her efforts, because she has the appearance of a fragile woman that does not necessarily inspire terror. Bulimia and hallucinations add to her distorted body image and send her off to the domain of madness, to-ing and fro-ing at the limit between interior and exterior. A true "Alice in Wonderland", her fluctuating material body and dysfunctional (psychological) body image testify to her inability to find a proper physical self, which would help her succeed in her environmental quest. But ultimately, these characters' bodies become mirrors for the vulnerability and lack that exist in any woman reader who might see herself as possessing a "normal" body. In fact, as Margrit Shildrick contends, there is no such thing as a normal body. Her bold assertion is that

> In seeking confirmation of our own secure subjecthood in what we are not, what we see mirrored in the monster are the leaks and flows, the vulnerabilities in our own embodied being. Monsters, then, are deeply disturbing; neither good nor evil, inside nor outside, not self or other. On the contrary, they are always liminal, refusing to stay in place, transgressive and transformative. They disrupt both internal and external order, and overturn the distinctions that set out the limits of the human subject. (4)

The two women are not necessarily two different identities, because they are drawn together into the same body. Paulina Palmer argues that both of these women are ridiculed as monsters – Dog Woman because of her size and strength, and the present figure, due to her involvement in active, radical politics. Dog Woman's alter ego, an ecologist who fights pollution of a river with mercury, parallels Dog Woman's rebellion against the Puritans (Palmer, 103). They are women who speak out and threaten the masculine order, being ostracized as undesirable aspects of femininity.

Dog Woman is not the object of sexual desire for men due to her enormous body; and this grotesque quality of her physicality challenges the image of women as a constructed reality. Rather, she becomes the source of terror for men: 'I am too huge for love. No one, male or female, has ever dared to approach me. They are afraid to scale mountains.' (SC, 34) Therefore, Dog Woman challenges the accepted patriarchal norms of female beauty through her ugly body. But ugliness is not limited to female bodies in *Sexing the Cherry,* as there are many instances when the focus is on highly vivid and gruesome details of death or sexuality, such as Dog Woman's visits to the brothel. Umberto Eco distinguishes between three different phenomena: *ugliness in itself*, (which is related to "excrement, decomposing carrion, or someone covered with sores who gives off a nauseating stench"), *formal ugliness* (interpreted as a lack of balance between the parts of a whole, such as a person lacking teeth) and *the artistic portrayal of both,* which as the name says it, implies a redemption of the first two forms through art (Eco, 19). The novel seems to portray ugliness as a

general trope of the times through a sharp and morbid attention to bodily functions. As Dog-Woman sets out to kill her two arch enemies, Firebrace and Scroggs, she unravels a world where "God's elect" indulge in zoophile, heterosexual, homosexual and even necrophile perversions. The man who enjoyed being branded with a hot iron with the sign of a pig all the while having intercourse with one, the two preachers engaging in an orgy and the highly violent murder inflicted by Dog-Woman upon the two men, all round up to a representation of what Eco calls 'ugliness in itself.' In a climactic stunt, Dog-Woman disappears, not before a scene of intense repugnance: 'I looked back and saw that one already had Scroggs on the remains of the bed. He was mounting him from behind, all the while furiously kissing the severed head.' (SC, 89)

According to Makinen, Dog-Woman's immense body is a form of power, agency, assertiveness, even suggesting some sort of political revolt: 'Her textual violence castigates the hypocrisy of the Puritan's denouncement of the flesh and stands instead as a transgressive and self-sufficient magnified body' (97). In other words, through her unusual proportions, she opposes standards of Puritan composure and decorum, in the same way that she fails to conform to heterosexual norms of behaviour. Farwell also views Dog Woman's body as an instrument to underscore feminist rebellion, arguing that her size functions as the text's refusal to acquiesce to culture's attempt to control the woman's body (Farwell, 184). Winterson treats her in a celebratory manner, focusing attention on her heroic qualities and positing her as a transgressive aspect of femininity which patriarchy tries to suppress. Other critics, such as Pearce, see her as an essentially conservative principle. After all, she dismisses ambiguous gender as monstrous when she asks Jordan 'Of what sex is the monster you are making?' (SC, 79) According to Pearce,

> the procreative and destructive powers of her body are unleashed for the preservation of kingdom; She cannot be seen as either protofeminist in her phallic power or unproblematically feminine in her material body; she upholds existing patriarchal institutions such as the monarchy, the church, the state, and she prefers situations where gender relations are static rather than overturned. (179)

The monstrosity of her body also serves to defamiliarize traditional relationships within a phallocentric culture and, in particular, to subvert the power relations in heterosexual coupling. Her male's partner's penis is insignificant to have an effect, which ridicules phallic power in relation to the feminine (Makinen, 86).

Men are generally portrayed as lilliputan, her own son, Jordan, is diminutive in comparison to her: 'When Jordan was new I sat him on the palm of my hand the way I would a puppy, and I held him to my face and let him pick the fleas out of my scars?' (SC, 25) However, while size is a key component of

gender identification, with men being biologically the more imposing ones, weight is interestingly balanced against size in this novel just to further complicate the traditional gender hierarchy. In Winterson's novel, women are either larger or stronger than men, but their weight doesn't match their size, because they still remain light as a feather. Dog-Woman remembers breaking her father's legs and him being unable to carry her, despite being a man; but her mother, 'who lived only a while and was so light that she dared not go out in a wind, could swing me on her back and carry me for miles'. (SC, 25) Any myth based on male stamina is debunked, but certain gender assumptions are still preserved, with the idea of empowering motherhood. Hence, there is a deeper meaning attached to this weighty/weightless dialectics, and the exaggerations of magic realism truly become instrumental in expressing this fact: mothers possess an inner feminine strength which defies muscle power.

However, Dog Woman's body fails her as a mother. Motherhood remains a crux in Dog-Woman's identity, because her body is paradoxically situated at the crossroads of "good" and "bad" projections of femininity: on the one hand, she is repeatedly posited as corrupt embodiment, and on the other, she possesses the respected status of a nurturing mother, both aspects contributing to a disconcerting position of her (un)femininity in society. In the much-quoted book *Of Woman Born*, Adrienne Rich denounces the double-edged, simplistic image of the female body created by patriarchy and underscores the logical error inherent in this division: while the female body is basically 'impure, corrupt, the site of discharges, bleedings, dangerous to masculinity, a source of moral and physical contamination, "the devil's gateway"', when it turns to motherhood, it is also 'beneficent, sacred, pure, asexual, nourishing; and the physical potential for motherhood – that same body with its bleedings and mysteries – is her single destiny and justification in life.' (Rich, 34) As a monstrously gigantic woman who refuses to play the submissive role that society culturally imposes on her, Dog Woman constitutes an offence and a failure. As an adoptive mother with a very strong maternal instinct, she redeems herself and finds an outlet into a world that rejects her as a circus freak. Her liminal position makes her abject, a concept which Julia Kristeva defines as 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite'. (Kristeva, 4) Kristeva relates the abject to the horrifying struggles for self-differentiation of the unformed ego. The proto-subject identifies what is not-I and to expel it as "other", which leaves the formed self with a "phantom", a memory of the entrapment at the border between identity and non-identity, manifested either through physical nausea or existential nausea. (Hurley, 143-144)

Dog Woman's imperious need to look after Jordan and protect him by all means springs from an instinct that is independent of any willingness to be accepted and conform. She is not a mother by constraint; she chooses to be a

mother without the trappings of copulation, as her body rejects her union with a man: 'When a woman gives birth her waters break and she pours out the child and the child runs free. I would have liked to pout out a child from my body but you have to have a man and there's no man who's a match for me.' (SC, 11) The implications of this quote are multifaceted. Firstly, we find that she embraces the idea of motherhood, but rejects the sexual process by which one can become a mother. She must first find a male match to impregnate her, and, as we follow her throughout the book, we find that such a match does not exist. Secondly, the metaphor of "water breaking" which is involved in the physiological process of birth lays out the foundation for the ensuing drama that characterizes her relationship with Jordan. Throughout the novel, Dog-Woman will be torn between her liberal views of motherhood and her natural proclivity for stability. She believes that a child should not be smothered, and be allowed to achieve his independent identity, yet at the same time she longs for Jordan to be less adventurous and less of a traveller in order to have him closer to her.

Jordan's quest and longing for a well-defined identity and his desire to travel away from his mother is a story of abjection. Conversely, Dog Woman's strong attachment to her son and her desire to keep him close to her might be a substitute for sexual intercourse and a good appeasement for her frustrations regarding men. The narrative does end, after all in an unusual note: instead of the traditional tale of romantic closure, the novel brings us a doting mother and a wayfaring son sailing off from a flaming London, thus sealing in the Oedipal overlay covering the text. *Sexing the Cherry* is basically an incestuous story of maternal desire; the idea of motherhood appeals to Dog-Woman because of the repeated stories of sexual failure that she experiences, failures that still keep her longing for genuine human intimacy. Her curiosity about sexual intercourse is almost sickeningly grotesque and unquenched, as shown by her frequent visits to brothels as an observer or her discussions with the prostitutes. Dog Woman sublimates the tremendous sexual drives imposed by her equally tremendous body through maternal love, a process which Luce Irigaray describes in her argument regarding women's self-sufficiency:

> Thus maternity fills the gaps in a repressed female sexuality. Perhaps man and woman no longer caress each other except through that mediation between them that the child-preferably a boy-represents? Man, identified with his son, rediscovers the pleasure of maternal fondling; woman touches herself again by caressing that part of her body: her baby-penis-clitoris. (Irigaray, 27)

And this is precisely where Winterson's feminist agenda makes its strongest point. Dog Woman is an illustration of how women can be a closed and independent universe, breaking limits through their culturally acknowledged "unfemininity", yet at the same time building others that obstruct patriarchal sexism. Thus, *Sexing the Cherry* offers a solution against femininity as

victimization. Women's bodies are either enormous (Dog-Woman) or more powerful (Dog-Woman's mother) than men's. In fact, the dialectics big-small subverts the biological assumptions of men and women's bodies: Winterson depicts women as gigantic and men as midgets, turning biology in favour of her feminist intent. Interior strength is transferred upon the body and made visible: it is thus that inside becomes outside.

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HUMAN BODY IS A SIGN: ON THE SEMIOTIC NATURE OF CORPORAL IMAGERY IN ENGLISH MODERNIST AND POSTMODERNIST FICTION (A CONCEPTUAL STUDY)

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the semiotic nature of literary corporality, special attention being paid to the mode of conceptualizing human body by means of a conceptual metaphor - *HUMAN BODY IS A SIGN* - activated in the course of imagery system formation. The conceptual analysis, that implies the process of reconstructing conceptual metaphors in the literary text, has been applied to the research of English modernist and postmodernist literary prose. The results thus obtained have revealed the wide scope and specific ways of figurative semiotization of the *human body* in the poetics of modernism and postmodernism. Whereas the modernist vision of corporeal semiotics is mainly concerned with the role of the *body* in socializing, the one of the postmodernist period highlights the individual psychological states.

Keywords: corporality, human body, conceptual analysis, conceptual metaphor, semiotics, sign, literary text

1. Introduction
1.1 Body and Corporality

The phenomenon of human body has been in the focus of multiple scientific paradigms since ancient times, but it is in the 20th century that it becomes one of the major aspects of study in both natural sciences and humanities. Apart from natural sciences, corporality is investigated in psychology, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, literary studies, culture studies, cognitive science, etc., which analyze the representations of the body in a variety of discourses. Gradually the concept "corporality" has extended the boundaries of its understanding and its philosophic comprehension has changed as well. Whereas until the 20th century the term "body" was thought of merely as a physical, casually determined entity, characterized by a set of organic processes that suggest the vision of corporality in its biological facet, throughout the 20th century and especially in the beginning of the 21st century it is not confined to physiological and biological dimensions only. Being incorporated into a

multidimensional space of existence and functioning within its different subsystems, human body acquires different levels of being. On each of them and in accordance with the laws of nature, society, culture, the body is interrelated as it interacts with other elements of the corresponding system (natural factors, social institutions, culture norms), is constantly modified and it appears not as one, but three basic incarnations: biological body, social body and cultural body (Bykhovskaya, 1998).

Whereas the *BIOLOGICAL BODY* is understood as the entire structure of a human organism, consisting of a torso, its parts, limbs and the organ systems of the individual complying to the laws of existence, functioning as and developing into a living being, *SOCIAL BODY* is the result of its interaction with the social environment. *CULTURAL BODY* is the product of culture congruous formation and employment of bodily principle of a human being; it is the quintessence, the accomplishment of the process of transition of impersonal, purely corporeal preconditions to properly human existence of the body (*Ibid.*).

From this viewpoint, the term *corporality* – a postmodernist concept associated with bodily existence – can be treated as the dialectical unity of body and soul, as the integral quality of existential experience of a person, a complex of natural, individual and cultural features of a human body, as the field of interaction of inner and outer life spaces of a human being, or as a body that acquired various "languages" as a result of socialization (Nekrasova et al., 2008, 113). In other words, corporality as a socio-cultural phenomenon is the term used to characterize a human body which has experienced transformations due to the impact of social and cultural factors, which has socio-cultural meaning and fulfils certain socio-cultural functions. This definition infers the vision of human body specific to the postmodernist philosophy as functioning not only on a physiological level, but on meaningful levels as well. In accordance with it, the way in which it is represented and interpreted as a cultural phenomenon (in literature, cinematography, fine arts, etc.) undergoes changes as well.

1.2 Body semiotics. A theoretical background

In the 20th century the significance of corporality is emphasized in the culture forms which apply to the "human body" phenomenon not only as the object of reflection, but as a means of image formation as well. A human body gets foregrounding both in its referential and imagery functions while authors of literary texts, works of art, or cinematographers make human corporality work for the general artistic and aesthetic conception by means of projecting additional senses on a human body.

Given the fact of a meaningful nature of the body, where the latter becomes the plane of sense formation, of bearing and transmitting information, a noticeable foregrounding gets the understanding of a human body as a semiotic code. Generally, the vision of a human body through the prism of its symbolic nature has a long history and the attempts of treating it as a semiotic

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code as well as those aimed at deciphering it, are known since ancient times as chiromancy, physiognomy, phrenology, etc. in which bodily signs and physical qualities of a human body were and are believed to contain the information about the temperament, inborn talents of its owner and even about his/her fate and way of life. But the utmost level of semiotization that the human body does acquire is in the postmodernist age. The background of such a vision of the body is found in recent works of 20th-century philosophers, who focus on the phenomenon of corporality due to their interest in the issue of "the Subject". It appears in the conception of phenomenology of Husserl and Heidegger, though clearly stated only in the works of Merleau-Ponty (1999), who treats the body as the source of human identity.

Merleau-Ponty employs the framework of the conception of the "phenomenological body" to demonstrate the inefficiency of opposing "spiritual" (active, animated, meaningful) to "corporeal" (passive, rigid, senseless) and stipulates the interpretation of corporality as implying the inseparable unity of "inward" and "outward" characteristics, as the structure, generating thought (Mozhejko, 2001, 812). Almost simultaneously with M. Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault sustains the idea about the human body as the generator of meaning, the latter being conditioned by bodily practices (1970, 1977, and 1978). Finally the assumption on the significance of human body in the process of generating sense is made by J.- L. Nancy in his work *Corpus*, in which corporality is thought of as not only physiological component of the personality, but as the only possible form of expression and disclosure of the Subject (2008). Thus, corporality becomes the most significant characteristic of subjectivity and self-identity. This idea substantiates the role of corporality as the fundamental principle of reflection. A human body becomes the surface on which the senses are projected from without and which generates them from within (Ostry, 2007). Furthermore, the spectrum of meanings of a human body has permanently grown since that time.

All in all, corporality is viewed by postmodernists as the sphere of activation of various social and discursive codes: the "phenomenological body" of M. Merleau-Ponty (1999), the "social body" of G. Deleuze and F. Guattari (1972), the "textual body" of R. Barthes (1989), etc., among which the latter is of special interest in the context of this research. In Roland Barthes's conception (1989) *corporality* is applied for the interpretation of the *TEXT*, the latter being viewed through the prism of the *body*. The type of corporality realized in the text is a special type of organization and structuring of both individual and collective experience, the "matter" of the thought, primary in relation to the thought itself and conditioning the way of its development (Mozhejko, 2001, 813). In such interpretations *BODY* and *TEXT* turn out to be practically isomorphous. In his later works Barthes goes on to explain it and elaborates the typology of *BODIES*: the first is analyzed by anatomists and physiologists, which is nothing else but a *TEXT* as studied by philologists (a

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pheno-*text*) and the second one – the *BODY* as a source of pleasure, an eroticized *BODY,* which the philosopher finds to be the closest to the *text* (Barthes, 1989, 473-4). He becomes more specific in his vision of a *HUMAN BODY* as a *TEXTUAL SIGN*, when he states: 'The text has a human face, perhaps it is the anagram of a human body.' (Barthes, 1989, 474)

Hence, corporality, perceived in postmodernist thought as a sphere where various code systems function, seems to be similar to discursive media (Mozhejko, 2001, 813). Nowadays there is an ample spectrum of scientific works on body semiotics. Recent studies embrace multiple approaches to its analysis and aspects investigated (Coupland & Gwyn, 2002; Henriksen & Hansen, 2009; Krysinski & Mikkanen, 1981; Lazzarato; Pease, 1981; Thurtle & Mitchell, 2002; Vannini & Waskul, 2006, etc.). For example, the importance of the semiotic value of human body has been studied by A. Pease (Pease, 1981, Pease & Pease, 2012) who treats "body language" (*kinesics*) as non-verbal communication, in which the body transmits meaning to others by means of non-spoken signals on the unconscious bodily level (Pease, 1981).

There are a lot of basic parameters that substantiate the idea of the human body as the main transmitter of presentational codes (Fiske, 1990, 68), each of them conveying certain meanings (e.g. bodily contact, proximity, orientation, appearance, aspects under voluntary control - hair, clothes, skin, make-up -, aspects not under voluntary control - height, weight, etc. -, head nods, facial expression, gestures, posture, eye movement and eye contact, prosodic and paralinguistic codes of speech). In general, a vast range of meanings can be conveyed through body language. The symbolic semiotics of the body (i.e. any iconic means of pre-verbal, physical expression – dance, mime, a somatization disorder, nervous breakdown, a fit of tears, intensities, movements, rhythms, etc.) studied by M. Vogt, is believed to depend neither on language nor on consciousness as far as the "message" does not go through linguistic chains but via the body, postures, noises, images, mimicry, intensities, movement, rhythm, etc. (Vogt).

Since the body is perceived nowadays not as a constant, but a variable, the instances of artificial signs and codes that find realization in the textual space of corporality can be observed. It takes place when a certain part of body is marked, among such marks being make-up, tattoos, piercing, manicure, hairdo, clothes, jewelry, etc. which are employed to emphasize the meaning of the corresponding part of the body and to turn it into an erotic zone.

Several other aspects of body semiotics are highlighted in recent works. Thurtle and Mitchell dwell on "semiotic flesh", which marks an important contribution to the emerging field of information studies, providing multiple perspectives on the implications of burgeoning information technologies and biotechnologies. They accentuate the inseparability of body and information and situations where flesh and information productively intermingle as well as the

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role of the human body in virtual reality installations (2002). W. Krysinski and R. Mikkanen discuss the semiotic modalities of the body in modern theater (1981) while N. Henriksen and H. Hansen study a literary-semiotic perspective in the context of the connection between the ill body and identity (2009). M. Lazzarato dwells on the direct, unmediated impact that different types of sign-productive systems (money, television, science, etc.) produce on the body. These researchers study the ways the body is articulated in language and discourse, explore how "discourses of the body" - in talk, text and other semiotics - sustain moral, ideological and practical positions, analyze body representations of bodily ageing, gendered bodies, bodies at risk, ill and disabled bodies, but also bodies at play and narcissistic body and embodied action (Coupland & Gwyn, 2002). Among the most recent studies there are also observations made in cognitive science where the assumption about the semiotic nature of the body is substantiated by its significance in the processes of conceptualization and categorization (Ziemke, 2007) due to the rootedness of thinking in bodily experience (Gibbs, 2006, 9). Through the mediation of language corporality appears in the symbolic space of the sign: 'body appears as the primary generator of the meaning, it can produce symbolic codes of different types (visual code, acoustic code, tactile code, etc.) and thus, can interpret itself. It is one of the arguments of understanding body as a text.' (Gaznyuk, 2003, 15)

All in all, such polyphonic understanding of body semiotics gives the stimulus to its further study, since there still remains a field for the research, for instance, of its literary representation.

1.3 Literary Corporality

The concept of corporality, specific to the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, finds embodiment in its artistic forms (*fine arts*, *literature*, etc.) as far as the vision of the world, set by the dominant culture paradigm, determines the specificity of poetic mind and thinking (Belekhova, 2002, 83) and finds reflection in the means of imagery formation.

Indeed, the phenomenon of corporality becomes obviously significant in the literary text, where the human body appears in its "literarized" form. The review of previously completed studies has demonstrated that the most pronounced foregrounding of the human body is observed in the literary texts of the modernist period due to the changes in people's outlook stimulated by the drastic events of the epoch (Ioffe, 2007; Poltarobat'ko, 2009; Tataru, 2007; Zul'figarova, 2007, Steinbuk, 2006) and this tendency has lasted until the postmodernist period (Shtokhman). This fact makes the literary texts of modernist and postmodernist periods a perfect material for the research of literary corporality.

Corporeal imagery of the literary text has been the focus of literary studies (Ioffe, 2007; Poltarobat'ko, 2009; Tataru, 2007; Zul'figarova, 2007), in

which different aspects of corporality have been analyzed (*erotic*, *existential*, etc.), yet, until recently, it has lacked linguistic and cognitive analysis. In view of the fact that today the study of literary text semantics and literary imagery remains in the spotlight, cognitive studies that shift the focal point on the essence of mental processes and cognitive procedures underlying the image formation, keep their relevance (Belekhova, 2002; Vorobyova, 2011). In previously completed studies, the research of literary corporality in English modernist and postmodernist literary prose and of the imagery conceptualization of *HUMAN BODY* sustained the idea that due to the polysemantic character and universality of bodily imagery in the literary text the *HUMAN BODY* domain becomes a significant symbol or semiotic code, through the prism of which various phenomena are interpreted in the imagery space of the text (Galutskikh, 2012a, 2012b). The results thus obtained have stipulated further research of the semiotic aspect of literary corporality.

2. Methodology and analysis procedures

In this article specific features of semiotic nature of *HUMAN BODY* in the context of English modernist and postmodernist literary prose are analyzed. The material of the research is the corpus of literary texts by D.H. Lawrence (*Women in Love*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*), Virginia Woolf (*The Waves*, *Mrs. Dalloway*) and J. Winterson (*Written on the Body*).

The research aims at the study of the specific ways of figurative interpretation of *HUMAN BODY AS A SIGN* in the poetics of modernism and postmodernism. The aim is realized with the methods of semantic and cognitive types of linguistic analyses applied, which imply the process of reconstruction of conceptual metaphors in the text. The methodological grounds of the research are the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Kövesces, 2002) and the theory of conceptual integration (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003).

The results obtained of the conceptual analysis of the *HUMAN BODY* domain and the scope of its metaphoric correlates in the literary texts under the study demonstrated that the implication of the generic-level metaphor *HUMAN BODY IS A SIGN* is one of the significant directions of imagery conceptualization both in modernist and postmodernist period.

3. The semiotic nature of *human body* in modernist literary texts

In the imagery space of modernist literary prose the signifying function of corporality is accentuated by means of creating the image of a *HUMAN BODY* that serves as "a surface which is marked, transformed or has a special sign on it" or the image of a *MARKED HUMAN BODY*. Any signifying aspect of *HUMAN BODY* has a polysemantic character. In modernist prose the image of *SIGNS ON THE BODY* is applied to highlight 1) the devastating impact made by socialization process (being combined with the image of a *DEFORMED BODY*) (for more detail see Galutskikh, 2013), 2) aspects of eroticized body and 3) identity/non-identify of an individual.

Thus, the image of the *sign* which stands for the RESULT OF SOCIAL IMPACT is applied in the following text fragment of V. Woolf's novel *The Waves*, where the conceptual metaphor HUMAN BODY IS A WAXEN FIGURE is activated, the latter having the meaning "a soft, liable to influence person", since the image of a *waxen figure* possesses the sense "soft surface, which melts easily and on which the imprint is easily left": 'Month by month things are *losing their hardness; even my body now lets the light through; my spine is soft like wax near the flame of the candle.* I dream; I dream.' (Woolf, 2000, 45) It is obvious that here the *human body* is depicted as soft as wax that melts near the flame ("my spine is soft like wax near the flame of the candle").

The same metaphoric interpretation of the HUMAN BODY is employed by V.Woolf in other episodes of the text, where she becomes more precise with the HUMAN BODY semiotics.

Using the image of a WAXEN FIGURE as a metaphorical correlate of the HUMAN BODY, V. Woolf emphasizes its signifying function, since its "virginal wax that coats the spine" reflects the imprint and bears information about the things experienced by the person. The impact of social factors is interpreted here as the process of "melting" of some parts of the "wax coat", it being different for different people depending on their former social and individual experience (*melted in different patches for each of us, our white wax was streaked and stained by each of these differently*):

> But we were all different. *The wax — the virginal wax that coats the spine melted in different patches for each of us.* (…) our white *wax was streaked and stained by each of these differently*. Louis was disgusted by the nature of human flesh; Rhoda by our cruelty; Susan could not share; Neville wanted order; Jinny love; and so on. We suffered terribly as we became separate bodies. (*Ibid,* 241)

More than that, with the time this "wax coat" melts and drops, that serves for the imagery interpretation of the changes the HUMAN BODY undergoes under the influence of age and events that it lived through, compare: 'Thus, not equally by any means or with order, but in great streaks *my waxen waistcoat melted, here one drop, there another.*' (*Ibid*, 237); 'It is not age; it is *that a drop has fallen; another drop*. Time has given the arrangement another shake.' (Woolf, 2000, 271)

Another part of the bodily imagery in Woolf's literary prose is based on the sensory and sensations. Noteworthy, in most cases painful sensations caused by the injuries of the body are applied for the formation of the imagery in modernist literature, that serves to denote the devastating impact of the society on an individual revealed through its effect on his body.

Such effect is metaphorically depicted by means of the images of *signs on the human body*, activating the conceptual metonymy SIGNS/ PRINT ON THE HUMAN BODY that stands for the IMPACT LIFE AND SOCIETY PRODUCE as in the

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following context:

> Before, when we met in a restaurant in London with Percival, all simmered and shook; we could have been anything. We have chosen now, or sometimes it seems the choice was made for us — a *pair of tongs pinched us between the shoulders. I chose. I took the print of life not outwardly, but inwardly upon the raw, the white, the unprotected fibre.* I am clouded and bruised with the print of minds and faces and things so subtle that they have smell, colour, texture, substance, but no name. (*Ibid*, 214)

Painful experience, connected here with 'taking the print of life inwardly upon the raw … unprotected fibre' implies the idea of sufferings that people experience during their lifetime, associated with the process of socializing. The HUMAN BODY in this fragment is viewed as unprotected, exposed to deformations and sufferings, where bodily pain is associated with mental pain.

Even the accustomed way of life in the society with its dogmas and restrictions is obviously disliked by a human being, that is emphasized in the text of the novel by means of the image of a *stigma on the human body* made by red-hot iron, activating the conceptual metonymy SIGNS ON THE BODY stand for THE IMPACT OF THE ACCUSTOMED WAY OF LIFE, compare:

> I am for ever sleeping and waking. Now I sleep; now I wake. I see the gleaming tea-urn; the glass cases full of pale-yellow sandwiches; the men in round coats perched on stools at the counter; and also behind them, eternity. *It is a stigma burnt on my quivering flesh by a cowled man with a red-hot iron*. I see this eating-shop against the packed and fluttering birds' wings, many feathered, folded, of the past. (*Ibid*, 96)

The image of a MARK ON THE HUMAN BODY, used to signify the terrible deformation of the human soul, appears in the contemplations of Septimus Smith about his wife Lucrezia in V.Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, compare:

> He shaded his eyes so that he might see only a little of her face at a time, first the chin, then the nose, then the forehead, *in case it were deformed, or had some terrible mark on it.* But no, there she was, perfectly natural, sewing, with the pursed lips that women have, the set, the melancholy expression, when sewing. But there was nothing terrible about it, he assured himself, looking a second time, a third time at her face, her hands, for what was frightening or disgusting in her as she sat there in broad daylight, sewing? (Woolf, 2010, 103)

It makes the image of the SIGN ON THE HUMAN BODY significant for bringing out the idea of human vulnerability and susceptibility, its exposure to hard life experience and pressure of the society. The IMPRINT left of the surface of the HUMAN BODY as well as the whole image of a DEFORMED HUMAN BODY WHICH stands for VULNERABLE, PSYCHOLOGICALLY SUFFERING PERSON that is activated in most of the fragments above reflect the devastating impact of society on a

person. As far as almost all of the *signs* are the remnants of injuries causing physical pain and the like, they bear the information about the events lived through, while the image of a *SIGN ON THE BODY* serves to reveal psychological discomfort and sufferings of a person in the present-day society as viewed by modernist-writers.

Another type of *SIGNS ON THE HUMAN BODY* serves for identifying function, whereas their absence makes human being unrecognizable, featureless, and faceless. Thus, even the owner of the *HUMAN BODY* can become so faceless in the crowd of people that can forget one's own features: 'It is not vanity; for I am emptied of ambition; *I do not remember* my special gifts, or idiosyncrasy, or the *marks I bear on my person; eyes, nose or mouth. I am not, at this moment, myself*' (*Ibid*, 114). It is obvious, that the 'marks' he 'bears on his person' imply 'face features', which are specific for everyone and help to distinguish people from one another, that, if lost, deprive a person of individuality. The absence of such "marks" accentuates facelessness of people, who, being the fragments of the crowd, seem to lose their personality and their identity.

In Virginia Woolf's interpretation people are losing signs of identification, even face features. Such inability to distinguish one's *BODY* from others', though, does not attest the unity of people in the society.

The function of recognition as essential part of communication and social interaction is fully completed by the *BODY* solely that emphasizes its significance in the course of socialization. V. Woolf applies the image of *decoding signs* process that stands for *identifying personality*, illustrated by the following fragment of the novel *The Waves*: 'Thus, in a few seconds, deftly, adroitly, *we decipher the hieroglyphs written on other people's faces*. Here, in this room, are the abraded and battered shells cast on the shore.' (*Ibid*, 175) The process of '*deciphering the hieroglyphs written on people's faces'* means acquiring information about their personality, getting acquainted with them, that obviously emphasizes discursive character of the *HUMAN BODY*, bearing encoded information that requires decoding.

Similar figurative representation of the *HUMAN BODY* is found in the novel *Women in Love* by D.H. Lawrence:

> Gudrun watched them closely, with objective curiosity. She saw each one as a complete figure, like a character in a book, or a subject in a picture, or a marionette in a theatre, a finished creation. She loved to recognise their various characteristics, to place them in their true light, give them their own surroundings, settle them for ever as they passed before her along the path to the church. *She knew them, they were finished, sealed and stamped and finished with, for her*. There was none that had anything unknown, unresolved, until the Criches themselves began to appear. (Lawrence, 2011a, 6)

Here well-known qualities of the personality are signified by means of the images of a SEAL and a STAMP used to mark the BODY, activating the conceptual metonymy SEALED AND STAMPED HUMAN BODY stands for WELL-KNOWN PERSONALITY.

In other fragments of modernist literary prose corporeal semiotics accentuates erotic aspects of the body. Thus, BODIES, which seem to be personified, fulfil social functions as communication, compare: 'I am ready now to join men and women on the stairs, my peers. I pass them, exposed to their gaze, as they are to mine. Like lightning we look but do not soften or show signs of recognition. *Our bodies communicate*. This is my calling. This is my world.' (Woolf, 2000, 101)

More often such "bodily communication" presupposes tactile contact, with the help of which maximum information about beloved person is received, compare:

> *She had her desire of him, she touched, she received the maximum of unspeakable communication in touch*, dark, subtle, positively silent, a magnificent gift and give again, a perfect acceptance and yielding, a mystery, the reality of that which can never be known, vital, sensual reality that can never be transmuted into mind content, but remains outside, living body of darkness and silence and subtlety, the mystic body of reality. (Lawrence, 2011a, 251)

Obviously, tactile contact as a means of getting information, that can be compared to a process of "reading", deciphering the *body code*, is found in the context of D.H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Here *sex* is conceptualized through the prism of the image of COMMUNICATION, activating the conceptual metaphor SEX IS COMMUNICATION, where the comparison of two semiotic systems (LANGUAGE and HUMAN BODY) lies beneath the formation of the imagery: 'Well, Charlie and I believe that *sex is a sort of communication like speech*. Let any woman start a *sex conversation* with me, and it's natural for me to go to bed with her to finish it, all in due season.' (Lawrence, 2011b, 35) Moreover, here D.H. Lawrence apparently highlights the idea about sexual intercourse being the closest and most intimate type of communication that takes place on the level of touch and provides the true and deep natural intimacy between partners.

To sum it up, semiotic nature of corporality is revealed in the imagery space of the analyzed modernist literary texts by means of the poetic interpretation of the HUMAN BODY through the prism of the conceptual metaphor HUMAN BODY IS A SIGN that activates the image of a DEFORMED, FACELESS, CARNAL BODY. Such imagery vision of the body conveys the inner psychological state of a human being in the society – suffering, injured, who finds the outlet for his emotions in individual feelings, usually of sensual character.

4. The textual space of *HUMAN BODY* in postmodernist literary prose

The conceptual analysis of the *HUMAN BODY* literary interpretation in postmodernist prose on the material of J. Winterson's novel *Written on the Body* demonstrated that philosophic vision of corporality, characteristic of postmodernist period, fully finds reflection in the literary text.

Thus, one of the metaphoric correlates of the *HUMAN BODY* in J. Winterson's novel is a *text*. Such vector of literary extension implies the activation of the conceptual metaphor *HUMAN BODY IS A TEXT* and a more specific one in relation to generic-level conceptual metaphor *HUMAN BODY IS A SIGN*.

Text, as a complex language sign, is not a random metaphorical correlate applied to the *HUMAN BODY*. Such figurative interpretation of the *HUMAN BODY* correlates with the general tendency of postmodernist thought, because postmodernists place *LANGUAGE* and, foremost, *TEXT* in the centre of philosophizing, giving the priority to the esthetics of emotional experience, *TEXT* being the universal medium of human sensuality (Kanke).

The appeal to sensuality and eroticism of the *HUMAN BODY* in the context of J. Winterson's novel that takes place through the prism of the image of a *TEXT* as a language sign correlates with the assumption made by R. Barthes as well, who was quite precise in his interpretation of the *HUMAN BODY AS A TEXT*. His (R. Barthes's) vision of correlation of the *body* and the *text* finds reflection in the context of the analyzed novel and figurative representation of the *EROTICIZED BODY*, since J. Winterson employs the text as the image-symbol, correlating with the corporeal code in the literary text to create the image of the *TEXTUAL BODY*.

Such modus of imagery conceptualization is illustrated by plenty of text fragments of J. Winterson's novel and is, evidently, the dominant one. This vector of conceptualization of the *HUMAN BODY* reveals the specific aspects of mutual relations between people and beloved ones in particular as described in the literary text, both *TEXT* and *HUMAN BODY* being the codes, that require two sides of the process – decoding or deciphering, that precedes understanding, and encoding, that follows one's own interpretation. Both processes are metaphorically associated with the stages of human communication. Thus, the attempts of human beings to get acquainted and understand each other are interpreted in the novel as deciphering the "written on the body" code, whereas the impact this acquaintance produces (emotions and feelings aroused) is viewed as leaving signs on the body of the beloved person.

As far as J. Winterson depicts the romance between two lovers, she portrays their love relations as the interaction of two *HUMAN BODIES*, endeavouring to interpret each other's codes. For example, the generalized representation of the *human body* as a *sign* is obvious in the following text fragment:

Articulacy of fingers, the language of the deaf and dumb, singing on the body body longing. Who taught you *to write in blood on my back? Who taught you to use your hands as branding irons? You have scored your name into my shoulders, referenced me with your mark. The pads of your fingers have become printing blocks, you tap a message on to my skin, tap meaning into my body. Your morse code interferes with my heart beat.* I had a steady heart before I met you, I relied upon it, it had seen active service and grown strong. Now you alter its pace with your own rhythm, you play upon me, drumming me taut. (Winterson, 2001, 89)

It is noteworthy that the *human body* is simultaneously represented as both a TEXT (or a CODE) and a PALIMPSEST, on which the code is written, compare:

Written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain light; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there. In places the palimpsest is so heavily worked that the letters feel like Braille. I like to keep my body rolled up away from prying eyes. Never unfold too much, tell the whole story. I didn't know that Louise would have reading hands. She has translated me into her own book. (*Ibid*, 89)

From this fragment of the novel it becomes evident that in the figurative interpretation of J. Winterson one's life experience is encoded on his/her body by means of a 'secret code*'* as if on a 'palimpsest', which a human being tries never to 'unfold too much' and 'keep the body rolled up' as a manuscript from curious eyes, that implies never 'telling the whole story' to others, i.e. never showing the inmost and intimate part of one's soul, that can be observed in the text of the novel more than once, compare: 'Your beloved has gone down to a foreign land. …Your beloved is waiting on the hills. Be patient and go with nimble feet *dropping your body like a scroll.*' (*Ibid*, 178)

The BODY is depicted as if "narrating" the story of one's life, which is inscribed on it. From the fragments above it is evident, that it is the body that "tells our story", having it 'written down' and preserving our background experience, that is some 'secret code' (*written on the body is a secret code only visible in certain light; the accumulations of a lifetime gather there*), which is understandable not for everyone, though it is obvious and clearly "imprinted" into the skin (*so heavily worked that the letters feel like Braille*), but to lovers only. It is lovers or sex partners that can understand the "code", i.e. 'the soul of one's beloved'. The fact of such understanding is realized through the prism of bodily imagery. In the literary vision of Winterson a lover has '*reading hands*', which he/she uses in the process of "deciphering" or "decoding" the body of a beloved person, which results in comprehension of his/her personality.

The desire to make a partner open and understandable provokes one of the characters of the novel to ask: 'What else is *embossed on your hands but her*?' (*Ibid*, 189), where the need to understand a beloved woman is depicted in the imagery system of the author as the process of solving the secret of the mark

imprinted on her hands (*embossed on your hands*), which is a "seal" of ex-love.

In the figurative interpretation of J. Winterson such primary mutual understanding ("decoding" each other's bodies) is necessarily followed by the desire to make a partner "readable" for a single person only, that is realized in the novel by means of metaphorical "*translation*", i.e. encoding by means of another language, deciphering and transferring into another code system, understandable for them only (*she has translated me into her own book*), that makes it similar to the process of "translation from one language into another." In the imagery space of the novel such "translation" occurs in the course of sexual relations and activates the conceptual metaphor MAKING LOVE IS TRANSLATING A TEXT.

Following it the process of "encoding" takes place by means of leaving metaphorical *signs* on the body of a beloved person that is performed by means of bodily contact and finger touch (*the pads of your fingers have become printing blocks*), that can leave a "brand" (*use your hands as branding irons*), "write" in blood (*to write in blood on my back*), "mark" the body of the beloved person with one's name (*have scored your name into my shoulders, referenced me with your mark*), "tap the message and sense" (*you tap a message on to my skin, tap meaning into my body*), and even be means of altering the "code system" (*your Morse code interferes with my heart beat*). Even the slightest touch of a partner's body can leave signs on it:

> Louise came home her face shining with frost. There was a deep glow in her cheeks, her lips were icy when she kissed me. She pushed her frozen hands under my shirt and held them against my back like two *branding irons. (Ibid*, 103)

To the process of "encoding" of the body of a beloved person joins the ability of retina to "remember" everything seen: 'I have mapped you with my naked eye and stored you out of sight. The *millions of cells that make up your tissues are plotted on my retina.' (Ibid*, 117) Sometimes the metaphorical BODY SIGNS are painful, depicted with the help of the image of a "wound" left on one's skin:

> After sex you tiger-tear your food, let your mouth run over with grease. Sometimes it's me you bite, *leaving shallow wounds in my shoulders*. Do you want *to stripe me* to match your own? I *wear the wounds as a badge of honour. (Ibid*, 118)

and even on the inside of one's body:

> The moulds of your teeth are easy to see under my shirt but the L that *tattoos me on the inside* is not visible to the naked eye. (*Ibid*)

Obviously, no matter what a variety of SIGNS ON THE BODY the author uses in the imagery system of the text, the majority of them have the common meaning – they are 'the signs of belonging to the partner as the marks left by him/her' or the 'witnesses of the events lived through, reflecting the background experience'. (*Ibid*) In the majority of contexts the generic-level conceptual

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metaphor making love is encoding and decoding the signs on the body is activated, based on the image of the *BODY NARRATING*. The author, turning to the images of figurative *DECODING AND ENCODING THE SIGNS ON THE BODY*, applies different code systems for the imagery conceptualization, among them being both artificial ones (Morse code) and natural language. The application of the latter implies the activation of the image of *PALIMPSEST* as a metaphorical correlate of the *BODY* and conceptual metonymy *HUMAN BODY* stands for *PALIMPSEST*, illustrated by the text fragment:

> During the interval of The Marriage of Figaro I realized how often other people looked at Louise. On every side we were battered by sequins, dazed with gold. The women wore their jewellery like medals. *A husband here, a divorce there, they were a palimpsest of love-affairs.* (*Ibid*, 31-2)

The choice of the image of a *PALIMPSEST*, - 'a manuscript page from a scroll or book from which the text has been scraped or washed off and which can be used again' is, apparently, not random for the formation of the general conception of the body in the novel, as it corresponds to J. Winterson's poetic vision of sexual relations, in the course of which the partners as if "scrape off" the "written on the body" by ex-lovers and put down their own "writing", previously having "translated" it into their own "language".

This modus of imagery conceptualization of the body accentuates the characteristic feature of corporality interpretation as "a source of textual information".

As the text interpreter, a lover "deciphers" the beloved body and leaves his own "message of love" on it:

> I shall think of you every day, many times a day. Your *hand prints are all over my body*. Your flesh is my flesh. *You deciphered me and now I am plain to read. The message is a simple one; my love for you.*' (*Ibid*,106)

> In the waste basket perhaps, in the larder, *I will find a clue to you, I will be able to unravel you*, pull you between my fingers and stretch out each thread to know the measure of you. (*Ibid*, 50)

The way lovers treat each other as one another's "property" is depicted in the novel with the help of such literary detail as a "copyright" for the "text, written on the body", e.g.:

> When we were over, I wanted my letters back. *My copyright* she said but her property. She had said the same about her body. Perhaps it was wrong to climb into her lumber-room and take back the last of myself. (*Ibid*, 17)

or the "signature" left on it:

> What would you do? Pass the body into the hands of strangers? The body your arms still long for dead or not. You were intimate with every muscle, privy to the eyelids moving in sleep. *This is the body where your name is written*, passing into the hands of strangers' (*Ibid*, 177-8).

Such literary interpretation of the body was stipulated by bodily world

perception, specific of postmodernist thought. In general, the poetic interpretation of the human body in the literary text of postmodernist period is marked by a more pronounced focus on the existential space of the individual. The image of the *HUMAN BODY AS A TEXT* and the *BODY NARRATING*, activated in the imagery system of J. Winterson's novel, conveys the psychological state of a human being, deepened in his private and intimate feelings and emotions.

Conclusion

In modernist and postmodernist literature corporality becomes the phenomenon conveying the general idea of the author and the message of the text. The human body domain serves not only the key component of the plot structure, but of the imagery system of the literary text as well. The focus on bodily world perception of the characters is used by the authors to highlight their mental and psychological states.

Human body as a semiotic code is marked by polysemantic character and is represented as the space of generating meaning and the "surface" of projection of the meanings, being specific for each of the analyzed periods. While in modernist literary text the conceptual metaphor *HUMAN BODY IS A SIGN* activates the image of a *DEFORMED, FACELESS, CARNAL BODY*, that conveys the inner psychological state of a human being in the society – suffering, injured, who finds the outlet for his emotions in individual feelings, usually of sensual character, it is the period of postmodernism that demonstrates the utmost figurative semiotization of the human body due to its discursive nature. Textual space of the human body, correlating with the specific postmodernist understanding of corporality, reveals to the full extent eroticized and sensual aspects of the body as well as the individual existential experience of a human being.

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II. EXEGEZE

TOURISTIFYING THE NATION: LIQUID ENGLISHNESS IN JULIAN BARNES' *ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

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Abstract. The present paper approaches Julian Barnes' novel *England, England* in the light of Zygmunt Bauman's metaphor of the *tourist syndrome* – a further explanation of his concept of 'liquid modernity' –, examining the comic-satirical representations of the commodification of national memory and identity as an inevitable aspect of the process of globalisation, and the way in which the fictional project of the nation as theme-park highlights the challenges that postmodern tourism brings to the idea of authentic experience and of historical awareness.

Keywords: tourism, identity, memory, capital, theme-park, Englishness, liquid modernity, authenticity, otherness

Julian Barnes' novel *England, England* (1998) has been variously approached as a postmodern satirical comment on ideas of national identity, 'an intriguing contribution to the ongoing debate about Englishness' (Nünning, 2001), especially in the light of Eric Hobsbawm's seminal concept of 'invented traditions'; as a fictional exploration of the postmodern paradoxes in the relationship between reality and representation, in which Baudrillard's notions of simulation and hyperreality loom large for the advised reader (Miracky, 2004), or as an 'effective satire on both the selection of what constitutes "essential" national characteristics, and the processes of commodification that go hand in hand with marketing these for tourist consumption' (Bedggood, 2005: 213). In a similar line of concern, Nick Bentely (2007) grafts Lacan's theories of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real, as well as Ricoeur's theories of narrative and time, onto Benedict Anderson's concept of the nation as 'imagined community', to analyse the way in which Englishness is narrativised in various modes in Barnes' novel.

The reading of *England, England* attempted in the present paper starts from a metaphor proposed by Zygmunt Bauman in order to define from a new angle the human condition in what he calls 'liquid modernity' (cf. 2000), and proceeds to discuss the comic-satirical representation of the commodification of national memory as an inevitable aspect of the process of globalisation. The

metaphor in question is that of *tourism*, which, for Bauman, represents not only an essential economic activity of the global consumer society, but also an emblematic one, reflecting the major characteristics of our 'liquid' civilisation.

In an interview given to Adrian Franklin and published in *Tourist Studies* (Franklin, 2003), Bauman defines the *tourist syndrome* as a generalized condition affecting contemporary existence and manifesting itself first of all by the 'presumption of temporariness', 'built into the way of being and behaving' (207) and weakening our ties to places and to people. This loosening of attachments leads to what Bauman calls 'grazing behaviour' (208) – relationships and experiences are reduced to their consumption value; as in the case of the modern tourist, for whom the quest for new pleasurable sensations renders all relationships fragile and temporary, contemporary man, living and acting under the conditions of uncertainty, continuous risk and shifting trust characterising the world of liquid modernity (cf. Bauman, 2004), finds that 'the effort to construct a hard and tough frame of mutual rights and obligations and mutually binding rules of conduct is completely redundant' (*ibidem*). To become fit for a kind of life in which change is the only permanence, the individual has to be quick both in learning and in forgetting, which again recalls the condition of the tourist:

> To be on the move before the ground moves under feet, to be always ready for another run – this is the name of the game. And so, just like during a tourist trip, you can cut out all the worries about the long term, far-reaching consequences of what you are doing at the moment. In all probability, there will be no such consequences – not for you, at any rate. There is no lifelong identity that could be selected at the beginning of life and pursued from then on, no 'training for life', no 'whole life' skills that can be acquired once and for all and won't require revision – or forgetting…. (Bauman, in Franklin, 2003, 209)

The problematic nature of identity under the 'liquid' condition of globalisation and consumerism has been seen by Bauman in terms of an ongoing struggle 'to arrest or slow down the flow, to solidify the fluid, to give form to the formless.' (2000, 82) The relief from the anxieties of uncertainty and permanent mutability is of a fantasmatic nature and comes from the illusion of control and choice that consumerism creates:

> Given the intrinsic volatility and unfixity of all or most identities, it is the ability to 'shop around' in the supermarket of identities, the degree of genuine or putative consumer freedom to select one's identity and to hold to it as long as desired, that becomes the royal road to the fulfilment of identity fantasies. Having that ability, one is free to make and unmake identities at will. (*Ibidem*, 83)

As an activity with both economic and cultural implications, the tourism industry is, as Donald V.L. MacLeod points out, 'particularly attuned to creating

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and marketing identities.' (2004, 11)

The change that tourism, as an epitome of postmodern consumer culture, effects on ideas of identity – both individual and collective – presupposes a reconsideration of the issue of *authenticity* and, related to it, a new attitude to *history* – again, both personal and communal.

These are central issues in Julian Barnes' novel, in which the main plotline concerns Sir Jack Pitman's project of building the ultimate theme-park of Englishness on the Isle of Wight, as 'one last great idea' (Barnes, 1998, 33) which would amaze the world and restore its respect for the elusive 'entrepreneur, innovator, ideas man, arts patron, inner-city revitaliser', as he advertised himself (29). This last grandiose project may be seen as an attempt to provide his life with a defining goal, one that would transcend all his other diverse and temporary achievements and fix a certain aspect of his multi-faceted, ambiguous identity. There is a certain dubiousness about Sir Jack's person – or persona –, much of which is his own deliberate creation, starting with the myth of his 'continental origin', which he had allowed to spread (33). Opinions about Sir Jack varied greatly and were often contradictory:

> Was he villain and bully, or born leader and force of nature? Inevitable and gross consequence of the free-market system, or a driven individual who nevertheless kept in touch with his essential humanity? Some ascribed to him a deep, instinctive intelligence which gave him equal feel for the tidal fluctuations of the market and the susceptibilities of those he dealt with; others found him a brute and unreflecting junction between money, ego, and lack of conscience. (56)

Perceptions of his genius as a businessman were equally divided: for some, he was 'chancer, a gambler, a financial illusionist'; for others he was 'a dynamic merchant venturer' inciting envy among inferior competitors; still for others he was 'an archetypal transnational entrepreneur working in the modern global market' (57). Similar 'variant readings' could be applied to Pitman House: 'Was its location – in an enterprise zone reclaimed from green belt to the north-west of London – a canny piece of cost-cutting, or an indication that Sir Jack was bollock-scared of mixing it with the City's heavy hitters? Was the hiring of Slater, Grayson & White a mere kowtow to architectural modishness, or a clever investment? A more basic question was: did Pitman House even belong to Jack Pitman?' (*ibidem*)

All these perceived contradictory and unstable identities emerge from interpretations of his ability to make money move – they are, therefore, a function of the circulating power of his capital. Capital in the age of 'liquid modernity', Zygmunt Bauman shows, is 'weightless': it 'can travel fast and travel light and its lightness and motility have turned into the paramount source of uncertainty for all the rest.' (Bauman, 2000, 121) As a capital holder, Sir Jack can 'invest' in any identity that suits him, and keeping the ambiguity about his

real self is a source of power. The run-of-the-mill rhetoric about authenticity and fakeness in which he indulges before the assembled team that was to bring his project to life ('What is real?. This is sometimes how I put the question to myself. Are *you* real, for instance – you and you? […] are real to yourselves, of course, but this is not how things are judged at the highest level. My answer would be No. Regrettably. And you will forgive me for my candour, but I could have you replaced with substitutes, with … simulacra more quickly than I could sell my beloved Brancusi' – 31) is not just a comic piece of postmodern kitsch philosophical musing, but an intimation of the power that capital has in manipulating identity. The project that he embarks upon is both a commercial enterprise, designed to absorb his capital and return profit, and a strategy whereby he can self-gratifyingly showcase an identity aspect: the international businessman, in whose postmodern office one could admire a Murano chandelier, two Bavarian hunting-lodge fireplaces and a sculpture by Brancusi, likes to think of himself as 'a patriot at heart.' (30)

The meaning of patriotism in the context of global postmodern tendencies is one of the targets of Barnes' comic satire in the novel. For Sir Jack, England is a 'client' which must be served well, as it can bring into business an inestimable capital: 'an accumulation of time', as his special consultant, Jerry Batson (whose personality is equally elusive and goal-oriented), points out (39). Jerry Batson's self-proclaimed patriotism is of a 'pro-active' kind (37): the decline of Britain from its imperial glory ('We are no longer mega' – 39), as well as the prospect of Irish, Scottish and Welsh devolution, feared as debilitating for England, detracts nothing from his love of the country, but impels him to 'dream', with Sir Jack (cf. 34, 36), of ways of keeping up, of 'embrac[ing] time and change and age without becoming a historical depressive' (38). Instead of nostalgic glances at past greatness, the 'consultant to the elect' (36) sees England's rehabilitation as a matter of 'placing the product correctly':

> You – we – England – my client – is – are – a nation of great age, great history, great accumulated wisdom. Social and cultural history – stacks of it, reams of it – eminently marketable, never more so than in the current climate. Shakespeare, Queen Victoria, Industrial Revolution, gardening, that sort of thing. If I may coin, no, copyright, a phrase, *We are already what others may hope to become*. This isn't self-pity, this is the strength of our position, our glory, our product placement. We are the new pioneers. We must sell our past to other nations as their future! (39–40)

History as capital to be invested in a Quality Leisure enterprise may, however, be at odds with patriotism, so far as it is conceived in relation to truth or to knowledge. Confronted with people's ignorance, Dr. Max, the "Official Historian", whose task was to determine how much history the prospective

customers knew already (71), explicitly equals lack of historical awareness to lack of patriotism (82). The result of his market research reveals, however, the paradox that 'patriotism's most eager bedfellow was ignorance, not knowledge' (*ibidem*). The success of a touristic enterprise promising visitors an encounter with a 'quintessential' England, as Sir Jack's theme park was supposed to do, lies in its capacity to gratify a sense of epistemological security, which is the outcome not of a quest after the solidity of trustworthy historical knowledge, but of the pleasure of *recognition*: tourists do not really want to learn more, they come 'to enjoy what they already know' (71). The comfort of recognition, the pleasurable familiarity with standardised forms, is, as revealed by Theodor Adorno's prophetic insights (cf. Adorno, 2001, 85), an essential mechanism of what he termed 'culture industry', whereby consumers, who are no more than 'statistics on research organisation charts', are kept in a state of passive receptivity to the interpellation of capital. In the liquid, touristified condition of postmodern civilisation, actual tourism, turned into an industry in its own right, while apparently promising a sort of 'surplus value' to the capital of one's cultural and historical knowledge, tends to package the offer in consumable forms meant to make customers '*feel* less ignorant' (Barnes, 1998, 70), not necessarily be so. Jeff, Sir Jack's Project Manager in Barnes' novel, sums up satirically this strategy of securing buyers for their Quality Leisure product: 'So we don't threaten people. We don't insult their ignorance. We deal in what they already understand. Perhaps we add a little more. But nothing unwelcomely major.' (71)

Barnes's comic-satirical emphasis on the importance of ignorance for the success of Sir Jack's theme park project establishes an implicit opposition between modern tourism, centred on 'democratic' consumption, and the traditional Grand Tour, an educational and cultural institution which, in the 18th and 19th centuries, contributed to the formation of Britain's ruling élite and which was 'central to the elaboration of discourses on national identity and language' in these periods (Cohen, 2001, 130). The Grand Tour was, to a large extent, a social and cultural imperative, meant to dispel a certain feeling of inferiority in the insular Englishman (*ibidem*: 129), and its more immediate purpose was to enlarge knowledge about the Other, to establish points of reference concerning standards of sociality, as Richard Steele was pointing out, as early as 1712, in *The Tatler*:

> Certainly the true end of visiting Foreign parts is to look into their Customs and Policies, and observe in what Particulars they excel or come short of your own; to unlearn some of the Peculiarities of our Manners, and wear off such awkward Stiffness and Affectation in our Behaviour, as may possibly have been contracted from constantly associating with one Nation of Men, by a more free, general and mixed Conversation. (qtd. in Cohen, 2001, 130)

The Grand Tour was thus predicated on the idea of accumulation of cultural capital, which, in turn, was expected to increase social capital. As a 'rite of passage' for the young Englishman, it may be seen as underlain by what Bauman calls 'the pilgrim syndrome': a modality of travel 'where the significance of every stage is derived fully from the diminishing distance separating the traveler from the previously selected destination.' (Bauman, in Franklin, 2003, 209) Covering distance – cultural as much as physical – presupposes a journey towards and the direct encounter with the Other as an object of knowledge, and this enterprise may be fraught with risk and insecurity. Postmodern tourism, in a globalized world in which communications and travel technologies have shrunk distances and advertising takes care to reassure tourists that ignorance is not an impediment to enjoyment, has turned the 'pilgrim' into a consumer and both self-identity and Otherness into commodities. 'Genteel travel' has indeed, in spite of Sir Jack's cynical denial in Barnes' novel (cf. Barnes, 1998, 41), turned into a major profit-driven industry, which commodifies culture, identity, and history, offering them for safe consumption.

Barnes' novel satirises precisely this endeavour to shelter the prospective customer from the inconveniences of the encounter with the 'real thing'. The kind of touristic experience that his theme-parked, essentialised England offers does not aim at satisfying the tourist-as-learner's curiosity, but at confirming *fantasies* of knowledge: 'The Island Experience, as the billboards have it, is everything you *imagined* England to be, but more convenient, cleaner, friendlier, and more efficient' (184; emphasis mine). Real England, now 'Old England', having finally regressed to a utopia of archaic rurality in a complementary effort to find its own essence, its true identity, is advertised as no longer a desirable destination, since it precludes this kind of sanitised and manageable encounter with otherness: in the completely touristified 'England, England', there is no risk of incurring 'the traditional cold-fish English welcome' or of wandering in confusion 'on a wind-swept sidewalk in dirty Old London Town' in search of the way to the Tower (184):

> From now on, only those with an active love of discomfort or necrophiliac taste for the antique need venture there. The best of all that England was, and is, can be safely and conveniently experienced on this spectacular and well-equipped diamond of an Island. (185)

Even the unpredictable, inclement weather – one of the 'quintessences' of Englishness cited by prospective tourists – has been efficiently commodified in Sir Jack's theme park: technology has allowed the creation of safe permanent zones of winter or of 'pea-soup' fog, in which inconveniences are turned into entertainment, becoming entirely a matter of choice, thus gratifying the tourist with the illusion of control.

To ensure this kind of gratification, time and place themselves, as

matrices of national memory and identity, are to be submitted to the constraints of the project. The diminutive replica of England that is the Isle of Wight contains most of the icons of Englishness in an aggregation that has eliminated both spatial and temporal distance – clearly a satirical reference to postmodern theories of time-space compression. The recreation of a variety of national memory sites and historic moments, as well as the revival, by hired actors, of legendary or real figures from the past, turns the small island into a grotesquely scrambled jigsaw puzzle, in proud defiance of any original pattern. The jigsaw puzzle is a pervasive motif in the novel: Martha remembers how, as a child, she was supposed to re-assemble the image of England from several pieces representing the various counties, and how she would choose a shortcut, picking up a piece at random and trying to force it into the pattern (4). Sir Jack's theme-park "England, England", where everything is jumbled within comfortable reach, has the same arbitrariness and randomness about it:

> In our time-strapped age, surely it makes sense to be able to visit Stonehenge and Anne Hathaway's Cottage in the same morning, take in a 'ploughman's lunch' atop the White Cliffs of Dover, before passing a leisurely afternoon at the Harrods emporium inside the Tower of London (Beefeaters push your shopping trolley for you!). (179-80)

It is, ultimately, the issue of mastery that underlies the apparent debate about *authenticity* in Barnes' novel. The enormous success of "England, England" as a touristic destination was proof that the aura of anything original had faded in the postmodern world of hyperreality and simulation. The preference of the replica to the original is established by the 'French intellectual' invited to provide a theoretical basis to Sir Jack's project (Barnes, 1998, 53–55) as an indelible sign of modernity – our yearning for the 'original' must be dismissed as sentimental and 'inherently fraudulent' (55), if modernity is to be fully embraced:

> We must demand the replica, since the reality, the truth, the authenticity of the replica is the one we can possess, colonize, reorder, find *jouissance* in, and, finally, if and when we decide, it is the reality which, since it is our destiny, we may meet, confront, and destroy. (*Ibidem*)

The replica is preferable because it provides relief from the inherent 'otherness' of the unmasterable Real, from the 'profound atavistic fear we experience when we are face to face with the original' (54). It is the "imaginary", manageable version of a reality that might turn to be unwieldy.

Memory constitutes, in the novel, an epitome for the elusiveness of the Real and of our strategies to 'colonise' it with convenient substitutes. The suggested analogy between personal and collective/national memory is linked to the issue of the accessibility of the past and to the amount of truth that memory can make available. Martha Cochrane's preoccupation with the nature of memory and the relationship between it and history serves as a frame to the

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comedy of national touristification that Sir Jack's project achieves. As the "Appointed Cynic" in the project's managing team, she knows better than anyone the capacity of memory to falsify the past, to provide secure versions of it. Memories are like jig-saw puzzles in the hands of children: they may 'just pick up any old piece and try to force it into the hole' – they are 'artfully, innocently arranged lie[s]' (*ibidem*, 4), the result of a process of negotiation, of a psycho-economic deal closed in order to adjust the present and the past to each other: an 'element of propaganda, of sales and marketing, always intervened between the inner and the outer person' (6). Paradoxically, what we tend to regard as a store of truths about ourselves, as the foundation of our authentic self, is, Martha acknowledges, a 'continuing self-deception'; on the other hand, being lucid – or cynical – about it does not help complete demystification: 'even if you recognized all this, grasped the impurity and corruption of the memory system, you still, part of you, believed in that innocent, authentic thing – yes, thing – you called a memory.' (6–7)

      Martha's awareness of the double nature of memory is analogous to the tourist's experience in a theme park, which, in Julian Barnes' novel, is underlain precisely by this unsteadiness and unreliability of national memory. In a 'liquid' present, the past is indeed never to be taken for granted when operations of 'propaganda' and 'marketing' will turn it into a manageable commodity, meant to gratify a kind of ignorance that comes from the defensive suspension of historical consciousness (Jeff, the Concept Developer, is convinced that 'most people don't want […] history – the kind you get in books – because they don't know how to deal with it' – Barnes, 1998, 70).

      The question of authenticity, as far as the touristic experience of the past is concerned, becomes prominent, but at the same time spurious; it is one that needs to be addressed and dismissed at the same time when the past is commodified for consumption. Tourist studies actually point out the paradox that authentic experience is practically inconceivable in contemporary tourism, even in the case of 'tailor-made holidays', a form of 'niche tourism available for those with sufficient cultural capital to appreciate them' (MacLeod, 2006, 178) and which presupposes direct contact with real events and rituals and the enjoyable experience of local friendship and hospitality. Even in this case, what the tourist experiences is actually a contrived, 'staged authenticity" (a concept introduced by Dean MacCannel, qtd. in MacLeod, 2006, 179). In the theme-park experience, staged authenticity is replaced by simulacra, offered for consumption in a 'completely artificial, purpose-built environment.' (*ibidem*, 178) For Nicola MacLeod, '[t]he very act of being a tourist is to consume inauthentic and commodified products and events' (ibidem), and he cites Daniel Boorstin's view that the tourist is in fact in search for the 'pseudo-event', the deliberately contrived experience (*ibidem*). The innumerable problems that history and truth seem to pose to Sir Jack's project are to be solved by Jeff in a

pragmatic way: 'I'd say the best approach is to flatter the client rather than the product' (Barnes, 1998, 109). Updating and upgrading icons, traditions, and customs, and bringing everything deemed or invented as 'English' within the conveniently diminutive 'England, England', Sir Jack's theme-park represents a touristified nation in which the postmodern tourist – or, rather, the 'post-tourist' – feels free from the burden of history and finds delight in the consciousness of the blurred boundary between the fake and the real. It is a paradoxical experience, which confronts him with the world as stage, with national identity as performance. John Urry remarks that 'the post-tourist knows that he or she is a tourist and that tourism is a series of games with multiple texts and no single, authentic tourist experience.' (2002, 91) In Julian Barnes' novel, we have a sense of this nature of postmodern tourism when Martha is described surveying – and surveilling – the island on the computers in her office; from her position of control, ensured by technology, she can 'read' simultaneously the random 'texts' of quintessential Englishness simulated in the theme-park, offering a comic-parodic compendium of the possibilities of post-tourism:

> From her office Martha could experience the whole Island. She could watch the feeding of the One Hundred and One Dalmatians, check throughput at Haworth Parsonage, eavesdrop on snug-bar camaraderie between straw-chewing yokel and Pacific Rim sophisticate. She could track the Battle of Britain, the Last Night of the Proms, the Trial of Oscar Wilde, and the Execution of Charles I. On one screen King Harold would glance fatally towards the sky; on another posh ladies in Sissinghurst hats pricked out seedlings and counted the varieties of butterfly perching on the buddleia; on a third hackers were pock-marking the fairway of the Alfred, Lord Tennyson Golf Course. (Barnes, 1998, 185)

These multiple 'texts' do no longer need to be faithful to a reality; as simulations, they actually extricate themselves from any referential obligation: loosened attachment to the truth of history is one aspect of the volatility of identity in liquid modernity, as posited by Bauman, and tourism, as the epitome of this condition, is particularly apt to illustrate this 'epoch of disengagement, elusiveness, facile escape and hopeless chase.' (Bauman, 2000, 121)

This disengagement occurs at another level, as well, in Barnes' novel. The complete touristification of the nation, achieved after its independence from real England (now referred to as "Old England"), offered not only relief from the "burden" of history, but the comfort of irresponsibility and the escape from the depressing spectacle of "social strain". The Islanders inhabiting now the national theme-park built by Pitco decide to stop fleeing to the Continent and enjoy their new, touristified condition:

> Why become voyeurs of social strain? Why slum it where people were burdened by yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that? By

> history? Here, on the Island, they had learnt how to deal with history, how to sling it carelessly on your back and stride out across the downland with the breeze in your face. Travel light: it was true for nations as well as for hikers. (Barnes, 1998, 203)

Finally, independent 'England, England' turns from a successful 'leisure business' into a 'miniature state' (*ibidem*, 183), in which there is full employment – as the unemployable have been shipped to the Continent; no crime – therefore no need for police or other repressive apparatus; no government responsible for foreign or domestic policy. The theme-park state has eliminated such transcendent categories as history, society, and politics – the fundmentals of 'solid' modernity –, the only logic governing it being the economic one. It is a comic fictional illustration of the concept of '*cité par projets*', proposed by sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello as an aspect of the 'new spirit of capitalism', which Zygmunt Bauman finds consonant with his own description of liquid modernity (cf. Bauman, 2004). As a project, 'England, England' has succeeded in subordinating everything to the logic of capital, achieving no less than Utopia, by becoming 'a pure market-state' (*ibidem*). This full realisation of the nation-as-theme-park project evinces, according to one analyst praising it, the true nature of man: 'What's happening on the Island is a recognition that man is a market-driven animal, that he swims in the market like a fish in the sea' (*ibidem*, 184).

The all-absorbing, centripetal force of capital in its relentless motion is inescapable in its global effects. 'Old England'/'Anglia' returns through historical regression to its 'natural' state of a rural, pre-industrial paradise, choosing isolation and self-sufficiency; banning all tourism 'except for groups numbering two or less, and introduce[ing] a Byzantine visa system' (253), it attempts to conserve the authenticity and truth of its traditions and save them from commodification, but the ironic twist in the novel is that Old England turns out to be as fake in its antiquatedness as its touristified version. Withdrawn to her native village, which is now inhabited by people coming from elsewhere, drawn here by rural simplicity, Martha Cochrane has the leisure of pondering on the paradoxes of belief and disbelief concerning our ideas of authenticity. Her memories of genuine rural Englishness are the only trustworthy ones; most of the community strives to revive – but mostly invent – traditions in which they believe *as if* they were true. The few tourists who visit Anglia are themselves fake tourists: the purpose of their journey is knowledge, not leisure, but in order to gain access to the 'truth', they must play the game of the 'tailor-made holiday', a concept associated with the global tourism industry, just as the villagers play the role of the congenial hosts, proud of their heritage and of their resistance to the claims of capital. Jezz Harris, the farrier of the village (whose actual name is Jack Oshinsky and who is a former electronics expert from Milwakee), finds no greater pleasure than 'to play the yokel

whenever some anthropologist, travel writer or linguistic theoretician would turn up inadequately disguised as a tourist' (244), or, faking a local accent, to offer spurious local knowledge to the 'disguised sipper and browser of retarded humanity' (*ibidem*).

Englishness is here no longer a simulation, as in Sir Jack's theme park, but more of a pastiche – the next-best thing in a global culture, by definition 'memoryless and presentist', since 'no culture […] can flourish without collective memories and traditions, neither can cultural identities and communities exist without their distinctive cultural codes', as Anthony D. Smith points out, asking, however: 'As for a pastiche culture, how long could it withstand its own disintegrative tendencies?' (1999, 261) Julian Barnes' witty and ironic novel seems to suggest that, especially in an age in which capital, having grown so 'weightless', can travel 'hopefully, counting on brief adventures and confident that there will be no shortage of them' (Bauman, 2000, 121) – in other words, that its own 'liquid' nature makes it hard to prevent its leaking into every aspect of life –, cultural and national identity has been flattened into a floating signifier, an empty form which is there to be invested with content by one project or another. Or, to put it differently, but in the spirit of the same metaphor, no matter whether in the form of simulacrum or pastiche, Englishness, in Barnes' novel, has become a liquid category, dissolving the apparently solid articulations of national memory and conveniently assuming the shape required by the two utopian, alternative nation-projects.

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EXILE AS A STATE OF BEING:
TAKING REFUGE IN THE UTOPIA OF WORDS AND
SURVIVING THROUGH POETRY

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Abstract: In Ion Caraion's poetry, exile is a recurring theme, of extraordinary poetic power. This power is rooted in the fact that, more than a theme, in Caraion's case, exile is a state of being, *the* state of being of the poet in the world. His poetic universe must be viewed in relation to his life, a tragic existence, in a cruel and absurd history. From this perspective, the theme of exile reveals its complexity and tragism. It becomes acute after the poet's final departure in Switzerland, in 1981, to the end of his life (1986), in a fierce communist period, when the totalitarian regime evolves towards its climax. In his last years, the poet lives, at paroxysmal intensity, the exile condition, in all its forms: the geographical exile, the linguistic exile, the exile in space and time, the political exile, the ontological exile, the inner exile. Poetry becomes a form of survival, the refuge in a utopia of words and in the transcendence of ideas, in the last, supreme, exile, the aesthetic exile, beyond time, beyond being and non-being. In the context of this thematic universe, of a tragic essence, Caraion's poetry knows remarkable aesthetic metamorphoses, in an essentially expressionist key.

Keywords: exile, Caraion, political ideology, communism, ontology, utopia of words, poetic transcendence, Romanian litterature, expressionism

The linguistic exile or wandering through the labyrinth

After the torturing experience of the concentration camp exile and the almost 20 years spent in the great communist "prison", Caraion "escapes", together with his family, to the free world, towards the horizon of freedom that he has long dreamt about. But this is an escape to an illusion, to a space configured in the imagination, which does not coincide with reality, especially from a psychological point of view. After leaving for the Western world, Caraion gets to know the geographic exile, filled with other tragedies and difficulties, some insurmountable, on a linguistics, spiritual or moral level. The poet is a misfit and a perpetual outcast by temperament. Regarding exile as a defining state for the individual, the tragedy of words and of language, the poet confesses in a memorable essay (*Words in exile*), which expresses metaphorically or directly, with Caraion's typical and somewhat violent style, the shock of meeting a new language and the difficulty of living within it (also felt by Cioran, after he gave up on Romanian and faced the challenge of writing in French). Getting used to the cultural space of a different language implies major risks for the writer's

spiritual being because it endangers his very aesthetic ego. Besides the accuracy, depth and subtlety of observation, the essay – transposed in the complex and versatile writing of the poet and evolving through several stylistic registers as a true spectacle of ideas and of textual metamorphoses through the synapses of speculative thought – has remarkable poetic virtues. It can be read as a vast poem (two of the statements – 'On the words - winter. On the threshold, harpy blood.' – are in fact verses from a poem included in the *Afterwaters*), a confession about the drama of failing to adapt to a different linguistic universe and, at the same time, a meditation on a fundamental human condition, the exile. Caraion's meditation is built on the supporting structure of a few essential ideas: exile is a prison of sorts; it is equivalent to an existential failure; coming into this world means departure towards death; language is man's first exile and giving it up is the second, even worse than the political one; as birth is a foreword to demise, exile is a spiritual death. Reading the essay in the context of Caraion's poetry, we discover the fundamental idea, the axiom of his poetical ontology. In the poems, it appears transposed in lyrical, metaphorical, obscure, hermeneutical metamorphoses – accessible to hermeneutics and critical intuition –, but now it is explicitly formulated in unambiguous terms, in two embodiments: 'The great descent into death begins in the moment we are born into this world"; "(…) birth is death (…)'. This idea is the cornerstone of Caraion's poetry, the axis of the philosophy he developed. Once this essential truth is reached, the long, tragic and flawless confession that is Caraion's poetry opens up its obscure and enigmatic self to reveal its profound meaning. Thus, even more than a reflection on exile and language, this essay proves to be an open gate to the otherwise closed universe of Ion Caraion's poetry and ontology:

'Exile is a ruptured breath, amended, canceled, irredeemably afflicted by the curse of not being able to ever fully use its lungs. A moral, not only chemical, part of the air in which the being of your thought exists is progressively annulling itself, it forbids itself the required space, the reasoning width, its complete, as well as its implied, power. Words freeze, they contract and become confined in themselves, after a mortal clash with the laws of other, foreign architectures, traditions, habits. Language has been hurt, it suffers profound, irrecoverable modifications, it hides, it becomes unraveled or diluted and it oozes until its total loss and disfigurement. It becomes insufficient and inefficient. It suffers grotesque infirmities. It becomes diseased and it ails its bearers. Because exile is, in the end, nothing more than a sophisticated prison, therefore a place, a crossroads where the living conditions of language are unfit and abnormal, like a living organism forced to leave the waters and to become a land dwelling animal. (...)

On the words - winter. On the threshold, harpy blood. Forced to leave one's country at the age of 60... But I cannot leave behind my language. It is as blood, as air. Without it, I disappear. When passing to the habits, the structure, the meanderings and the sky of another language, a part of you retracts or hides from sight, it stays concealed, it shies away. Communication with yourself and with the world is reduced. You enter a degeneration of utterances. Words become agitated like mental patients. They are terrorized, haunted, filled with loneliness. A hospital for words. Disenchanted by history and by language. History, defiled, becomes a school for assassins: language, corrupt and lost, becomes philosophical demagogy. It puts on make-up and it becomes a travesty, a puppet. Antinomies are given the same name. And each word is a Janus. Not only with two faces, but also with two pairs of claws. And each claw, in its turn, is a two-faced skull. And each mouth screams or lies, flatters, foams, kills, it befouls the blue skies with nightmares. (...) I am just beginning to understand how hard it is to be Abraham in exile. To know that you have to lay the foundations for a new bloodline. Because a new language is a new bloodline. The physics of chimeras. How many layers of solitude, stacked on top or another, of how many kinds and depths!... (...) In order to continue to lead a literary existence in exile, one has to write in a universal language, however savory or seductive one's own language is. Preferably and usually, one should write in the language of the hosts. They will be, understandably, more or less flattered and you will be no longer you. Is there any authentic poet in the world that has ever succeeded, especially when approaching the twilight of life, to optimally change his language with another and write not well, but as well, in another language? There are none, not a single one. (...) Exile is the share of the defeated. Only creation and time can help one turn a defeat into a victory. They alone can send tyrants to the boat of the drowned and to eternal derision. On certain days, life and death share the same name. (...) What happens when we come into this world, do we enter once again into our beings, do we go from life to life or from life to death? Whatever the case may be, we are programmed with the precision of the end since our first minute of existence, we go from certainty to uncertainty, from peace to conflict and from the comfort of the apparent unconsciousness to the conscience of pain, from prenatal beatitude and placental contemplation to implications, assumptions, poison and aggression, forced to face a thousand and one embodiments of the risk of being. Is language one of these? Language is our first exile. The great descent into death begins on the moment we are born into this world. We grow

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and experience happiness for a short time, then we become increasingly scared and uneasy. As we grow, we delve even deeper in the nothingness and we enjoy with naïve oblivion the compactness of the shadow that surrounds us. Language is our first risk, our first exile, and forswearing one's first language, if this is the given of destiny, this renouncing – a sort of brutal evacuation of a large part of the noble contents of the memory – will be a second exile, with other conflicts, traps, threats and irreparable losses. Often enough, even fatal. This exile is even more dreadful than the political one. This is the last exile. (...) Planted in abnormal living condition – and prison, mental institutions and exile are without a doubt agonizing and improper living conditions – one reacts abnormally, all the more if one is a writer. (...) A writer's reaction to any challenge or stimuli has a better chance of being unpredictable, exhausting or catastrophic. Languages have no eyes. That is, they do, but they cannot see. They are very tired. We are caught in words as if they were shackles. What dance could turn words into kings? The dance of death? That of madness? (...) If birth is a death, exile is a second death. The first one forces the arrival into language, the second one the retreat, a departure from language or an eternal wandering through it, as if it were a labyrinth. Since I am in exile, every one of my words hurts.' (Caraion, 1995c, 16-28)

The exile in space and time. The obsession of the past

The volume *Afterwaters* (1991) is a collection of poems written in exile, some of them published while the poet was still alive, some posthumously. The poetry written by Caraion during this period has a gloomy atmosphere, dominated by intensity and older obsessions. However, a change in tone can be observed when comparing it to previous poems: while revolt, hatred and, sometimes, even a thirst for vengeance are iconic psychological realities of his previous poetry, present at high intensities especially in his first volume and in the poems inspired by the concentration camps, vituperating and dark due to the feeling of frustration and injustice experienced by the imprisoned, after the geographic exile begins, the new poetry of Caraion starts to indicate a reflexive attitude, a turning of his gaze towards its origins, solemn, contemplative, a somber "taming" in proximity of the incoming end. The metamorphosis can also be seen on an aesthetic level, where Caraion practices a fragmented lyricism, an ingrowing and focused discourse that concentrates on the idea and not on its rhetoric – which is often baroque, blossoming in complicate edifices and meandering lexical constructs, in whose structures all senses seem to get lost. During this period of his work and of his life, Caraion cultivates *a stylistic of deception and abandonment*, through poems that are symptomatic for the psychology of the exiled. Loneliness and a foresight of death (which the poet

has experienced with intensity throughout his penitentiary seclusion, but also during his complicated existence) rule over a closed universe, governed by absurd laws, dehumanized, and preparing his own dissolution. Life is isolation, exile in the "tree hollow" of living, a priori seclusion in a cave-like space, a metaphor – build on the deformed image of the Platonic theory – for the failure of knowledge and for the ontic and gnosiological closure. Existence is under the sign of insufficiency, it is defined by terror and by the impossibility of communication: 'Flames repair the darkness with sawdust from the hollows /I live in a tree hollow called life /thoroughly perusing the theory of the cave /caught between all kind of hunts /in one of the mind's chambers /Plato hangs himself several times a day /Here and there the scars of the pitch-black /look like warts or buttons on a fiery coat /to a barbarian's skull //Oh, Lord, how tender your things, how gaunt and puny /Snake knots bind the distance between the words /Air and language are no longer enough.'[26] The obsession of time, of the past, the fear of that which is approaching implacably, death, revealing itself in terrifying embodiments, aggravates the feeling of loneliness, not only in the geographical space chosen as refuge, but also in the universe, underlining the failure to relate the ego to the reality that is under the sign of illusion: 'The river of time howls /Corpses in the windows //We were sharing the coldness of death /like rations in the trenches //There is no thing /that my soul can attach to.' ("Styx")

Prisoner of an inescapable condition – his outraged conscience, bearing the marks of all his suffering –, captive of his obsession and of the fear of death, the poet transposes his angsts in a deconstructed lyrical discourse, populated with nightmarish images, ruled over by thanatological symbols: 'There was a lint, there was a fog /in front of my eyes this morning /Mein Gott! Meine Frau! /like a pulley /going up, going down /silent somber /torrential screams. //Visions come to me always, shadows /of people that once were and are not anymore.' (Charon)

The past repeats itself in tormenting sequences, updating an atrocious suffering, in the context of a cynical and deceitful history, a sinister space in which the obscure interests, treasons and manipulations face off with the illusions and the gullibility of whole peoples: 'From that flag station /(do you remember the name of the /White, but sad, Valley?) /as if through the threads of a handkerchief /that were actually our life, /we gazed at the other world. /Blue. /That is how it seemed to be. //They lied to us. And the time /when we used to say /from behind the bars /of this window or of that window /that the Americans are coming, has passed… //May the years /that enter our houses – /be recollections and less unlucky /(from now on, at least) /stars!' ("Mysteries")

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[26] Several of the poems, especially the posthumous ones, do not have a title in the original

The ghosts of the memories sometimes take material forms, bringing back to life events and states of mind experienced in the prison exile and increasingly transforming the liberty of the West to an illusion, a painful utopia. Thus, the escape from the great communist prison did not mean redemption for a victim of the history such as Caraion, but an exile in his own conscience, surrounded by the barbed wire of the past obsessions and traumas, from behind which the prisoner of suffering cannot escape: 'I had enough of the world /never ending /the mud… the mud… the mud… /on the shore of the lake, the convoy /marched on, exhausted //I slipped, I could not see /the road, the lake – nothing at all //someone was carrying me when I woke up /like a puppet /on his shoulders, like a tiny /sack //all of a sudden /I felt such a longing for life /the stuff of souls is elastic /and strange.' ("I had enough of the world", in *Posthumous Poems*).

Sometimes, his memories are violent, contradicting the impression of calmness typical for the poetry he writes in this period, and they describe nightmarish images from the sphere of repression and terror, lifting the veil over a hideous history and accusing a criminal regime, but also the complicity of those that have settled the destiny of the world, crushing under their feet the dignity, lives and hopes of people: 'For us, the doorbell does not mean the same thing it means to you /for us the doorbell means the police /a group of brutes that burst in (usually at night) /into your life and your nightmares /they turn upside down your guts, your papers and your house, /they break stuff, they curse you, they destroy things, they punch you, /they spit, they rob you, they put sunglasses on you and take you away /take you away (death never leaves empty-handed) /you and, sometimes, every one you love /away to a place that you usually never return from /never /it's as if death dropped by /and it refuses to leaves /and this goes on for decades, under the indifferent gaze /(Oh! civilization, you are so dressed up, your sleep is so deep…) /of Europe and of America (torn asunder /is the liberty for which so many nations /believed in America) that have grown very concerned /with the fate of South Africa //the deal with us is done //except that those that have sold us and are selling us every day /are also selling (and this is forgotten) /themselves //otherwise – the moon and two and a half pennies //and this goes on for decades /under the indifferent gaze of those that helped /fascism and communism /spread like the black plague and that have unleashed them on us /because it is from the West that this pestilence came /but we were blamed for it. //Oh! Civilization, your poisons are so dressed up and your sleep so deep…' ("The doorbell")

The political exile and poetry as an act of protest

The poem quoted above, first published in *Afterwaters* and then again in *Posthumous poems* – a volume that includes poetry written by Caraion in exile, some of them edited in the 1991 collection –, illustrates an important theme in Ion Caraion's poetry, that of the *anti-communist protest*. It includes harsh

attacks on the political regime in Romania, satirizing and ridiculing the communist leaders of the country with unmerciful irony and virulence. A strange poem with allegoric meaning (*wreck-it-all and muddle-head*) hides – under the pretext of a self-portrait, Arghezian in nature and vaguely humorous – a sharp, unforgiving satire; its two-faced lyrics sketch out a very well-known figure of the totalitarian era, described through its defining features. It is hard to explain how such lyrics could deceive the vigilance of the censors and be published in 1980 (*Love is a pseudonym of death*), during a paroxysmal period of the communist regime and of the dictatorship: 'I will wave my hands and run off my mouth, /I will snap at everyone and everything. /my purpose is to look busy /and I want nothing to work, if possible – //and it's possible! since I've already /turned the world upside down. /although there is nothing I know well, /the windmill is turning… I still have to //lead the waters uphill, towards the spring; /have warmth instead of cold; /to invent rain that pours upwards /and the hole in the bagel, //and the belly of the roundworm /and another law, another law, another /I am the maker of all: /whatever I touch turns to dust.'

In a fragment of poetic pamphlet with a political nuance we find the caricature of an obsessive portrait for a tragic history and a world crucified on the chimera of utopia, turned into generalized nightmare by the totalitarian system. The lyrics unleash, again with influences from Arghezi, with atrocious hatred and terrible vigilante anger: 'He haltered stupidity to the pillar at the gate. /He feeds it from a platter and a bucket. /On the stoop, in a tray nip either the dead, /or the smirches in the bloodless fallow land temple. /He shoes his voice nine times a day /and in the end he still needs horseshoes. /His goiter is a nest in which lay eggs the snakes or /the vengeance of fabricating folktales. /Whole and standing, still talking, he comes undone. /His skull is filled with straws and his mouth with lead /and a plum falls out with every word. /A squash, a mush, a slop, a ditch, a gut, a stew. /The spit-upon, the hisser, the lisper, the stuttering fool /has a mansion in every town. /<Will they find his carcass in one of them?> – /is all that the downpour of shapes, the lowborn, scrawny /and boney, hard at work, wonder every days…' ("Obsession", in *Afterwaters*)

A victim of an inhumane political system, of hatred, terror and crime, through the events of his dramatic existence and in spite of the unfortunate and grave compromises that he made (the collaboration with the secret police), Ion Caraion was an enemy of the communist regime who did not accuse anyone and who fought with the weapons of attitude and of poetry, until the bitter end. When we talk about the resistance and the acts of dissidence of the Romanian intellectuals against the communist oppression, when they are blamed for not reacting, when the writers are accused of not protesting through their writing, when it is said that we do not have a censored, unpublished literature, Ion Caraion's case, the poet that never kept silent, must be taken into account. He

objected from the very beginning, starting with the establishment of the Soviet regime in Romania, in precarious conditions from the point of view of freedom, then all throughout his imprisonment, his exiles and his illusory freedom, he protested in writing, sometimes allusively, satirically and allegorically, and sometimes fiercely and unforgiving, with devastating words, in his poems and his other writings. In its fundamental dimension, Caraion's poetry is deeply anti-communist and, surpassing the limits of the political and historical context, against all types of totalitarianism, a pleading for the values of humanity, for life and for the dignity of man.

The ontological exile and the specter of death

The isolation in a foreign space, the self-exile, the loneliness, the state that generates an overwhelming tension, the conscience of the existential failure, the anxiety of failure and of sterility are fundamental themes of the universe of the outcast, taking on new embodiments in the *Posthumous Poems* volume (1995): 'I came not to stay, but to leave (...) //I used your mountains to create a loneliness /thicker than cloth, denser /than loneliness'; 'Blood and wax harden on the candlestick. //Letters... letters... nuances of failure, /gardens that were once filled with fruit. /How many colors now fading and silent, /how many wrinkles – /oh, complexion of water! Oh, unceasing /exodus...'

Living in exile, the poet identifies, in turn, with the great outcasts of history and culture (Abraham, Ulysses, the prodigal son, Dante, Byron, Victor Hugo etc.), in personal scenarios, that relate to the contingent. Leaving in exile sometimes appears to the poet as a saving, mythological exodus from the night of existence, from a world that is sacrificed, ruled by malevolent forces that lead it into nothingness. The strong attacks on the communist regime are also present in this vision. But freedom is an illusion, because the ghosts of the past haunt the spirit in a continuous and hallucinating return, an obsessive inner journey to the place of suffering and agony: 'The night is now /somewhat further away. A water that resurrects //once in a while, rarely. /On your ship, memories divide /in Ulysses' quiver, nightmares from one another. /Floating forever. Ithaca is far away – //and the bane is behind you. A country fed to the dogs /or to birds of prey. /Hung on the street: /sinister symbols, pictures of bread //like skeletons. A viper within each of them. /Ulysses bleeds them dry. He collects their venom. /The sea grows and jumps on his back, /transformed into ghosts. It's the Pontus Euxinus. //He travelled to the West and ended up in the East. /The winds deceived him again.'

The poetry of exile and the whole existence of the poet during this period is placed under the sign of the end, irradiating everywhere, in the conscience and in the apparent world, a mute, intense terror: 'The saddest man on Earth /will soon fade away.'; 'butterflies falling /now and again; /the last loneliness /will soon come to an end.'

Beyond his other exiles, the poet lives at tragic intensities the

unhappiness of a hopeless *ontological exile*. In its alienating space, communication with God fails, the horizon of living closes down, and beyond it, in the shadows, lie in wait the end, the nothingness, the void; above them, a silent, mysterious transcendental instance, impenetrable and intangible. The "dialogue" with the divinity recovers some of the aggressiveness, irony and disenchantment of Arghezi, to which he adds a feeling of damnation: 'You came to my help. /For you, days and nights are alike /with the roughness preceding the silence, /walk with me, Lord, hand in hand. (...) /Incomprehensible, you come and you go /silent. Like a patter /that is heard far away, near the gate, /as if from beyond a mist. /Without ever telling me everything. /Without leaving a trace in the broadening broadness. (...) /Any question: futile. /And every answer. /You are lonelier than us and colder than stone. /The wastes bark at /shadows, under the camp /misfortune, misfortune. /You were non-time and non-place. /You are a river that stopped. /You seem to be a waterless and landless planet. /A leafless tree. /You came to my help /but you are running back, /with the eyes in the back of your head – /out of this world, out of reach, voiceless. (...) /We are all forgetting the way. /We all return to mystery and azure. /It's not too early and it's not too late. /There is no shape. /Winnow your udders, your roaring, your infinite /you winds, you rains! /You've always been bleaker than smoke. /You will always be lonelier than us.' ("What a night with wolves")

The failure to meet God aggravates the perception of man's emptiness, abandonment and loneliness in a universe that has fallen prey to chance, decline and death. The nihilistic ontology of the poet, his somber perspective of the world and of the human condition - a cynical and absurd comedy like in the works of Cioran, with influences from Ionesco - manifests and evolves towards paroxysm on this psychological backdrop. Life is the tragic history of an impossible meeting - continuously postponed - between the one that aspires to save himself from failure, from the ashes of suffering and from the horizon of the finite and a illusory, inaccessible transcendence, or of a deceit. Hence the tragedy of the man who seeks in vain and cries from the depths, condemned to a life in the decay of a hopeless existence: 'I always came to the station, Lord, /earlier than the departure time of the train. /And I waited for you in all the trains of my life, /to greet you. /I was seen rambling in vain. /by children, by switchmen, by the gossiping wind. /You did not come. Or you passed by /without getting off. /I have no clue what train you were in or /where and why are you going... //How many worlds have risen? How many have set, /before darkness fell and time came to an end and it got gloomy! /Now, when it is so late that /no train will pass again and there will be no more years, /I imagine that you were in every one of them /but you were tired like a moose /being chased at the pole by a pack of fairies /by fear and by cold, /that you were asleep and dreaming and that is why /you did not come to the window, you didn't get off /you put no guard on the wall /between the quagmire and the stars /between the

foul and the foul. //Like a woman expecting /her lover to come back from war, /I have waited for you in all the trains of my life – /in the sun, in the rain, /until I came unraveled... /but you could not find the sign, the pathway / (The truth itself is not true), /the inch of road /that you could follow to reach the time of the meeting. /Like the ghouls of ancient Assyria, you're probably still traveling /through some direful winter or fall, /through some huddle, some weather, some rotten, some dirt. //Wake up, Lord, /or you'll end up abroad!' ("The antiquity of pain")

Alienation, loneliness, estrangement, physical and moral suffering – all on the background of the ontological exile in a foreign universe, dehumanized and lacking transcendence, where everything is governed by chance – are steps of the slow and overwhelming descent into death: 'Yes, there was something... A little /death. And then a little more. (...) /Time was suspended from a window /with an old hinge /suspending the window. /God moved outside of himself. /I no longer live within myself. /The skin of silence patches its broken dolls. /Burnt by the symbol of the turbid, /the hours have something venomous about them. /The distance to the curtain of conscience /is the same it has always been. /What is it? We'll talk later, we'll talk later... /After the summer storms, the fall /cunningly applies makeup on the afternoons. /I no longer live within myself.' (*Cunning perfume*)

Nowhere in the Romanian post-war poetry do the obsession of the end, the fear of nothingness and the implacable thought of death surface as clearly as they do in Caraion's poems. These are associated with an intense aesthetic of the ugly ("You grow tired, wanderer"), unparalleled since Arghezi. Caraion is a poet of the great and tormenting thanatological obsessions, always under the rule of terror and of urgency, a perpetual fugitive that desperately tries to separate himself from the others – tormentors, assassins, instigators, executioners –, but also from himself, from his ego that bears the traces of his long suffering and of his capricious existence in his conscience. The poet is a victim of history, of his own character, of time, he is a fugitive from destiny, always hiding from the past, the present and especially from the future, a future that can only bring about the final heartbeat of fate, whose echo he can hear, as a premonition, everywhere in his life and in his poetry. Caraion writes the most intense and the most obsessive *poetry of death* of Romanian literature in the second half of the previous century. Here is an "Epitaph" (also influenced by Arghezi), that was published in the magazine "Don Quichotte" (which Caraion restarted again in Lausanne, after he had created it in the communist prison) in 1984, two years before his death: 'Follow the road. Do not question, do not knock /for the soul is long gone /and there is no one to receive visitors, /traveler from all over the world, /and in here the only mistress is death /and only the shadows of vultures pass /in certain evenings over these rocks /under which ideas lie.'

Loneliness, ugliness, terror, resentment and hatred, overwhelming regret for the time that has been lost, all of these come together in a violent, infernal perspective on humanity in decline and the end: 'Loneliness and venom, /Afterworld. /The Great Ugly. Princes, hounds /jump at each other's throats. /The Great Pallor. /At least they will not return /the time that was lost. /That's the least that can remain. /On the windows, on the bed: /claws. / Fountains without hands.' ("Poor simplicity")

Life is a failed experiment for the one falling victim to his own illusions, and from its ashes there is nothing left besides bitterness, regret, deception, on the background of insoluble existential depression: 'I've drank from life's great /cup of ashes - /bottoms up! Angels and poets /could still come /to wipe away the solitude /off of this tired world. /Welcome them as temptations /that know how to caress / (Oh, in the green of the thicket /all of the birds are sleeping...) /and have colossal dreams /and let it snow with light.' ("Mysteries")

A somber presence, death, insinuates itself into all these, in the form of the mythical river: 'Oh! Hour heavier than all that is heavy / hour that the prophets have spoken about. /Through the mires of the fog /a river always came.'("Oh! Hour"), or in that of violent revelations, on a grotesque background inspired by the existential absurdity of a world seen as a vast territory of nothingness: 'Death wraps me around its maddening roller /of ice and flame. The town's /buffoons giggle above the metropolis.' ("Obsession")

The inner exile. The world as a vast necropolis

The posthumous poems recovered in the *Inner exile* (1997), many of them already included in the volume *Posthumous Poems* (1995), manufacture a world in dissolution, dominated by a severe existential crisis, which includes mankind and the universe in its phenomenal and physical aspects. In this land that reveals itself to the spirit as an endless cemetery, populated by skulls and shapes of the inferno, limited by the "paraplegic time" and by the "carcass of time", with a sky that is "upside down", mankind lives tragically, overcame by an intense angst, the ontological exile. The world is just an appearance, a "mask" or a "caricature" of the void and existence itself is erected on the foundations of death: 'The mute that torments and baffles /the shapes of the inferno, with a pitchfork /in his left hand and another one in his right hand. Naked /chasing mounds of rape. /Great skull on a peakless mountain. /The paraplegic time. The carcass of time /A hilarious tree with a broken hand /A stuttering Cyclops with his eye torn out. /All of a sudden the sky turns upside down /– and then everything enters into the afternoon /like a caterpillar in the apple on the branch /swinging in the sun that lays /here a muzzle, there a harness /like the windmill of the helter-skelter life /to unravel its custom further on. /Is there an architecture that does not share /– night or light – its suspicion /of being a mask or a caricature /everything around us? Times are stealing /the greatness of the

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times trying to curdle /blue masquerades on ruins /and on the battered foundations /(pyres for sweet wrongdoings?) /of death, another death… Blind /– the years slowly stroll between the hooves, /riders with whitening hair from the crows. /And in the universal burial grounds /rags become imperial, /everything around shiver sublimely, /sleep cannot go to sleep /the days cannot get up, /sweet stops being sweet, /the hours grow softer /and stop their crisis or are changed. /The lewd rived starts to swell /what it had lacked before is now too much. /from a language passing into another /birds and lands.' etc. (*Pamphlets of the forest*...)

Due to the lack of communication with the divine, the world has fallen prey to chance and disaster, and people have became prisoners in the slough of an existence without a horizon: 'In the likeness of /with tiny letters, painful /he began rewriting god's biography /on the sand, with a blunt /nail. Catastrophic upheavals /had befallen the world, the world of his flocks, /since he had last descended on earth /Holy Elohim /the people were speaking other languages /they had other traditions, other signs.' ("In the likeness of…")

It is a world of puppets ("A puppet here, another one there") – a vision that also implies the transcendent and that suggests that the existence represents an absurd scenario, a cynical and cruel game –, populated with "shapes" and "anthills", with people that swarm without purpose in a morbid decorum and with their tombs. This understanding comes as a continuation of the negative representation of the living space in the form of a vast "necropolis" (an image from a previous poem). Caraion's lyrics violently claim, in a blasphemous metaphor, the consubstantiality of creation in a horizon with no glory or height, that of the rough, perishable materiality: 'Man and sky: the same mud.' It is a revelation – part of a long series of hallucinogenic images, permeated by the acute spirit of an ailing, tormenting lucidity – that reaches new heights of existential nihilism. ("You say fable, the pen…") For the spirit that is captive in the closed environment of being, in the disfiguring limits of existential exile – which foreshadows 'the eternal cave' of nothingness –, everything is 'leaden, ended, scattered…', and everywhere around we find the 'ruins of Olympus', a sign of the falling of hopes in the metaphysical sky, of dissolution and of the end. Over all of this falls a tragic conjuration, a call from the depths of despair, an invocation of the final stillness: 'O, come at the window, eternal snows! /Let snow fall still, let snow fall infinities!' ("Leaden, ended, scattered…").

The aesthetic exile in the transcendent empire of poetry

Under arrest, imprisoned, isolated, persecuted, exiled, haunted by nightmares, obsessions and suffering, loneliness and a fear of the end, Caraion has created his own existential space, a transcendent universe, a kingdom of poetry, his last refuge, a shelter from the storms of existence. From this artistic exile – *an aesthetic exile –*, beyond the time and the times, beyond good and evil, life and death, nobody can cast out the poet again, to another place of exile. Somewhere,

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in a poem, the author includes a memorable confession of his faith in the power and endurance of poetry in a fleeting world, subject to dissolution and death, in a history like a shadow, a dream or a nightmare, under the tyranny of time: 'A poem can outlast an empire.' In an essay included in the volume *The mole and the neighbor*, he affirms the essential purpose of creation – poetry as reason and way of being: 'In the eternal pulverization and recompilation of the universe, for me poetry has remained the sole logic of life, for which you pay with your life.' Originating, at least through a part of its sources, in the phenomenal world, art offers the creator, in its autonomous space, separated from the contingent, the alternative of a parallel, essentialized existence, the chance of redemption through creation. In *Bacovia – the perpetual end*, Caraion said: 'There is always something else beyond the place where the umbilical cord between the work and life ends. It is the miracle of art. Its real miracle. That of the art that can feed on anything. Even on the inferno. Or rather, especially on the inferno. And that is redeemed through the tactics, the voluptuousness and the alchemy of the alliance of contraries.' Caraion's poetry feeds on the inferno of an existence under the sign of suffering and of absurdity – and it is itself a *season in the inferno*, as the poet calls it using Rimbaud's metaphor –, it grows from the dramas and tragedies of faith to assert the fight of the spirit with the darkness, with the evil within people and the world, to save the being from the depths of humiliation and of dehumanization through the dignity of thought and of creation; it is the victory of life over death, it is survival through art. This genesis, this evolution is what hides – to use the term of the poet – the *miracle* of Caraion's poetry, the sign of the spirit undefeated by darkness. Being aware of the significance of his lyrical act, of the value of his works and of its spiritual force, Caraion anticipated his destiny in eternity in a confession he wrote near the end of his life: 'My name is Ion Caraion and I am one of the writers that cannot be cast out of the Romanian literature by no party, by no dictator, by no bullets, by no villains or scoundrels in the official press. I have published in Romania, always censored and oppressed by four successive dictatorships (that of Carol II, that of the Iron Guard, that of Ion Antonescu and that of the communists), almost 20 volumes of poetry, dozens of translations and collections of international poetry and prose, 5 volumes of essays etc. I was imprisoned for 11 years in the communist jails and I have been sentenced to death for the crime of showing that communism is just another form of totalitarianism, more abject, harsher and more dangerous. (...) After having gone in between 1950 and 1955 and 1958 to 1964 through the most atrocious prisons and extermination camps (Jilava, the Danube-Black Sea Channel, the Maramureş lead mines, Gherla, Aiud and others) and having been sentenced to die for a second time, I was freed with all the other political prisoners in 1964. I was actually going from the cells of a smaller chain of prisons to the greater penal colony that Communist Romania was boasting to have become. My first

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book, containing anti-war poems, *Panopticum*, was refused for publishing by the censorship authority in 1943, under the fascist regime. My last book, a collection of essays against cowardice, corruption and the selling of consciences, *Diary I*, was refused for publishing by the censorship authority in 1981, under the rule of the communists. I was then forced (by threats and chauvinistic attacks, spread out over months) to leave my country, going down the path of exile at 58, together with my wife and child and two suitcases. I am part of a vast political movement, which has 22 million members. It is called the Romanian people. In its structure, each member is a leader or he has the potential to be a leader. Myself or any of the other captives within it. How can a people come undone?' Also, in one of his latest poems, he carved an Epitaph onto his own destiny, a lapidary testament, bearing the grievous messages of coming detached from an absurd world that has lost its humanity and its fundamental ideas and of a bitter reconcilement with himself: 'I cared for you, I loved you. /You did not know how to care for me. /There might come a day /when you will regret this. /Please get over it /and do forget me.'

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LA MISE À NU DE LA RUSE LANGAGIÈRE COMME DÉNÉGATION DU VICE

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Abstract: The following paper is centred upon identifying the dimensions of the role played by the verbal ruse in nourishing the devouring vice of miserliness in Molière's play *L'Avare* (*The Miser*), written in 1668. The nature of Harpagon, the character whose name has become in the French lexis synonymous of being "obsessively greedy and cheap", can be summed up in one word naming a mania: parsimony. Although inherent to Harpagon, the ridicule of his mania remains unknown to himself. His unawareness is partly due to his constant refusal to talk about it. Words pertaining to the semantic field of "money", such as "affluence", "treasure", "well-being", "revenue", "expenses", "stinginess", to name but a few, become taboo in Harpagon's universe. Besides the avoidance of uttering the lexemes related to his obsession, the miser resorts to a wide array of cunning language contrivances meant to divert the attention of his entourage from his prevailing preoccupation with accruing his wealth. Among these there are the evasiveness through repetition and rephrasing, prevarication, dithering and equivocation. By making use of the tools provided by textual linguistics, we shall single out the manifold shapes taken by miserliness when coming up to the surface of language in the *Avare*'s speech.

Keywords: miserline**s**s, unawareness, ruse, prevarication, dithering

I.   UNE PAROLE SOUPÇONNEUSE OU L'AVARE CRAINTIF

Sous-tendue par le principe de réfléchissement d'une vie essentielle, la littérature du grand siècle classique s'attache moins à étudier la nature extérieure de l'homme, qu'à fixer son intérêt en revanche sur les luttes intérieures qui écartèlent l'âme humaine selon les passions auxquelles celle-ci est sujette. Par conséquent, les écrits littéraires ont une forte dimension psychologique. Dans ce contexte, la comédie moliéresque satirise le vice, des pièces entières étant vouées à démasquer des monomanies. La pièce *l'Avare*, écrite en 1668, scrute à la loupe la parcimonie. Cette mise en examen ressort de l'univers discursif tout entier de la pièce qui se déploie le long de cinq actes, autant donc des scènes où l' « avaricieux » (pour emprunter le mot de La Flèche) est présent *de facto* et profère sa vision pécuniaire, que de celles où il est présent uniquement dans les réactions langagières suscitées chez son entourage.

Harpagon, le personnage dont la passion dévorante donne matière à la pièce, fait son entrée uniquement dans la troisième scène du premier acte. Dans la dramaturgie classique, l'apparition du héros est mise en scène de deux manières: les auteurs font appel soit à la technique du héros prodigué, qui apparaît dès la première scène du premier acte, soit à la technique du héros rare, qui consiste à ménager son entrée en scène « en utilisant le reste du temps disponible à parler de lui ou de ses desseins, pour mieux préparer les scènes où il figure » (Scherer, 1950, 24). Le rôle d'Harpagon s'amplifie avec chaque scène, qu'il y soit présent ou non, jusqu'à écraser les rôles des autres personnages. Cette ampleur dramatique accordée au rôle principal est une technique privilégiée par Molière dans presque toutes ses pièces.

La troisième scène du premier acte est entièrement dédiée, par le biais de moyens langagiers variés, au dévoilement de la faim d'avoir et de posséder du personnage. Dans un premier temps, sera mise à nu une caractéristique coalescente à son avarice, à savoir son côté soupçonneux. Harpagon prend ce qui n'est qu'un moyen pour une fin en soi. N'ayant pas intégré la vision conformément à laquelle la valeur de l'argent ne se réalise que dans sa dépense, il vit sans pouvoir se réjouir de quoi que ce soit, étant dans une perpétuelle inquiétude par rapport à l'argent qu'il détient, constamment entretenant soi-même sa peur qu'il ne lui soit volé.

La scène se déroule sous la forme d'un dialogue entre Harpagon et son valet, La Flèche. Pareillement à la pièce dans son ensemble, cette scène commence *in media res*, Harpagon faisant son apparition sur une injonction intimée à La Flèche: « Hors d'ici et qu'on ne réplique pas. Allons, que l'on détale de chez moi, maître juré filou, vrai gibier de potence. »[27] Le choix auctorial d'introduire le personnage sur l'accomplissement de cet acte impératif, qui advient en outre au début de la scène - cette petite unité de vie dans l'économie de l'univers théâtral -, témoigne de l'intention moliéresque d'exhiber un caractère grincheux, habité par une hargne particulière; le lecteur est d'autant plus réconforté dans cet impression que la raison de cet ordre violent de mise à la porte et de l'imprécation y proférée, raison réclamée par l'inculpé, se fait longuement attendre. La frustration de l'ignorance où semble être le valet de Cléante, qui sera aussi celle du lecteur, donne à ressentir l'atmosphère soupçonneuse où vit Harpagon, atmosphère à laquelle il s'oblige tout seul, par sa nature: « La Flèche: Pourquoi me chassez-vous ? Harpagon: C'est bien à toi, pendard, à me demander des raisons: sors vite, que je ne t'assomme. La Flèche: Qu'est-ce que je vous ai fait ? Harpagon: Tu m'as fait que je veux que tu sortes. La Flèche: Mon maître, votre fils, m'a donné ordre de l'attendre. Harpagon: Va-t-en l'attendre dans la rue, et ne sois point dans ma maison planté tout droit

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[27] Molière, *L'avare*, Paris Hachette, 1991, acte 1, sc. 3, p. 21.

comme un piquet, à observer ce qui se passe, et faire ton profit de tout. Je ne veux point avoir sans cesse devant moi un espion de mes affaires, un traître, dont les yeux maudits assiègent toutes mes actions, dévorent ce que je possède, et furètent de tous côtés pour voir s'il n'y a rien à voler. » (acte I, sc. 3).

Le caractère suspicieux d'Harpagon est manifeste également dans le fait qu'il recourt à l'atermoiement (une des techniques langagières préférées d'ailleurs par les avares de la littérature - bien connue du personnage balzacien Grandet, par exemple). Il s'agit donc d'une ruse langagière, de la temporisation de la réponse censée justifier dans ce cas-ci la mise à la porte du valet, le temps de s'assurer qu'il n'a pas été victime d'un vol. Harpagon esquive les deux questions précises de La Flèche: « Pourquoi me chassez-vous ? », « Qu'est-ce que je vous ai fait ? », en laissant entendre qu'en fait La Flèche ne connaîtrait que trop leur réponse. Dans les conditions où, en vertu du « pacte de lecture », le lecteur- récepteur croit à l'ignorance de la Flèche, ce dialogue enfreint le principe de coopération[28] auquel doit consentir « tout être raisonnable impliqué dans un échange communicatif » (Maingueneau, 2002, 368), et la maxime conversationnelle de la relation, celle qui dit « Parlez à propos ».

La première réponse esquivée d'Harpagon contient en fait une injure à l'égard de La Flèche, « pendard », qui laisse transparaître l'intention accusatrice de vol de la part du maître de maison: « C'est bien à toi, pendard, à me demander des raisons: sors vite, que je ne t'assomme. », tandis que la deuxième est un refus obstiné d'en dire plus, qui prend la forme d'une construction illogique, spécifique plutôt à un enfant qui manque d'arguments: « Tu m'as fait que je veux que tu sortes. ». Le verbe « donner », caractérisé par le trait inhérent « dire » dans la locution « donner des explications », a comme premier sème l'idée de privation matérielle; pour l'avare, « donner des explications » revient à « donner quelque chose », acte qui lui répugne au niveau langagier avec la même intensité qu'il lui répugnerait au niveau factuel. La raison pour laquelle il ne veut point laisser La Flèche attendre son maître Cléante dans sa maison sera finalement dévoilée dans une tirade qui donne à voir sa peur maladive d'être volé. Il voit l'Autre comme « un espion de mes affaires, un traître, dont les yeux maudits assiègent toutes mes actions, dévorent ce que je possède, et furètent de tous côtés pour voir s'il n'y a rien à voler ». Les différents éléments de la lexie de la méfiance: « espion », « traître », « yeux maudits » et la possibilité que toute une série d'actions soit entreprise, du genre « assiègent toutes mes actions, dévorent ce que je possède, et furètent de tous côtés pour voir s'il n'y a rien à voler », actions censées motiver la présence du soupçon, confèrent un rythme cadencé à cette tirade qui devient par là même illustratrice d'un état d'esprit bien

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[28] Nous faisons référence au principe identifié par le philosophe du langage Herbert Paul Grice dans son article de 1975 « Logic and conversation » paru dans l'ouvrage *Syntax and Semantics*, P. Cole, J. Morgan publié à New York Academic Press.

accentué.

À la fin du dialogue susmentionné, même quand La Flèche se déclare prêt à partir, la peur que le valet ne lui ait dérobé quelque chose est déjà trop ancrée dans l'esprit d'Harpagon. Paradoxalement, après avoir prestement hâté son départ, l'avare se trouve dans la situation où sa peur le pousse à retarder lui-même la sortie de La Flèche: « La Flèche: Hé bien ! je sors. Harpagon: Attends. N'emportes-tu rien ? La Flèche: Que vous emporterai-je ? Harpagon: Viens ça, que je voie. Montre-moi tes mains. La Flèche: Les voilà. Harpagon: Les autres. La Flèche: Les autres ? Harpagon. Oui. La Flèche: Les voilà. » (acte I, sc. 3). L'illogique où il se campe à un niveau factuel par la requête que le valet lui montre les « autres mains », après qu'il lui eût montré ses mains, rend compte, une fois de plus, de l'omniprésence de son appréhension que les Autres n'escamotent des choses lui appartenant. Les articles vestimentaires en eux-mêmes deviennent ses ennemis, puisque susceptibles d'abriter des choses qui pourraient lui avoir été subtilisées. Harpagon vit sous le signe de l'hypothèse que tout lui est ennemi, que tout se coalise pour lui soustraire ses biens: « Harpagon. Ces grands hauts-de-chausses sont propres à devenir les receleurs des choses qu'on dérobe et je voudrais qu'on en eût fait pendre quelqu'un. » (acte I, sc. 3). L'expression du désir de voir quelqu'un être pendu par ses hauts-de-chausses parce qu'il voit dans cet habit un bon endroit pour cacher des objets volés, pendaison censée servir de modèle de peine infligée à ceux qui volent, prend la forme d'une déclaration ouverte relevant de la paranoïa du personnage.

Le modèle d'organisation discursive qui rend le mieux l'obnubilation du personnage est l'aparté. Cette forme spécifiquement théâtrale qui représente une adresse du personnage- locuteur à soi-même, en présence d'autres personnages, est propice à exprimer la nature défiante d'Harpagon, vu qu'elle suppose une crainte constante de la part du locuteur de ne pas être entendu par les autres. L'aparté suppose donc la présence d'une tension ininterrompue, engendrée par la situation de communication où les personnages sont engagés dans le dialogue. Il naît chez notre locuteur suite à une réaction violente à des paroles dites par les interlocuteurs, réaction qu'il lui faut cacher, mais qui est trop puissante, par là même, pour rester silencieuse: « Harpagon. Laissons cela, et parlons d'autre affaire. Euh ? Je crois qu'ils se font signe l'un à l'autre de me voler ma bourse. Que veulent dire ces gestes ? » (acte I, sc. 4). Cet extrait provient d'une scène qui engage dans le trilogue toute la famille d'Harpagon, c'est-à-dire lui, le père, Elise, sa fille, et Cléante, son fils. Harpagon vient de donner à ses enfants des leçons de conduite dans la vie et surtout d'économie, qui reviennent à dire « Ne dépensez pas votre argent, faites les comptes à chaque fois que vous auriez envie d'acheter quelque chose, et vous verrez le montant que vous n'aurez pas gaspillé. ». Il procède à annoncer à ses enfants les mariages qu'il projette: pour lui avec Mariane, la jeune fille caractérisée par le « maintien honnête et la douceur » (l'ironie du locuteur-scripteur y étant de mise), pour Cléante avec

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« une certaine veuve dont ce matin on m'est venu parler » et finalement pour Elise avec le seigneur Anselme, « un homme mûr, prudent et sage, qui n'a pas plus de cinquante ans, et dont on vante les grands biens » (acte I, sc. 4). Cette caractérisation réalise le passage de la leçon sur comment ne pas dépenser son argent aux projets qui impliquent (ou non) l' « affaire » de l'amour. Elle contient donc deux injonctions qui ont comme effet perlocutoire l'abandon d'un sujet pour approcher un autre: « Laissons cela, et parlons d'autre affaire. ». En réalité, le sujet reste bien le même, et l'« autre affaire » ne veut pas dire « chose qui importe » (Cayrou, 2000, 48)[29] - l'amour, comme il serait le cas quand il s'agit de parler de mariage, mais toujours « argent, bien ».

L'approche d'un autre sujet ne se fait pas naturellement, et les signes que se font les deux jeunes, qui ont en tête leurs propres « affaires » à défendre aux yeux de leur père, au sens de l'amour qui les porte vers Mariane, respectivement Valère, seront aussitôt interprétés par Harpagon comme précurseurs à un attentat à sa « bourse »: « Euh ? Je crois qu'ils se font signe l'un à l'autre de me voler ma bourse ». Suit la question directe: « Que veulent dire ces gestes ? » dont la réponse éclaircit les gestes comme étant en fait des gestes que les adolescents se font pour s'inviter à prendre la parole et avouer la passion qui les anime. Les apartés monomaniaques d'Harpagon font souvent irruption lorsqu'on s'y attendrait le moins, au beau milieu d'un dialogue ou d'un trilogue.

La scène 5 du premier acte fait venir sur la scène trois personnages: Valère, Harpagon et Elise. Elle peut être divisée en deux parties, selon la présence, respectivement l'absence, d'Harpagon. Ainsi se compose-t-elle de deux dialogues, le premier entre Harpagon et Valère, l'autre entre Valère et Elise. La sortie d'Harpagon se fait suite à son impression d'avoir entendu un aboiement qui le fait penser qu'il se pourrait que quelqu'un essaie de voler son argent: « *il regarde vers son jardin*. Ouais ! il me semble que j'entends un chien qui aboie. N'est-ce point qu'on en voudrait à mon argent ? Ne bougez, je reviens tout à l'heure. » (acte 1, sc. 5). Impression qui s'avèrera aussitôt être fausse.

II. LES FAUX-FUYANTS AU SERVICE DU DÉNI DE L'ISOTOPIE DE L'« ARGENT »

Avare mais espiègle, Harpagon est particulièrement attentif aux faits de langue – aux acceptions des mots employés par lui et par son entourage, aux faits prosodiques caractérisant l'acte de l'énonciation (intonation, accentuation), aux modalités qui jettent un doute sur le sens d'un énoncé censé, à la base, le flatter ou lui témoigner du respect, autrement dit, à tout phénomène linguistique engendré par son discours ou par le discours de ses interlocuteurs qui pourrait trahir qu'il est riche. Cette attention pointilleuse est accompagnée de près par

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[29] Il est vrai qu'au XVIIe siècle, le mariage est souvent „affaire" d'argent et non pas d'amour, au point que le nom est polysémique, son sens prenant aussi l'acception de „bien qu'une femme apporte en mariage" (*cf.* G. Cayrou), autrement dit, son dot.

une technique langagière, celle de ne pas nommer soi-même la réalité qu'il appréhende, mais de pousser son interlocuteur, par un interrogatoire soutenu (qui fait appel à son habileté de sonder la réelle intention de l'interlocuteur), à faire un aveu complet concernant ce dont il est soupçonné.

Mémorables dans ce sens-là sont quelques dialogues entre Harpagon et le valet de Cléante, La Flèche. Comme il sied à tout valet de comédie classique, La Flèche s'avère être un bon partenaire de dialogue, qui a de la repartie et qui sait comment gérer le discours tenu par le maître de maison. Fripon et insolent, il est le parfait valet de comédie. Par son attitude, il réussit à provoquer Harpagon avec esprit et impertinence. La troisième scène du premier acte, déroulée entre Harpagon et La Flèche, préfigure le vol de la cassette qui aura lieu dans l'acte IV.

Reposant sur le procédé du contrepoint par l'aparté qui marque sa progression, accompagnant et ponctuant le discours, cette scène témoigne de la tension existante entre le maître de la maison et le valet. Si la relation sociale veut que le valet obéisse au maître, dans cette situation-ci de communication, c'est le maître qui est toujours en position de réaction par rapport aux répliques provocatrices de son subalterne. Mais la provocation de La Flèche ne dépasse pas un certain seuil, il sait quand atténuer la virulence de ses propos et quitter sa position réquisitoire, à savoir juste avant qu'Harpagon ne se mette pour de bon en colère et ne le « rosse » (*cf.* Harpagon) de coups. Aussi se laisse-t-il perquisitionner, bien qu'il y réagisse pourtant verbalement.

Avec sa première déclaration qui épouse la modalité exclamative: « Ah ! qu'un homme comme cela mériterait bien ce qu'il craint ! et que j'aurais de joie à le voler ! », il taquine Harpagon qui vient de le perquisitionner après lui avoir fait subir un interrogatoire qui partait de la prémisse que le valet s'était à coup sûr rendu coupable de vol. La réplique joue, au fait, aux confins entre l'aparté et l'adresse directe à son interlocuteur. Cet énoncé dont l'expression verbale prend la forme du mode conditionnel est une petite revanche prise, au moins au niveau langagier, par le représentant de ceux qui se trouvent en bas de l'échelle sociale, mais ne sont pas sujets à des monomanies destructrices, sur le représentant d'une classe supérieure, mais asservi à un vice épuisant. Harpagon, qui reste le maître et qui ressent le besoin de connaître en détail toute pensée de ses interlocuteurs ayant trait à l'argent, demande à avoir des éclaircissements par rapport aux balbutiements de La Flèche. Ce faisant, il se garde pourtant d'employer tout mot appartenant à l'isotopie du « vol », dont l'articulation seule lui provoque de l'horreur. Les précisions sont donc demandées à travers une interjection interrogative: « Euh ? ». Mais La Flèche veut garder sa position dominante et ne donne pas cours à la demande du maître, feignant de ne pas savoir dans quel sens il doit interpréter l'interjection. Il apportera les précisions requises par Harpagon uniquement après avoir réduit celui-ci à formuler la question avec le verbe dont il est obsédé, « voler ». « La Flèche: Quoi ? Harpagon: Qu'est-ce que

tu parles de voler ? La Flèche: Je dis que vous fouillez bien partout, pour voir si je vous ai volé ». (acte I, sc. 3).

La technique employée par Harpagon est de dire le moins et écouter le plus. Il agit selon le précepte qui dit que trop parler, c'est risquer de trahir ses secrets; or des secrets, il en a, entre l'usure qu'il pratique clandestinement et le trésor qu'il a caché dans son jardin.

À première vue, la réponse de La Flèche ne suit pas sa première réflexion qui aurait pu donner à penser qu'il soit prêt à condamner ouvertement son accusateur d'être parcimonieux. Les rapports sociaux reprennent leur place et le valet n'ose plus défier le maître. À une analyse de près, cet acte déclaratif n'en est un, et la reprise du verbe « voler » se doue d'une force illocutoire d'accusation. La première séquence de cette scène finit par une nouvelle perquisition opérée par l'avare sur le valet.

Une deuxième commence, entraînée justement par cette action. Le modèle épousé par son déroulement est le même, sauf que cette fois-ci, après les tergiversations du maître, l'énoncé proféré auparavant par le valet sera repris tel quel par celui-ci et la revanche prise ne relèvera plus du domaine de l'imaginaire langagier induit par l'emploi du mode conditionnel, mais revêtira la forme d'une imprécation. Le ton de l'échange langagier se fait plus virulent. Pour porter atteinte à Harpagon et à ses mots tabous, la valet emploie par deux fois le mot qui sanctionne son vice, une fois en tant que tel, « avarice », et une autre en tant que son dérivé visant de plein fouet son destinataire: « avaricieux »: « La peste soit de l'avarice et des avaricieux ». Le schéma de cette séquence discursive est le suivant: questionnement (Harpagon) réfuté (La Flèche) puisque manquant de formulation claire, et donc effet d'atermoiement dans l'échange verbal: « Harpagon: Comment ? que dis-tu ? La Flèche: Je dis que la peste soit de l'avarice et des avaricieux ! » (acte I, sc. 3). À ce moment de la séquence discursive, La Flèche est à niveau sur le point de fâcher son maître. Il se reprend par la réponse à la question suivante d'Harpagon quand, tout en restant sur le seuil entre l'acceptable et l'inacceptable, il apporte des précisions par rapport aux référents de ses propos par le biais de synonymes: « des vilains et des ladres » - sans nommer directement Harpagon, mais sans l'en exclure, non plus. Et comme l'acte perlocutoire est accompli et que le maître se sent pourtant visé, celui-ci continue le tir des questions jusqu'au moment où se rend à l'évidence et conclut qu'il n'arrivera nulle part avec cette discussion engagée avec le valet.

Tout au long de ce dialogue, le pingre est astucieusement provoqué par le valet à avouer le sens qu'il donne aux propos tenus par lui, La Flèche, au début de la conversation: « De quoi vous mettez-vous en peine ? », « Est-ce que vous croyez que je veux parler de vous ? ». Mais la pratique de cacher ses pensées est bien ancrée dans la nature de l'avare et il ne laisse rien transparaître. Pareillement à son interlocuteur, il va recourir à un interrogatoire soutenu de l'Autre, les questions posées étant vouées à le surprendre et lui faire avouer les

fautes commises: « De qui veux-tu parler ? […] Et qui sont-ils ces avaricieux ? Mais que est-ce que tu entends par là ? » (acte I, sc. 3). Toutes ces reformulations de la même question, s'ajoutant aux réponses du valet qui relèvent du même regristre d'ailleurs (« Je me mets en peine de ce qu'il faut. […] Je crois ce que je crois. » acte I, sc. 3) ne font pas progresser l'échange conversationnel du point de vue informatif. Mais elles ne sauraient pour autant être stériles, puisqu'elles en disent long sur les manœuvres langagières auxquelles s'adonnent et le personnage central et le personnage secondaire, Harpagon ayant trouvé quelqu'un à qui se mesurer.

La scène prend fin sur l'interdiction prononcée par Harpagon à l'endroit de La Flèche qui s'obstine à maudire les rapaces: « Je t'empêcherai de jaser et d'être insolent. Tais-toi. La Flèche: Qui se sent morveux, qu'il se mouche. Harpagon: Te tairas-tu ? La Flèche: Oui, malgré moi. » (acte I, sc. 3). Le discours du valet est à double entente et Harpagon n'en est que trop conscient, d'où la profération de l'interdiction formelle de parler.

Pour Harpagon, il existe des mots tabous qu'il ne veut pas entendre prononcer: « Que diable, toujours de l'argent ! Il semble qu'ils n'aient autre chose à dire: « De l'argent, de l'argent, de l'argent. » Ah ! ils n'ont que ce mot à la bouche: « De l'argent. » Toujours parler d'argent. Voilà leur épée de chevet, de l'argent. » (acte III, sc. 1). Ce discours révolté a deux volets: d'une part, il révèle l'obsession du locuteur par rapport à l'argent, d'autre part, il advient dans une scène où, vu les préparatifs pour la réception de Mariane, les valets n'arrêtent pas de demander des moyens pour organiser l'évènement. Dans ces conditions, cette rébellion est faite à l'intention de tout le monde, ayant la tâche de rebuter toute tentative venue de l'extérieur pour lui demander quoi que ce fût. Appartenant au genre judiciaire, cette tirade est une accusation portée contre tous ceux qui affirment avoir besoin d'argent; c'est pour cela qu'elle est construite sur la répétition fâcheuse de ce dernier lexème. L'avare veut faire sentir à ses bourreaux potentiels (quiconque ose lui demander de l'argent) l'écho râpeux dont est accompagné dans son esprit la prononciation du mot « argent ». Polyphonique, la tirade commence par une exclamation qui rend compte de l'état d'esprit paroxystique de l'énonciateur Harpagon, trahi par le juron « Que diable, toujours de l'argent ! », se poursuivant par la reprise telle quelle d'un discours direct du locuteur–monde. Ce discours prétendu direct et seulement repris par l'avare est constitué de la répétition par trois fois d'un syntagme nominal dont le noyau est le nom « argent » « De l'argent, de l'argent, de l'argent. ». les commentaires de l'avare par rapport au discours direct du locuteur-monde connaît une gradation. Si au début il l'introduit au moyen d'une modalisation « il semble »: « Il semble qu'ils n'aient autre chose à dire », par la suite il le fait passer pour omniprésent: « Ah ! ils n'ont que ce mot à la bouche « , et tout-puissant « Voilà leur épée de chevet, de l'argent ».

Affirmer en sa présence qu'il a « assez de bien », comme le fait son fils,

Cléante, c'est défier l'autorité parentale et commettre un acte de trahison: « Cléante: Mon Dieu ! mon père, vous n'avez pas lieu de vous plaindre, et l'on sait que vous avez assez de bien. Harpagon: Comment ? j'ai assez de bien ! Ceux qui le disent en ont menti. Il n'y a rien de plus faux; et ce sont des coquins qui font courir tous ces bruits-là. Élise: Ne vous mettez point en colère. Harpagon: Cela est étrange, que mes propres enfants me trahissent et deviennent mes ennemis ! » (acte I, sc. 4). Le verdict qu'il donne par rapport aux gens qui ont identifié sa nature tombe sans appel: ils sont tous des mythomanes. La révolte d'Harpagon prend la forme d'une réfutation violente de ce qui le définit, et qu'il souhaite faire passer pour une absurdité.

CONCLUSION

En « dramaturge moraliste » (Viala, 2009, 204), Molière peint et démasque dans *l'Avare* le type monomaniaque de l'*harpagon*. La parcimonie du personnage central est doublée par le caractère soupçonneux celui-ci pour qui le monde se réduit à une entité indissociée dont la seule préoccupation est de convoiter son argent. Accablé par le poids de son obsession dont il est incapable de prendre conscience, Harpagon mène son existence en regardant derrière soi dans un monde dont il ne retient que ce qui le contrarie dans son obnubilation. Son attitude de rejet par rapport aux unités langagières qui nomment sa « passion dévorante » (Bertrand, 1999, 159) et les ravages provoqués par celle-ci contribue à entretenir cette hantise.

La feinte et la dissimulation (à travers la ruse langagière) de la réalité et des véritables motivations des personnages créent en fait la charpente de l'univers discursif dans la pièce *l'Avare*.

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GRIEF AND THE CRISIS OF MEANING IN JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER'S *INCREDIBLY LOUD AND EXTREMELY CLOSE*

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Abstract: The present paper is taking a look at Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Incredibly Loud and Extremely Close* by dealing with the crisis of meaning generated by trauma. After a traumatized experience, the individual is struggling with the impossibility of making sense of reality because his entire existence is coordinated by the absence of the one lost. In this context, the narrative gains an important role, as it is an endeavor to find meaning in an otherwise meaningless world. In this article we will analyze the story of Oskar Schell and that of his grandfather, Thomas Schell, who construct their world according to traumatic patterns. The conclusion we have reached is that only by a genuine contact with the other, as the interlocutor of a negotiation process, can the crisis of meaning, and in turn, the trauma, be overcome.

Key words: trauma, meaning, otherness, crisis

On September 11, 2001, the blind comfort of capitalism was disturbed by the destruction of one of its most important symbols. The event generated a wave of shock that led to the acknowledgement of new threats and new power machines were put in motion. The whole world trembled at the sight of the disturbing images of the twin towers collapsing and of the people who could not only choose the way to die. Still, time has passed, and, in order to make sense out of it, we have seen the political and social consequences of this moment of crisis, we discussed its every aspect, and we have represented it culturally. Once the moment was integrated in contemporary history, the crisis seemed to have passed and the world gained a new meaning.

Instead, the media was less eager to follow the personal dramas of those who remained. Their suffering was encapsulated in a social and cultural context and periodically they are brought into the spotlight. Still, for the survivors, September 11 is not only a tragic event in recent history, but the exact moment when their world has ended. Following the traumatic moment, they had to re-

learn how to live and to understand their suffering, as the towers did not break down only a symbol of Western civilization, but a family that generates a certain world view according to a particular paradigm of meaning. Trauma theories ascertain the fact that those who suffer traumatic events feel the need to integrate them into their lives, despite their inability to understand the complexity of the event: 'People who have been caught up in a traumatic event are utterly overpowered by the magnitude of what they have experienced. They cannot fit what has happened into an existing referential framework, nor can they conventionalise it.' (Uytterschout, Versluys, 2008, 5) Therefore, trauma survivors are left with acute feelings of absence and loss that makes them lose themselves in a state of melancholy, mourning and interminable aporia (LaCapra, 1999, 697). The event itself generates a lack of meaning engulfing not only the enclosed universe of the traumatized individual, but the entire world. Lost in this void, the individual, struggling with his own identity crisis in a constant search for answers, tries to rearrange the entire universe according to posttraumatic patterns. As Robert Neymeier asserts, 'major losses undercut our efforts to maintain a coherent self-narrative, as the significant others on whom our life stories depend are cruelly removed.' (2001) The traumatized individuals, who lose a part of their families, and, in extension, of themselves, are struggling with the 'human tendency to organize experience in narrative form, construct accounts that "make sense" of the troubling transitions in their lives by fitting them into a meaningful plot structure.' (Ibid)

Ultimately, he is trying to 'reconstruct a personal world of meaning that has been challenged by loss' (Ibid). Still, this attempt of reconstruction, of arranging life, and the world at large, according to posttraumatic patterns proves a difficult endeavor, as people seem somehow incapable to articulate (Esende, 2010). Therefore, the crisis of meaning generated by the trauma event extends contagiously over the entire world that becomes a place of nothingness (understood as a state of aporia). In this context, trauma narratives serve the purpose of looking for meaning in the otherwise confused world. Telling a story becomes more than a narrative act, it serves the need for order and meaning. The traumatized individual turns the world into a textual puzzle which he is trying to put together, in order to make sense of a reality marked by a significant absence. It is also an identity search involved in this narrative, as the individual is looking for his own self lost among the puzzle pieces of reality.

Jonathan Safran Foer constructs his novel, suggestively entitled *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, according to this posttraumatic/ poststructuralist pattern. In a collage of texts and images that is structured around the main theme of dealing with grief, generated by the sudden disappearance of a loved one, the novel focuses on the story of a nine year old boy who attempts to make sense of the world construed around the absence of his father killed in the September 11 attacks. One year after his father's death,

Oskar Schell, the main narrator of the novel, comes across an envelope containing a key on which is written the word "Black". Thinking that this is a clue left by his father for one of their "Reconnaissance Expeditions", Oskar immediately embarks on a journey through New York in search for a matching lock for the key. His expedition through New York turns into a trauma narrative focusing on a crisis of meaning that engulfs the entire world. Every character he meets struggles with a personal grief and is eager to tell their story in order to externalize their inner pain in a narrative form. By listening to everybody, Oskar becomes a collector of life stories that add secondary meanings to his own and contextualize his own suffering in the broader picture of a traumatized society. What all these trauma narratives have in common, besides the story of a loss, is the fact that they are constructed in a state of oblivion regarding the one who listens to them. They are triggered by Oskar's questions, but fail in giving him an answer. Therefore, despite the communicative act they entail, the narrative act points in fact to the lack of communication among individuals. Everyone is so caught up in their personal grief that they fail to relate to one another. Ironically, this is what triggers a generalized crisis of meaning in which the boy is caught. He is the only one looking for answers outside himself, turning the entire world into a search ground.

Oskar's quest for a presumed hidden message is in fact a search for significance triggered by an intrinsic absence. It is the mere promise of an ambiguous meaning that generates the search and that, in the end, disappoints the boy. The search, therefore, is an attempt to prolong a relationship between father and son, a relationship based on a pattern of decoding the world as text according to a certain order imposed by the paternal figure. Still, what the father is trying to teach Oskar, is exactly the ambiguity of meaning. The two spend time together searching for mistakes in *The New York Times* and engaging in expedition quests in which Oskar has to find certain treasures, supposedly hidden by his father. Still, when Oskar completes such a quest, he does not receive a definite answer. The purpose of the father is not the treasure itself, but teaching the son a method of decoding reality according to a non-hegemonic pattern. Returning from one of his Reconnaissance expeditions, Oskar is looking for paternal approval, but his father is unwilling to give him a definite answer:

> I brought them to Dad, who was reading the New York Times at the kitchen table, marking the mistakes with his red pen. "Here's what I've found," I said (...). Dad looked at it and nodded. I asked, "So?" He shrugged his shoulders like he had no idea what I was talking about, and he went back to the paper. "Can't you even tell me if I'm on the right track?" (...) Dad shrugged his shoulders again. "But if you don't tell me anything, how can I ever be right?" He circled something in an article and said, "Another way of looking at it would be, how could you ever be

wrong?" (Foer, 2005, 9)

In the absence of a father figure, Oskar explores the world in search for meaning by deciphering reality through a process of reading, as he has learned from his father. Foer constructs the world according to an elaborate arrangement that hides a poststructuralist awareness of the significance game. Therefore, making sense of the world seems possible only by a process of reading. In this context, the crisis of meaning is not only exploited as a main theme of the novel, but also involves the entire narrative structure. The reader himself is next to Oskar attempting to decode the world based on the awareness that meaning does not exist beforehand, but is constructed by context. Oskar enables this view of the world as text by starting his search from a textual clue, the word "Black" written on the envelope. He continues by analyzing the paradigm of the word, trying to contextualize its every meaning, and, by close analysis of another textual mark (the word "black" written with a red pen), Oskar reaches the conclusion that the word points to a name. From that point on, the boy makes out a plan: in order to decipher his father's secret, he will meet everyone bearing the name Black, in an alphabetical order. But the answer itself gains secondary importance, as Oskar is unconsciously motivated by the search itself, as he confesses:

> That was kind of how I felt when I decided that I would meet every person in New York with the last name Black. Even if it was relatively insignificant, it was something, and I needed to do something, like sharks, who die if they don't swim, which I know about. (Ibid, 87)

Therefore, the search becomes a reason, a struggle, not only for an answer, but for order and meaning of the world at large, and for reaching out to the other in order to share the burden of suffering. In this context, people struggle with a lack of communication and the impossibility of making sense of the world is translated in an impossibility of making sense of each other. To that extent, the relationships between people are sabotaged in equally textual terms, and, in the end, undermine Oskar's efforts. Ironically, the lack of communication between Abby Black (the second person Oskar visits) and her husband (William Black) compels Oskar to roam for eight months throughout the entire New York, and, in extension, through the entire alphabet. He finds the answer only at the end of his search, due to a message left by Abby. She confesses that her husband was actually looking for Oskar, but did not tell anything before, as the two of them were in the middle of a fight that triggered their divorce. The stories of Oskar and William Black are connected through the crisis generated by the absence of paternal figure, thus integrating Oskar's drama in a broader context than that of his own suffering. If Oskar is looking for a lock to open with his key, William is looking for the key itself, in order to open a deposit box with letters from his deceased father.

Both of are looking for answers, not only to a riddle, but to a personal

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crisis; they are trying to complete a portrait of the paternal figure, and, in extension, of themselves. In his search, Oskar tries to put together a portrait of his father from the puzzle stories of everyone he meets. But people have not met Thomas Schell and Oskar's questions become the trigger for their own acts of narration. Thus, despite the fact that real communication is jeopardized, as people fail to give Oskar an answer, his questions generate the need to tell stories. The assiduous search comprises the entire world, as all characters struggle with their own voids of meaning generated by the impossibility of genuine communication with the other.

Therefore, the novel brings into focus the improper relationship with otherness in the context of dealing with trauma. Characters are lost in their own personal tragedies, and this attempt, to make sense of their own suffering in the enclosed context of their lives, unconsciously sabotages real contact with others. This generalized oblivion towards each other is what makes people ignore the construction of meaning by an act of negotiation. Therefore, the entire world is thrown into an identity crisis much deeper than that generated by the terrorist attacks. Consequently, the death of the father shakes the grounds of a child's in a moment when the entire world finds itself at a turning point. Still, the boy is the only one who understands the importance of the other while dealing with his own tragedy.

But this crisis of meaning is not related only to the traumatic moment; it exceeds the present and encompasses past generations as an inherited inability of comprehension. Oskar's father himself is caught in this mechanism of perpetual nothingness. His entire existence is based on an absence, a void of meaning, as Thomas has never met his father. Still, he bears his name, a textual mark of existence, but one that is empty of any significance. This burden constructs a certain way of decoding reality, as he is in a continuous search for breaches of meaning. Thomas spends time searching for mistakes in *The New York Times,* and, ironically, he finds them on every page:

> One thing that was so great, (confesses Oskar), was how he could find a mistake in every single article we looked at. Sometimes they were grammar mistakes, sometimes they were mistakes with geography or facts, and sometimes the article just didn't tell the whole story. I loved having a dad who was smarter than the New York Times. (Ibid, 12)

This would be the reason why the relationship between Thomas Schell and Oskar is mediated textually. The father tries to teach his son to decipher the world by telling him stories and giving explanations to any questions the boy has. For Oskar, he is a keeper of meaning, despite the fact that his entire existence is built upon a void of significance generated by his own paternal figure, who, in turn, tries also to connect textually with his son, but fails.

Built tortuously, and thus obliging the reader to a process of decoding, the narration combines two story lines shaped around two traumatic events: the

Dresden bombing and the attacks of September 11. The two trauma narratives are brought together by their protagonists, Oskar and his grandfather who joins the boy in his search. In fact, trauma seems to be the main mark of the world at large, connecting characters and generations. In a secondary narrative line, the reader comes across the story of Oskar's grandparents, struggling with their personal crisis of meaning.

Having survived the Dresden bombing, Oskar's grandparents deal with their own survival guilt that sabotages their relationship. Grandma believes that their house burned down because of all the letters she used to collect (another detail constructing the world from a textual perspective), and deals with suicidal predispositions. On the other hand, Oskar's grandfather, Thomas Schell, is haunted by the guilt of loosing Anna, his pregnant girlfriend. But if the grandmother feels the need to talk, to share her experience, the grandfather looses the ability to speak as he remains prisoner of his own past. Talking about Thomas Schell, Sien Uytterschout and Kristiaan Versluys consider that not talking is a sign of refusing to overcome the traumatic event:

> His inability or refusal to speak testifies to an unwillingness to cope with his traumatic past. Using language suggests at least some form of coming to terms or comprehension, and that is what Thomas wants to avoid at all cost. Thomas's loss of speech goes hand in hand with his losing Anna in Dresden. (2008, 222)

In fact, the character himself testifies this inability to use spoken language as a form of communication with others, as all words point out to the name of his deceased girlfriend; therefore, the name "Ana", or better said, its absence (as Thomas finds himself incapable of saying it out loud), acts as an eraser of speech that is lost gradually:

> I haven't always been silent, I used to talk and talk and talk and talk, I couldn't keep my mouth shut, the silence overtook me like a cancer, it was one of my first meals in America, I tried to tell the waiter, "The way you just handed me that knife, that reminds me of—" but I couldn't finish the sentence, her name wouldn't come. (Foer, 2005, 16)

Thomas Schell resumes his communication to writing, as this is the only place where the name 'Anna' can appear:

> I took a pen from my pocket and wrote "Anna" on my napkin, it happened again two days later, and then again the following day, she was the only thing I wanted to talk about, it kept happening, when I didn't have a pen, I'd write "Anna" in the air—backward and right to left—so that the person I was speaking with could see. (Ibid)

Soon, the text encompasses the entire world of Thomas Schell who is caught in repeating the horror of the traumatic moment, unable to relate directly to the present, and in extension, to the others. He isolates himself, even leaving behind his wife and unborn child, intensifying the crisis of meaning to an existential

level. For Thomas Schell, his entire life is reduced to an aporetic state, because, as he tells his wife in the moment he decides to abandon her, he does not know how to live (Ibid, 181). The reason for this acute feeling of aporia is generated by the fact that, before the trauma, Thomas Schell was in a relentless search for meaning through an exacerbation of reason. In fact, he believes that logical reasoning is what helped him survive the bombing (Ibid, 17). Nonetheless, after the event, reason is overpowered by guilt and the generalized crisis of meaning associated with trauma. That is why Thomas Schell shuts in and turns his body into a place for writing. He limits communication to 'yes' and 'no' signs tattooed on his palms and to an invented sign language. Relationship with others is therefore sabotaged because Thomas may not be understood, despite the fact that he would want to communicate. He is consciously canceling himself out by losing his identity into the relativity of interpretation. Moreover, he becomes a textual product, as communication is mediated by a notebook bearing the palimpsestic signs of everyone with whom he interacted. Still, the notebook does not carry only text, but it also contains fleeting images in a *mise-en-abyme* representation of the novel itself. Therefore, significance is not fixed by additional means of communication, emphasizing thus the ambiguity of meaning.

If Oskar becomes the keeper of everyone's stories, and Thomas Schell holds an answer for everything, the grandfather keeps the textual marks of everyone he interacts with. At a symbolic level, they all contain in themselves the entire panoply of obvious and hidden meanings, as well as the deep connections with the others. Still, the trauma prevents them to access these deep inner layers of signification, and that is why they find themselves in a relentless identity search.

For Thomas Schell, the grandfather, human contact is based exclusively on reading that, in turn, proves to obliterate real communication. Still, if the failure of direct verbal contact leads to a shift towards the text, written communication, ultimately, fails in a similar manner. In relation to his wife, both trauma victims, Thomas Schell imposes the rule of not talking about the past, refusing her the opportunity of healing. Oskar's grandmother deals with trauma in a different manner. She feels the need to tell her story in order to make sense out of it, but she is unable to do so, as she does not have anyone to listen. Moreover, from the need of canceling themselves altogether (as the only possible way to completely forget about their suffering) they invent Nothing Places, defined as "rectangles of space that do not exist. Whoever occupies a Nothing Place temporarily ceases to exist as well" (Ibid, 110). Still, these places expand gradually and end up by occupying more and more space, as if the nothing would come from the inside and cancel out parts of the world.

In order to satisfy his wife's need for telling her story, Thomas Schell asks her to write it, but sets her typing machine in a Nothing place. She initially

refuses, asking for direct verbal communication, but in the end accepts writing as a form of narrating her suffering to her husband. Sat down in such a place, she tries to put her burden down on paper, turning trauma into a written story. But the pages remain blank, contaminated by the nothingness of the place. She substitutes the act of writing with the repeated pressing of the space bar. The text itself becomes a repetition of the interior nothingness. Paradoxically, this does not stop Thomas to read. While his wife fakes the act of writing, trying to maintain the routine of the couple, Thomas engages in a fake act of reading, considering that his wife's bad eye sight prevented her from seeing that the text she was writing was not imprinted on paper. Both of them create the particular context, allowing and justifying the failure of real communication. They both negotiate the meaning of nothingness starting from a fake image of the other. To that extent, the white page becomes the only possible place for human connection, as it functions outside any hegemonic relations of imposed meaning, but also the inability of genuinely relating to the other. In the end, they refuse any form of interaction, be it physical or textual, as even writing and reading can't work as means of communication.

This crisis of meaning, that generated the separation of the two, is transferred from one generation to another. So, despite the fact that Thomas writes letters to his son trying to reach out to him (even if in written form), these letters are never read. Therefore, Oskar's father unconsciously continues the crisis of meaning of his own father. This ends with Oskar's attempt to reestablish real human contact in his quest for meaning. Moreover, in his adventure, he is reunited with his grandfather.

Joining Oskar in his quest, Thomas Schell manages to reestablish direct human contact, overcoming his trauma. For Oskar too, the end of the search signals the moment of reuniting, at a more subtle level, with his father. Finding a lock for the key marks the moment when the crisis is overcome for both nephew and grandfather. Ironically, it does not provide Oskar with the answer he was looking for, but signals the reestablishment of human contact. The boy's key opens the deposit box with letters from William Black's father, providing an answer for his identity crisis. Still, disappointed by the final discovery, Oskar repeats the gestures of his father. at a symbolic level, Oskar, who was looking for an answer becomes, in turn, a holder of truth. On the other hand, Thomas Schell finds himself caring about the boy, looking after him and communicating directly with him. Therefore, the connection between the two restores natural human communication, which closes the circle of lack of significance.

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III. RECENZII

**Ioana-Crina Coroi, *Normele imaginarului lingvistic în presa literară,*
Editura Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, 352 p.**

L'ouvrage récemment paru, *Les normes de l'Imaginaire Linguistique dans la presse littéraire*, signé par Ioana-Crina Coroi, est un nouveau défi adressé aux chercheurs philologues, aux linguistes et aux exégètes sceptiques, distants ou soupçonneux concernant la théorie déjà «classique» de l'Imaginaire Linguistique (IL). Selon les propos de prof. univ. dr. Sanda-Maria Ardeleanu, dans une préface concentrée et éloquente, «L'Imaginaire Linguistique est une théorie ouverte» et, conformément à l'axiome d'Anne-Marie Houdebine-Gravaud («Chaque locuteur parle sa propre langue»), ce concept a proliféré dans de nombreux syntagmes: «imaginaire littéraire», «imaginaire social», «imaginaire didactique», «imaginaire francophone», «imaginaire politique», «imaginaire médiatique», «imaginaire scientifique», «imaginaire publicitaire» etc. Au-delà du panorama des approches de l'Imaginaire Linguistique, le fait important qui reste est que l'IL traite, essentiellement, du rapport entre l'usage particulier, créatif stylistique de la langue et les normes linguistiques statuées dans la dynamique des langues et de l'évolution des sociétés, IL donnant la possibilité à explorer des corpus linguistiques différents d'une époque à une autre.

La notion d'Imaginaire Linguistique (IL) est relativement récente, étant proposée en 1975 par la chercheuse Anne-Marie Houdebine-Gravaud, à l'occasion des études phonologiques sur la langue française régionale. Dans un article visant Le Colloque International sur l'Imaginaire Linguistique (qui a eu lieu à Sorbonne, en 2001), A.-M. Haudebine-Gravaud précise que, selon son opinion, «le terme imaginaire a été préféré à celui de représentation (…), allant vers des connotations surprises par J. Lacan dans les rapports entre Réel, Imaginaire et Symbolique» («À propos d'un Colloque sur l'Imaginaire Linguistique», préface au colloque mentionné).

On connaît déjà, la problématique de l'imaginaire dans la langue n'est pas nouvelle. Tous les courants et les systèmes logiques, philosophiques ou esthétiques, dès les positivistes-empiristes jusqu'au psycho-mentalistes, ont postulé l'existence d'un «horizon imaginaire» dans la substance de l'expression verbale et dans l'être immanent du mot dans la position d' «intention pensée», dans la phase antérieure à l'acte de langage. Il existe foncièrement une certaine «imagination» du verbe, une transparente iconicité du mot. Le plus éloquent exemple, qui a fait naître une école et dont les échos seront vivants à jamais, est donné par F. de Saussure, qui a défini le signe linguistique comme une unité

indissoluble entre une image acoustique et son concept. Puis, Bachelard, Sartre et Durand ont donné des ouvrages de référence sur «l'imagination symbolique» et l'imaginaire, suivant une lignée phénoménologique et anthropologique. Beaucoup plus tard, J. Burgos a établi, d'une manière convaincante, que les dernières conséquences de ce phénomène opèrent dans la sphère sublime de *l'imaginaire poétique*.

Il existe quand même un problème extrêmement vaste, ayant des aspects connexes variés, abordable de multiples points de vue et, plus particulièrement, tellement féconde pour les chercheurs. Nous trouvons que la théorie de l'Imaginaire Linguistique (IL) passe, d'une manière profitable, au-delà des frontières du domaine fixé initialement. Ainsi, la psychologie cognitiviste, développée pendant les 25 dernières années et la sémiotique des faits imaginaires considère qu'il y a des rapports d'interdétermination entre le mot et l'image/l'imaginaire : «Premièrement, il existe une structure proposi-tionnelle. (…) La plupart des représentations humaines est inscrite, inculquée dans la matrice linguistique» (J.F. Leny şi M.D. Ginesta, *La Psychologie*, Larousse, Paris, 1995, p.270). Un certain logocentrisme essaye de réduire la représentation mentale aux structures énonciatives-phrastiques. Cependant, il y a bien de chercheurs qui essayent de restituer à l'imaginaire son rôle prépondérant. Le premier a été J. Piaget, qui a soutenu que le concept verbal survient dans l'image mentale, tout en reconnaissant que celle-ci a une fonction d'illustration du signifié conceptuel. La séparation entre le mot et l'image a été atténuée par les résultats des recherches expérimentales qui ont démontré qu'il y a une *certaine composante imaginale dans le concept lexical* (cf. M. Denis, *Image et Cognition*, PUF, Paris, 1989). On pourrait en déduire qu'il existe un certain «imagisme» à tous les niveaux de la communication verbale, greffé sur le fond énorme de l'imaginaire humain. Tout cela plaide pour l'iconicité de la pensée à l'intérieur de laquelle l'Imaginaire Linguistique est une composante fondamentale.

De cette perspective, vu comme «le rapport du sujet à la langue, selon J. Lacan, tenant compte des aspects les plus intimes, des fantasmes et des imaginations du sujet humain ou, conformément à Saussure, tenant compte des aspects sociaux et idéologiques» (*cf*. A.-M. Houdebine-Gravaud), le concept d'Imaginaire Linguistique est lié à la notion de «représentation sociale» ou à celle d'«imaginaire collectif». L'extraction sociologique ou psychanalytique de ce concept est argumentée par la conclusion de Madame A.-M. Houdebine-Gravaud, selon laquelle l'Imaginaire Linguistique analyse «les distorsions repérées entre les dires et les attitudes des sujets envers leurs réalisations et les autres locuteurs», qui exprime «l'idéalisation fantasmatique de la langue». Historiquement, la théorie de l'IL est circonscrite aux faits de langage dans leur évolution spatiale et temporelle, rapportables aux individus et à la communauté, aux mentalités et à l'expérience linguistique accumulée. Il est évident que les

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grands symboles et les archétypes de la culture et de la civilisation ont été structurés selon «l'imaginaire collectif» et que, dans le Grand Paradigme du monde, prolifère une multitude d'associations, de juxtapositions anarchiques de relations profondes, des évocations analogiques, des suggestions et des fragments de pensées non exprimées.

La démarche entreprise dans son livre par Ioana-Crina Coroi doit être regardée de cet ongle, puisqu'elle est «analytique, descriptive, intuitive et contrastive» (p.17). Ayant un corpus d'analyse constitué de la presse écrite roumaine de la période 1877-1916 (l'époque des grandes transformations et du fondement de la nation roumaine moderne), elle opère, tout premièrement, une ample et minutieuse investigation sur la communication médiatique, avec ses enjeux symboliques, «les effets de pouvoir» et sa capacité d'interpréter/imaginer la réalité et d'influencer le mental collectif.

D'une manière tout à fait juste, l'auteure met en relief la vérité selon laquelle la presse écrite a constitué «une véritable dimension stratégique, fondée sur l'actualité événementielle et sur l'imaginaire fictionnel des locuteurs (…), créant des systèmes de normes, des valeurs et des raisons collectives (…), illustrant le droit individuel de penser et de s'exprimer librement» (p.21). Une place spéciale est réservée ensuite à la création et à l'imposition des normes linguistiques dans le processus de modernisation de la langue roumaine, avec l'épuisement théorique des principes et des aspects fondamentaux: évolution et modernisation; langue populaire – langue littéraire ; écart de la norme, compétence et performance des locuteurs ; norme, style et créativité lexicale dans la communication écrite et orale etc. Si «la norme linguistique implique l'existence des structures prohibitives» (p.87), où elle opère avec les normes «descriptives» et «prescriptives» dans le système de la langue (*cf*. A. Martinet), alors l'écart de la norme, «perçue en tant que facteur d'évolution» (p.93) offre la chance à l'apparition des particularités individuelles dans l'usage de la langue, du style littéraire, technique-scientifique, juridique-administratif, publicitaire et colloquial avec tout leur cortège d'effets et de conséquences dans l'expression écrite d'une certaine époque.

La théorie de l'Imaginaire Linguistique est traitée dans un paragraphe articulé (qui pourrait être développé) [30]. À partir de la prémisse que l'Imaginaire Linguistique représente «le rapport du sujet à la langue (…), de la manière dans laquelle la langue reflète l'individu avec ses intensités imaginaires (…) et la dynamique de la société où il vit» et le fait que «chaque locuteur agit au nom d'un imaginaire personnel» (*cf*. Angela Grădinaru, citée à la p.116), Ioana-Crina Coroi considère que l'IL a comme éléments définitoires «le fonctionnement

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[30] En Roumanie, la théorie et la pratique de l'Imaginaire Linguistique ont des représentants redoutables, parmi lesquels Sanda-Maria Ardeleanu et Ruxandra Cesereanu, qui se sont imposés avec des recherches déjà reconnues.

dynamique de la langue, en tant qu'organisme vivant et activité créatrice et sa modélisation diachronique, aboutissant à un degré concret d'applicabilité immédiate» (p.28). L'auteure admet également que les zones de structuration de l'IL sont psycho-mentales (de la psychologie cognitive) et socio-indivi-duelles, en tant que des repères mixtes de réception et d'étude de la dynamique d'une langue de la perspective de l'Imaginaire Linguistique. À ce sens, l'approche de l'IL sur le plan interne et externe de la langue est proposée, adoptant avec conviction le schéma instauré par Anne-Marie Houdebine-Gravaud, avec des catégories de normes spécifiques, des relations et des interférences, comme base et procédé d'investigation analytique sur tout corpus textuel et discursif. Ainsi, on considère que, sur le *plan interne* de la langue, fonctionnent les normes *systémiques* et *statistiques* (des normes objectives et fonctionnelles, marquées par des descripteurs linguistiques) et, sur le plan externe (le plan subjectif) opèrent les normes *prescriptives* (à caractère puriste, visant l'usage idéal), les normes *fictives* (individuelles, symboliques, à argumentation affective, idéologique et créative-esthétique des locuteurs), les normes *communicationnelles* (compréhension, intégrations dans la communauté linguistique) et les normes *évaluatives* (l'analyse des faits de langue, des représentations et des attitudes des locuteurs).

Cette grille d'analyse de l'IL, vue comme instrument méthodologique efficace, est appliquée, dans le troisième chapitre, sur des aspects concrets de la société roumaine et la sur la presse littéraire de la période 1877-1916. Avec des extraits et des exemples de textes, avec des rapports précis à la langue, aux mentalités, aux «images sociales de la presse de l'époque» sont largement investiguées des revues importantes parues ou continuées à l'époque mention-née: *Convorbiri literare, Revista Literară, Contemporanul, Literatorul, Telegraful român, Tribuna, Vatra* e.a. «Ainsi, lors du processus d'occidentalisation» - constate l'auteure – « le réveil de la conscience de l'unité nationale et de la formation d'une culture solide pouvaient être réalisés à travers les pages des publications de l'époque», la presse écrite recevant «le statut de miroir fidèle de l'époque (…), reflétant des images de l'homme, de sa langue, de l'imaginaire sociolinguistique collectif» (p.145). Il est souligné aussi le fait que le poids de l'imaginaire sociolinguistique des Roumains « explique des visions, des conceptions, des représentations, des mythes (…) qui lient la sensibilité collective au champ vaste de la réalité immédiate» (*idem*). La pertinence des analyses entreprises par l'auteure est donnée par l'illustration véridique des catégories qui entrent dans la structure de l'imaginaire linguistique, appelant «aux méthodes, aux symboles, aux images, aux signes, aux schémas, aux emblèmes (…) qui se constituent eux-mêmes dans un instrumentaire particulier d'investigation proprement-dite» (pp.154-155). La conclusion est que «la presse littéraire roumaine connaît plusieurs étapes de recherches et d'expérimentations» et que «les directions majeures des

publications restent longtemps celles à caractère politique», c'est-à-dire «un mélange d'illuminisme tardif et de romantisme, avec des accents démocratiques souvent forcées», pendant que «les publications littéraires sont soutenues, en général, par les écrivains militants de l'époque, manifestant un enclin évident vers l'art à finalité sociale» (p.156).

Le livre de la jeune professeure Ioana-Crina Coroi suscite l'intérêt aussi parce qu'il est un véritable compendium d'histoire des revues culturelles roumaines, avec des orientations accentuées vers la sociologie et la linguistique appliquée. La démarche théorique et pratique offerte par la théorie de l'Imaginaire Linguistique devrait être continuée et amplifiée/approfondie, élargissant la sphère de la recherche.

Bien que la théorie de l'IL ait gagné, de point de vue méthodologique, un statut scientifique, tous ceux intéressés devront méditer à l'affirmation selon laquelle le phénomène de l'Imaginaire Linguistique, en tant que réalité vécue, est, en fait, «une fiction linguistique-nationale subjectivante» (Anne-Marie Houdebine-Gravaud).

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Le numéro 7/2012 de la revue *La Francopolyphonie* de l'Université Libre Internationale de Moldova se propose de répondre à une pluralité de questions polyvalentes portant sur le paradigme interculturel envisagé dans quatre grands domaines: les langues, les littératures, la traduction et l'enseignement. Comme les coordinateurs du volume l'avouent dans l'*Avant-propos*, le présent volume ne s'arrête pas seulement sur les perspectives purement théoriques du concept d'interculturalité, mais il tend à « mettre en exergue la phénoménologie pragmatique» de celui-ci.

Les cinq sections qui réunissent des contributions très pertinentes sont: *Anthropologie(s) et philosophie(s) de l'unité dans la diversité; Linguistique contrastive et interculturalité; Stéréotypes (inter)culturels et imagologie littéraire; Didactique des langues et interculturalité; Voyages et interculturalité/Expériences interculturelles migratoires;* elles élargissent la sphère de l'étude interculturelle, offrant une image complexe sur les implications de cet état de faits dans divers domaines de la vie humaine.

L'article portant sur la « Critique de la raison interculturelle», de Jacques Demorgon ouvre la partie théorique de ce volume et son auteur se penche sur trois méthodes d'étude de l'interculturalité, *« comparative-descriptive», « compréhensive-explicative», « dialogique-implicative»*, de manière que le « multi-trans-inter» de la vie humaine soit mieux compris et mis en évidence.

C'est dans la même direction d'identification d'un nouveau *« modus vivendi»* que se déploie l'ample étude de Victor Untilă, « La culture à l'épreuve de la (non)contradiction». L'auteur y fait preuve d'une grande finesse d'interprétation des valences interculturelles et des implications psychiques, biologiques et symboliques de la « condition (inter)culturelle» de l'être humain.

S'appuyant sur une analyse critique des conséquences de l'unification européenne, Valentina Enciu et Nicolae Enciu identifient les perspectives d'une Europe « multilinguistique et multiculturelle» au XXIème siècle. Les conclusions de cette recherche entreprise avec des moyens historiques, politiques et sociologiques attestent le fait que l'Europe est, comme l'avait déjà affirmé le prof. Faust Brădescu, « un veritabil mozaic de naţionalităţi» (p. 47), une toile d'identités nationales bien définies, impossible à mélanger.

Portant sur « La géographie des langues officielles et l'évolution de leur statut dans le contexte de la globalisation», Dragoş Vicol et Ana Mihalache étudient le cas de la République de Moldova, en luttant pour l'affirmation de

l'identité linguistique roumaine de l'État.

Le présent volume envisage ensuite les relations qui s'établissent entre la linguistique et l'interculturalité. Des mots comme « voyage», « voyageur», « voyager» reçoivent de nouveaux sens grâce au passage du temps, sens que Ion Manoli étudie d'une manière approfondie, faisant appel à la stylistique linguistique, à la stylistique littéraire et à la littérature universelle et comparée, dans son article intitulé «*Voyage – voyager – voyageur* comme symboles et comme mots anciens: leurs sens nouveaux dans le français d'aujourd'hui.»

Koia Jean-Martial Kouame se penche dans son étude « Le nouchi: creuset de la diversité culturelle et linguistique de la Côte d'Ivoire» sur le côté linguistique et sur les influences que l'espace manifeste sur la langue. L'auteur fait une radiographie de l'évolution du nouchi – une variété du français, au début argot des délinquants, qui est devenu de nos jours le moyen de communication par excellence, « miroir de la diversité linguistique de la Côte d'Ivoire car il puise ses ressources dans plusieurs canaux linguistiques locaux et internationaux» (p. 75).

Avec «État d'esprit et esprit d'état: analyse d'un recueil d'exercice de grammaire française», Olga Kuzmenko pénètre la zone de l'approche de la civilisation française par les manuels scolaires, la grammaire utilisée comme corpus de son étude se remarquant par une logique organisationnelle à part, par un contenu thématique et sémantique consciemment choisi.

Tout en continuant la démarche linguistique sur l'interculturalité, Angela Savin-Zgardan identifie l'empreinte que le signe linguistique porte sur l'identité culturelle. Dans son étude, «Motivaţia semnului lingvistic vizavi de conceptul general al interculturalităţii[31]», l'auteure argumente que l'analyse linguistique de type signifié-signifiant-signe est toujours conditionnée par les capacités cognitives de l'analyste, d'une part, et soumise aux lois du provisoire, d'autre part.

Ana Mihalache entreprend, dans son travail sur «Les particularités des textes religieux en roumain et en français», l'étude contrastive des textes religieux pris comme exemples mettant en évidence que «la littérature de culte englobe les mêmes particularités syntaxiques et fonctionnelles que les autres genres de littérature» (p. 100); de plus, selon les mots de l'auteure, les textes religieux contribuent à une «éducation dans l'esprit de la reconnaissance et du respect des ressemblances et des différences qui existent entre les religions et dans le développement de la communication interculturelle» (p. 101).

Une étude approfondie, pleine d'exemples argumentatifs en ce qui concerne l'hypothèse et les possibilités de l'exprimer dans trois langues européennes est offerte par Snežana Gudurić et Rodika Ursulesku-Miličić. Sans

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[31] «La motivation du signe linguistique quant au concept général de l'interculturalité»; notre traduction.

avoir la prétention d'exhaustivité, «Modalități de exprimare a ipotezei in limbile franceză, română și sârbă[32]» ouvre des voies à l'analyse du langage hypothétique, ayant comme point de départ les similitudes et les limites des systèmes des trois langues prises en considération.

Dans la même direction de l'analyse du rapport entre la langue et la culture se dirige l'étude «La composante culturelle des expressions idiomatiques» appartenant à Ina Papcov, qui considère que les unités phraséologiques reflètent «l'originalité culturelle de la langue» (p. 116) comme un miroir de la spécificité d'un peuple.

Georgeta Rus explore le terrain d'exercice de l'interculturel, comme quintessence de l'ouverture vers l'autre, dans son étude sur «Les anthroponymes dans l'espace littéraire roumain et français», ayant comme support l'œuvre bilingue de Panait Istrati. Après une approche approfondie d'un corpus istratien représentatif, l'auteure conclut que c'est par la diversité des formules dénominatives employées que Panait Istrati s'identifie aux deux cultures, roumaine et française, à la fois.

La démarche appliquée sur l'étude de l'interculturalité continue, dans la deuxième section du présent volume, avec des articles bien argumentés qui élargissent la sphère d'intérêt de la recherche. Sur la trajectoire décrite par les «Stéréotypes (inter)culturels» et l'«imagologie littéraire» s'inscrivent les traductions en français des textes appartenant à d'autres cultures, créations qui crayonnent l'image de l'Autre et qui le présentent comme «mythe identitaire propre à la société et à la civilisation» (p. 143), selon les conclusions formulées par Alain Vuillemin dans l'étude portant sur la société brésilienne: «La découverte de l' „Autre'', de l'Indien et de l'Européen, au Brésil, à travers les traductions et les transpositions en français du poème épique de José de Santa Rita Durão sur la découverte de Bahia: *Caramurú. Poema épico do descobrimento da Bahia (1781).*»

Le problème de l'identité féminine parisienne et de l'émancipation de la femme dans le contexte de la modernité est amplement débattu et argumenté par Elena Prus dans l'étude dédiée à «La Parisienne: Personnage emblématique de la modernité»; l'auteure y décrit la trajectoire de la femme à travers l'histoire et la littérature en présentant les diverses représentations de cette figure archétypale et ambigüe dans l'imaginaire collectif et individuel masculin.

Se situant dans la lignée des études d'imagologie, Efstratia Oktapoda surprend une autre facette de l'interculturalité – l'hospitalité. Choisissant comme espace de recherche les Balkans, l'auteure présente dans son article «Pour une imagologie européenne: Grecs, Roumains et Albanais ou l'hospitalité dans les Balkans», un des traits définitoires des peuples de cet espace, que

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[32] «Des Modalités d'exprimer l'hypothèse dans les langues français, roumaine et serbe»; notre traduction.

l'auteure analyse historiquement, à travers la littérature. Elle soutient, avec des arguments très pertinents, que «L'hospitalité est au cœur du système et des mentalités, fortement ancrée dans une tradition ancienne et hautement valorisée qui définit un continuum culturel spécifique dans la région de Sud-Est européen.» (p. 160)

Dans l'article dédié aux «Enjeux et facettes de l'interculturalité dans la prose de Brina Svit», Elena-Brandusa Steiciuc affirme que les personnages svitiens, surtout féminins, se penchent vers la découverte de nouveaux espaces et de nouvelles cultures, de l'«*outsider*» de toute société, l'écriture svitienne elle-même contribuant à «enrichir la polyphonie de la prose francophone». (p. 170)

Comment adapter une pièce de théâtre à une autre société, comment la traduire et l'approprier à ce qu'il y a de spécifique dans la culture d'accueil ? Ce sont des questions auxquelles se propose de répondre Renata Jakubczuk dans son étude portant sur «L'adaptation théâtrale: exemple de l'interculturalité appliquée», où elle présente des techniques adaptatives (la traduction, la réécriture, le montage, le collage, la romanisation, l'épicisation, la musique) comme base de l'approche interculturelle.

«Pluralismul multidiferentialist drept principiu fundamental al teoriei si criticii literare[33]», article appartenant à Tatiana Ciocoi, synthétise les diverses théories post-structurelles du sujet de l'identité et prend en considération «les possibilités de définir l'identité de la perspective du sujet de cyborg, du transsexuel, du liminal, de l'excentrique, du nomade et du situé», ainsi que du «hyperconstructivisme». (p. 187)

A partir des exemples de phraséologismes, Tamara Nestsiarovich étudie «L'espace sémiotique du symbole de l'œil», les liens syntagmatiques et paradigmatiques que l'image-symbole de l'œil envisage dans différentes situations de communication et qui constituent un système de valeurs pouvant être analysées du point de vue social et interculturel.

Par «The Greatness and Fall of Chivalrous Structures in the Cloak-and-Dagger Novel: *The Three Musketeers*, by Alexandre Dumas», Florica Bodistean étudie les modifications produites sur les structures chevaleresques dans le roman de cape et d'épée, ayant comme corpus d'étude *Les Trois Mousquetaires* d'Alexandre Dumas. A la différence du chevalier du Moyen Age, le personnage dumasien, même s'il respecte les normes de conduite chevaleresque, se présente seulement comme un avatar car, chez lui, tout est «l'apanage d'une masculinité arrogante et triomphale.» (p. 204)

Réfléchissant en égale mesure à la traduction et à l'interculturalité, l'article appartenant à Alisa Dumikyan – «Evaluation de la littérature de

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[33] «Le pluralisme multi différentialiste comme principe fondamental de la théorie et de la critique littéraire»; notre traduction.

traduction arménienne de l'Age d'or par les arménistes français dans le contexte des relations interculturelles» - soutient que la pratique traductologique permet la compréhension des valeurs spirituelles et contribue à créer «la propriété de la communauté intellectuelle.» (p. 217)

En étudiant les conséquences des approches interculturelles dans la littérature, Gisèle Vanhese montre, dans son étude «Au confluent des cultures. La poésie française de Benjamin Fondane», la manière dont cet auteur a transposé, dans la langue française, «le chant éminescien» et surtout le chef-d'œuvre du grand poète national de la Roumanie. Dans la deuxième partie de l'étude, l'auteure s'interroge sur la présence, dans la poésie fondanienne, d'une grande légende du folklore roumain, *Mesterul Manole* – miroir du mythe du sacrifice de fondation, mettant ainsi en évidence l'approche interculturelle dans la littérature.

Silvia-Oana Alestar étudie la manière dont «deux cultures quasiment opposées s'entremêlent d'une façon particulièrement originale», dans son article portant sur «(Anti)traditionalisme français et modernisme américain dans l'œuvre de Boris Vian». C'est le «rêve américain» qui crée, chez Vian, un art moderne, un mélange interculturel, français et américain à la fois.

L'approche interculturelle est abordée aussi par Florina-Liliana Mihalovici, qui se penche sur la figure de l'ogre dans les littératures francophones. «Le mythe de l'ogre: une vision interculturelle. Échanges et contaminations» est structuré sur les deux termes mentionnés pour mieux mettre en évidence les dissemblances au niveau de la représentation littéraire du mythe dans diverses littératures, comme conséquence de l'implication du facteur culturel.

Les interdictions sociologiques et idéologiques en tant que «mentalités rétrogrades» de la société algérienne sont étudiées par Diana-Simina Ludusan dans sa contribution au présent volume, «À la recherche de l'identité entre le passé algérien et le présent français dans l'*Interdite* de Malika Mokaddem».

La troisième section du présent volume, portant sur la relation qui s'établit entre la didactique des langues et l'interculturalité, débute par l'intervention de Ion Gutu, «Les valeurs de l'éducation humaniste aux cours de français dans la vision du *curriculum* modernisé moldave.» L'auteur y affirme la nécessité, dans le contexte des déplacements démographiques et des échanges interculturels, d'apprendre, à part la langue maternelle, au moins une autre langue de circulation internationale, le système éducationnel étant le principal facteur de «la constitution d'une pluralité plurilingue». (p. 254)

Margarita Daver suit la même trajectoire et affirme qu'il est nécessaire de renforcer l'importance des compétences interculturelles, dans son article «Intercultural Strategic Competence and Internet-Assisted Language Teaching/Learning» qui met en évidence aussi l'efficacité de l'utilisation de l'Internet dans la classe de langue étrangère et dans un apprentissage autonome.

En s'appuyant sur l'expérience acquise en enseignant la culture et la civilisation roumaines aux étudiants étrangers, Elena Platon identifie «Les pièges du concept de l'interculturalité» et conseille de ne pas «tomber dans les pièges réductionnistes de la compréhension du dialogue interculturel dans un seul sens et exclusivement de perspective globalisante» (p. 279), mais écouter les voix intérieures des autres, qui parlent de notre identité, pour enrichir notre propre image sur nous-mêmes et sur nos partenaires de dialogue interculturel.

Zinaida Zubcu prend en discussion une des manières d'aborder le contenu thématique dans l'enseignement des langues étrangères, son article «Les principes de l'interdisciplinarité aux cours de syntaxe française» signalant la nécessité de rendre la grammaire plus intéressante, plus accessible, plus attractive pour une meilleure acquisition.

En ce qui concerne l'apprentissage autonome, Kariné Doïmadjian-Grigoryan fait une «Analyse des pratiques de formations hybrides favorisant l'autonomie de l'apprenant» en affirmant que les formations à distance doivent se baser sur la collaboration entre les acteurs de l'acte d'enseignement, ce qui favorise l'autonomie de l'apprenant dans les domaines technique, méthodologique et langagier.

Mihaela Pricope parle de la France en tant que pays multiculturel, ayant comme point de départ son expérience personnelle à l'Université de Strasbourg. L'article «The Experience of Teaching for Diversity in an Academic French Environment – The University of Strasbourg» présente les opportunités de formation que l'Université offre aux étudiants étrangers, pour une adaptation culturelle et sociale à la fois.

L'étude contrastive de Natalia Celpan-Patic portant sur «L'(in)transitivité des verbes de mouvement entre la tradition grammaticale et l'interculturalité» pose le problème de la transitivité comme centre du système sémantique des verbes de mouvement, en s'appuyant sur les différences de sens que la traduction français-roumain suscite pour un même verbe.

La dernière partie du volume nous ouvre le chemin vers des voyages interculturels à partir des «expériences interculturelles migratoires». François Moureau identifie «Les voies difficiles de l'interculturalité dans les récits de voyage», mettant l'accent sur les relations de type vainqueur-vaincu, sauveur-pêcheur etc. qui se sont établies au cours des voyages, relations qu'il considère comme un «rendez-vous de l'interculturalité».

La contribution que les jeunes roumains, étudiants à l'étranger, ont eue au processus d'occidentalisation de la Roumanie est étudiée par Florea Ioncioaia dans l'article dédié aux «Mobilités étudiantes et configuration de soi: les jeunes roumains aux études en France. Une mise en question». L'auteur y identifie les apports des stages d'études en France aux transferts culturels de l'époque (XIX$^{\text{ème}}$ siècle) et «la nature de l'expérience individuelle estudiante, comme source de la configuration de soi.» (p. 319)

La prise de position de Galina Florea en ce qui concerne les conséquences de l'exil sur le peuple roumain est exposée au cours de l'article «L'exil politique roumain – pont historique entre deux cultures». Quoique peu étudié dans son ensemble, le phénomène est soumis à une analyse minutieuse que l'auteure entreprend par le biais culturel et littéraire, à partir de la littérature engagée des écrivains célèbres tels Virgil Gheorghiu, Paul Goma, Sergiu Grossu, Virgil Tanase etc.

Les mécanismes psychologiques de la typologie *homo viator*, menés par le désir de connaître d'autres temps et d'autres espaces, deviennent «histoire personnelle par la réception individuelle d'un autre rapport» (p. 327) où s'enracine le mythe de la diversité. «*Homo viator* – experienta alteritatii insulare[34]», écrit par Carmen Dărăbuş, conçoit l'évasion comme une forme à expérimenter l'altérité à partir de l'œuvre de Michel Tournier, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique – Vendredi ou la vie sauvage.*

Nicolae Bodnaru suit la même voie en analysant les multiples significations qui pourraient être attribuées au voyage dans son article «*Tayaout, fils d'Agaguk:* un voyage vers l'identité inuit». L'intrusion de l'Autre, de la civilisation blanche, amène, dans le roman, la corruption du personnage éponyme et la remise en question du système des valeurs jusque-là fidèlement respectées.

Nous pouvons conclure que le présent volume est une source de connaissances inépuisable, bien structurée et argumentée, ancrée dans la réalité de nos jours pour nous offrir une image fidèle, exacte, des implications que les multiples interactions culturelles apportent dans tous les domaines de la vie sociale et dans le psychisme de la société, à la fois.

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[34] «*Homo viator* – l'expérience de l'altérité insulaire»; notre traduction.

Onoriu Colăcel – *Mediating and Capitalizing on Cultural Competence: The Contemporary British Novel*, **Editura Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă, Cluj Napoca, 2013, 248 p.**

Una din premisele de la care porneşte cartea lui Onoriu Colăcel este aceea că o operă de artă are o anumită semnificaţie doar pentru cineva care, la rândul său, are competenţa culturală necesară ori care se află în posesia cheii în care a fost încifrată opera de artă. Competenţa culturală este crucială în construcţia semnificaţiei textuale: cititorul nu se poate deplasa dinspre stratul epidermic al semnificaţiei, pe care îl poate percepe graţie experienţei decodărilor culturale precedente înspre stratul semnificaţiilor secunde, de profunzime, dacă nu a achiziţionat în prealabil concepte, practici şi instrumente care transcend caracteristicile perceptibile şi care conferă textului o anume identitate expresivă. Argumentaţia solidă a autorului conduce la descurajarea prejudecăţii conform căreia textul trebuie privit ca o simplă modalitate de comunicare a unui sens/unor sensuri şi la adoptarea ideii că receptarea estetică este o relaţionare biunivocă: înţelegerea şi aprecierea calităţilor fizionomice şi de substanţă ale operei literare trebuie să fie susţinute, ghidate şi corectate prin intermediul unei cunoaşteri adecvate, în lipsa căreia receptorul/cititorul utilizează un cod nespecific şi inoperant.

Onoriu Colăcel examinează modalităţile în care competenţa culturală este mediată şi valorificată în proza de ficţiune a scriitorilor britanici contemporani John Fowles, David Lodge şi Peter Ackroyd. Obiectivul declarat al primei părţi este de a oferi un cadru conceptual restului lucrării în ce priveşte definirea termenilor, creionarea contextelor şi stabilirea perspectivelor. Acest prim capitol introduce definiţii ale conceptului de competenţă culturală – un concept din ce în ce mai uzitat în investigaţia critică actuală – şi demonstrează inextricabila relaţionare a acestuia cu temele specifice studiilor culturale: *rezistenţă culturală*, *ideologie*, *subaltern*, *heghemonie*, *handicap cultural* etc. Sublinierea insistentă a conceptului de competenţă culturală (prin definiri şi redefiniri care se prelungesc până în ultimul capitol al lucrării şi care reprezintă, în opinia mea, recalibrări din ce în ce mai fine ale evaluării critice) pune în evidenţă şi interacţiunea specifică dintre text şi receptor/cititor, ceea ce nu face decât să ne aducă înapoi la abilitarea/abilitatea cititorului de a se confrunta cu sensurile ideologice inculcate în textul literar. Autorul oferă un context coerent demersului său interpretativ prin utilizarea competentă a vocabularului teoriei culturale (post-)marxiste (R. Williams, în speţă) în accesarea „genealogiei literare" Fowles – Lodge - Ackroyd şi prin examinarea concludentă a formelor

şi tehnicilor narative dominante, emergente şi reziduale.

De remarcat pentru început că termenul „genealogie” este, după chiar mărturisirea autorului, mai mult o marcă a *dorinţei* de a identifica similitudini şi convergenţe între operele autorilor mai sus menţionaţi şi mai puţin un dat indubitabil. În paranteză fie spus, definiţia prea precaută a acestei „genealogii”, frecvent invocată drept fundament al demonstraţiei, ar putea induce un anumit grad de confuzie în perceperea intenţiei autorului şi fructificării acesteia în capitolele următoare, dacă nu ar fi adâncită prin sublinieri succesive. Modul în care este analizată categoria de *competenţă culturală* duce la o dislocare a tendinţei tradiţionale de esenţializare a criticii literare ca unic domeniu, distinct şi legitim, de decodare şi validare a textului literar. În loc de a defini cultura ca un domeniu al textelor şi artefactelor, autorul înţelege să o prezinte ca pe o serie de practici şi operaţiuni care se desfăşoară în cadrul unor structuri textuale sau identificabile cu textul. Influenţat în mod decisiv şi benefic de modelele culturale concepute de Jameson, Certeau, Laclau, Rorty, Giddens etc. Autorul aduce o acuzaţie implicită chiar cercetării neo-marxiste că prea ar ignora rolul cititorului ori că nu ar ataşa semnificaţiilor textului literar interacţiunea dintre mesaj şi multiplele strategii interpretative utilizate de către cititorul textului literar.

Efortul consistent pe care îl apreciem cu precădere la autorul acestei lucrări nu este însă acela de a face o evaluare quasi-exhaustivă a unei bibliografii care creşte impresionant, în proporţie geometrică, de la un capitol la altul, ci acela de a descoperi surprinzătoare interferenţe ale acestor studii recente în ceea ce priveşte competenţa culturală, care, dacă nu indică neaparat o perspectivă complet unitară, măcar oferă numitorul comun al unor caracteristici conceptuale integrante. Evitând cu acuitate acele perspective critice care definesc cititorul ca pe un receptor pasiv al semnificaţiei textului, autorul reuşeşte să ocupe o poziţie echidistantă şi să eludeze în egală măsură şi pericolul idealizării receptorului. Studiul prezent propune alte concepte generale mult mai potrivite în acest cadru (*polisemie*, *comunitate interpretativă*, *rezistenţă culturală* etc.).

În fine, cartea aminteşte (într-un veritabil joc postmodernist) propriilor cititori că ei înşişi pot construi lecturi opoziţionale ale textelor heghemonice. Aşa cum declară încă din primul capitol, analiza unui roman invită la utilizarea unei metodologii interdisciplinare şi, de aceea, autorul optează pentru cea elaborată de constructivismul ştiinţelor sociale, în special pentru instrumentarul studiilor culturale, la care se adaugă materialismul post-marxist, pragmatismul şi contextualismul. După prezentarea judicioasă a acestor direcţii de investigaţie critică, autorul se poate lansa în modul cel mai convingător cu putinţă în problematica extrem de complexă a competenţei

culturale, analizând cu fină cunoaştere maniera în care proza de ficţiune a autorilor sus-menţionaţi exploatează şi ia notă, spre exemplu, de diversitatea culturală. Proza de ficţiune se autolegitimează prin practici discursive împrumutate din ştiinţele umaniste, filosofie, istorie, religie, teorie politică etc., dar le şi conferă tuturor acestora legitimitate. Tocmai de aceea analiza romanelor se face aici prin prisma competenţei culturale care funcţionează cel mai adesea ca o modalitate de comunicare între text şi cititor, dar şi între texte, între autori şi texte ş.a.m.d.

Demonstraţia laborios şi subtil eşafodată de autor induce ideea că producţia culturală este în esenţă şi în totalitate legată de legile pieţei, nu doar în sens strict economic, ci şi în sensul mai larg al subordonării faţă de un standard valoric comun, care permite diferenţierea marii arte de cea minoră (mult hulita distincţie dintre valoare şi non-valoare, dintre *high culture* şi *low culture*). Producţia culturală ar depinde, în opinia autorului, de o economie uniformă a valorii, dar, cum o astfel de economie este ea însăşi o ficţiune (căci valoarea este în general un obiect de dispută şi nu de consens), până la urmă factorul de decizie rămâne tot competenţa culturală.

Chiar în miezul lucrării Onoriu Colăcel se decide să clarifice diferenţa dintre *competenţa culturală* şi *competenţa literară*, pornind de la observaţia de bun-simţ a lui Jonathan Culler cum că orice cititor vine spre textul literar cu o sumă de pre-judecăţi, dar şi cu o capacitate implicită de a înţelege operaţiunile discursului literar, capacitate care îi dictează unde să se uite cu mai multă atenţie, ce anume să urmărească într-un text, ce poate trece cu vederea etc. Autorul se poate lansa acum cu dezinvoltura unui profesionist într-o exemplară analiză a romanelor lui Fowles, care dramatizează acest topos al educaţiei, personajele sale fiind adesea plasate în sisteme sau procese de învăţare, de adaptare la noi stimuli culturali, îndeobşte captivi în (de acum) clasicul „triunghi pedagogic". Acest prag odată trecut, autorul trece la următorul pas al strălucitei sale demonstraţii, cel în care cititorul este şi scriitor, fiind în acelaşi timp model instructiv pentru alţii, el însuşi modelându-şi identitatea şi discursul în funcţie de modele anterioare. Înţelegem că aici nu mai este vorba de consumul de cultură inerţial, de recepţie.

Polarizarea clasică a consumului şi producţiei dispare în postmodernitate de vreme ce, în realitate, producţia raţionalizată, expansivă, centralizată, spectaculoasă şi zgomotoasă s-a transformat în „producţia de consum" (Certeau), pusă în mişcare de legile fragmentării şi, mai presus de toate, de legile clandestinităţii căci nu se arată în nici un produs anume, ci în arta de a le utiliza/consuma pe cele deja existente. În cel mai literal sens al cuvântului, ne convinge autorul acestei lucrări, fiind el însuşi convins de acest lucru, consumul este încorporare, îngurgitare, reducere a produselor culturale la

starea de materie fizică. În sens literar, scriitorii sunt şi cititori competenţi, dar şi difuzori de competenţă culturală pentru că, aşa cum notează Walter Benjamin (citat de autor), „un scriitor care nu-i învaţă pe ceilalţi scriitori ceva, nu învaţă nimic pe nimeni". Aceasta este o observaţie fundamentală deoarece şi scrierea textului literar presupune, din această perspectivă, o iniţiere în manipularea unor sisteme date, în cadrul cărora utilizatorii fac transformări multiple, chiar dacă infinitezimale, pentru a le adapta la propriile obiective estetice, dar şi la cerinţele pieţei. În acest caz specific, a avea competenţă culturală înseamnă şi a face o presupunere educată în legătură cu textul şi gradul în care acesta este sau nu saturat din punct de vedere cultural, aşadar redundant informaţional.

Deşi nu apare în mod mai explicit în dezbaterea de faţă, autorul tranşează în subsidiar şi problematica interelaţionării formelor culturale. Deciziile estetice nu au loc, decide autorul, într-un vacuum; ele se iau prin relaţionare negativă cu celelalte obiecte culturale care ar putea fi alese. A afirma o anumită preferinţă, a lua o anumită carte de pe un anumit raft implică utilizarea unei anumite competenţe culturale. Onoriu Colăcel admite faptul că alegerile făcute sunt relaţionate, dar este extrem de discret când e vorba de propriile alegeri în cadrul „genealogiei" literare supuse analizei (de ce el însuşi a ales aceşti autori, de ce aceşti autori îşi aleg modelele, dacă o fac, de pe acelaşi „raft" etc.) Ar fi fost poate interesantă menţinerea sub lupă a unor astfel de detalii deoarece autorul dă dovadă de o competenţă culturală greu de egalat, precum şi de o plăcere irepresibilă de a investiga textul literar. Aceasta se aglutinează de obicei într-un „capital cultural", care, atunci când e investit cum se cuvine, aşa cum se întâmplă şi în cazul lucrării de faţă, este menit a aduce un anumit profit reputaţional şi o reală legitimare socială.

Dincolo de aceste observaţii care nu ţin întotdeauna de substanţa demersului critic avut în vedere, sugerând doar trasee de investigaţie posibilă în acest domeniu al studiilor culturale şi interdisciplinare în care multe aspecte sunt încă necristalizate din punct de vedere conceptual-metodologic, cartea reuşeşte cu prisosinţă să se desprindă de nivelul metateoretic şi să demonstreze practic, prin analiză competentă de text, existenţa unei circularităţi a mişcării dinspre lectură spre utilizarea textelor. Autorul arată că nu există coduri de lectură cărora să nu le corespundă (cel puţin, în principiu) un set de coduri de scriere, că managementul cunoaşterii nu este un dat, ci un proces de achiziţie cognitivă, şi că structurile legitimării estetice, practicile textuale, relaţiile intertextuale pot oferi răspunsuri (e drept, parţiale) cu privire la ce este arta, literatura.

Ceea ce defineşte cu cea mai mare acurateţe cartea de faţă este temeritatea viziunii interdisciplinare, jocul extrem de productiv şi de elegant al abordării constructiviste, precum şi investigarea diversităţii cu deplin

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discernământ. Elocvenţa debordantă a lui Onoriu Colăcel, care aduce aici o contribuţie originală la studiile de anglistică românească, se manifestă în rigoarea, inventivitatea şi liberalismul cu care urmăreşte simultan şi firul demonstraţiei, dar şi satisfacerea interogaţiilor subînţelese lansate cu largheţe în fiecare capitol.

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IV. NOTE DESPRE AUTORI

NOTE DESPRE AUTORI/ NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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