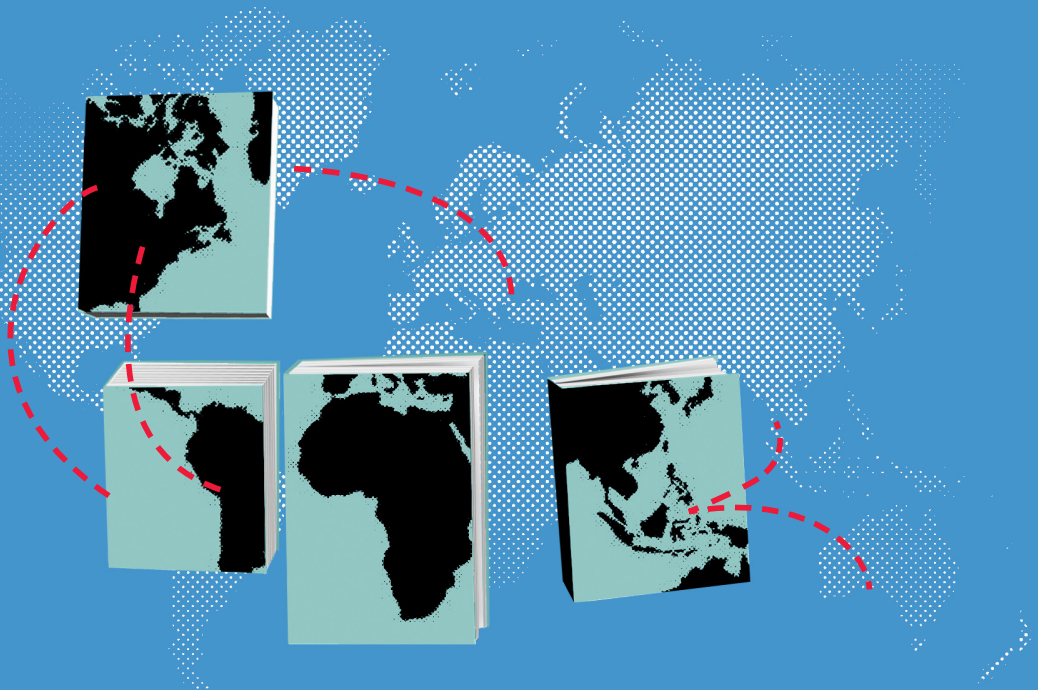


Literature in a globalized context

Carmen González Menéndez,
Daniel Santana Jügler and Daniel Hofferer (eds.)



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11th International Colloquium in Romance and Comparative Literature
(Universities of Brno, Halle and Szeged)

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Preface

Doctoral Programs at Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures / Program of Literatures at the Graduate Academy), Masaryk University Brno (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures) and the University of Szeged (Department of Comparative Literature / Doctoral School of Literatures) have been co-operating since 2000 in the form of regular conferences.

The basic idea was to offer a forum for post-graduate students to speak about their research to other students of the same level and to supervisors from the three universities at conferences organized on a rotating basis. On some occasions, other universities joined or organized conferences: in 2003 Novi Sad, Serbia, in 2009 La Sapienza and Accademia d'Ungheria in Rome were organizers or co-organizers while in 2014 doctoral students from Eötvös Lóránd University, Budapest, came to Szeged and in 2019 we could welcome students from Olomutz beside Halle, Brno and Szeged.

During the past two decades altogether twelve conferences offered up to now possibilities for doctoral students to discuss their topic and publish their findings in international, multilingual volumes or e-books. These meetings were around topics like borders, media, symbols of national cultures, real and imaginary journeys, North vs. South, the canon, texts and media, space and time, literature and globalisation, the strange(x) in literature, art, culture (see the list below). The doctoral students were involved not only by reading papers but also by helping the organizers and co-editing the volumes of selected papers, thus mastering experience in international academic activities.

The eleventh conference of this initiative took place in March 2018 at Stiftung Leucorea in Wittenberg and focused on Literature in a globalized context. We are glad that most of the papers presented in English, Spanish, French, Italian and German on that occasion can be published in the present volume within the electronic publication serial *The Impact of Literature and Language on Culture and Society from the 19th to the 21st Century (Sprache – Literatur – Gesellschaft. Wechselbezüge und Relevanzbeziehungen vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart)* of the program of Literatures at the Graduate Academy of our university.

Our thanks go to all those who facilitated the organization of the meeting, especially to the staff of Stiftung Leucorea, and to those who contributed to make the publication of the papers possible, especially to our constant partners at Masaryk University Brno and the University of Szeged.

Halle, December 2019

Thomas Bremer, Carmen González Menéndez,
Daniel Santana Jügler and Daniel Hofferer

These are the publication data of our volumes:

Thomas Bremer / Katalin Kürtösi (eds.): *Borders, nations, contacts: cultures in Europe and the Americas*. Szeged: Gold Press Nyomda 2003.

Petr Kylvoušek (ed.): *Codifications et symboles des cultures nationales*. Brno: Université Masaryk 2003.

Pavle Sekeruš (ed.): *Littératures et médias*. Novi Sad: Kiša 2003.

Thomas Bremer / Katalin Kürtösi (eds.): *Serta Musarum. Essays in honor of István Fried*. Szeged: Books in Print 2006.

Thomas Bremer / Susanne Schütz (eds.): *Literature in cultural contexts. Rethinking the canon in comparative perspectives. 5th International Conference on Romance and Comparative Literature*. Halle: Martin-Luther-Universität 2009.

Flóra Kovács / Dénes Mátyás / Katalin Kürtösi (eds.): *Contacts and contrasts. North-South, East-West in literature, culture, history*. Szeged: JATE Press 2012.

Petr Vurm (ed.): *Réévaluations: canons littéraires et culturels / Reassessments: literary and cultural canon*. Brno: Masarykova University 2013.

Thomas Bremer / Susanne Schütz (eds.): *Interculturalism and space in literature and media. 8th International Conference on Romance and Comparative Literature*. Halle: Martin-Luther-Universität 2016. Online edition, <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:2-46845> [01.02.2020].

Katalin Kürtösi (ed.): *Text and text – text and picture – text and music*. Szeged: University of Szeged 2016. Online edition, <http://www.complit.u-szeged.hu/szokoz/szovegek/text-and-text/> [01.02.2020].

Jan Radimský / Petr Kylvoušek (eds.): *Espaces. Paysages – espaces mentaux – espaces de la ville. Littérature, linguistique et didactique. XX^e école doctorale de l'Association Gallica et Ecole doctorale de l'Université Halle-Wittenberg, de l'Université de Szeged et de l'Université Masaryk de Brno*. Brno: Université Masaryk 2018.



Peripheral identities

Petr Vurm

Le parvenu congolais de In Koli Jean Bofane à l'heure de la mondialisation

Entre la tradition et la (post)modernité, entre l'humour et l'horreur dans le roman *Congo Inc.*

In Koli Jean Bofane, né en 1954 à Mbandaka en République démocratique du Congo (ex-Zaïre), est un écrivain kino-congolais. Comme la plupart des écrivains de ce pays, In Koli Jean Bofane vit en exil, c'est en 1993 qu'il décide de quitter son Congo natal pour la Belgique. En 1996, il publie *Pourquoi le lion n'est plus le roi des animaux* aux éditions Gallimard Jeunesse, traduit dans plusieurs langues et qui lui vaudra le prix de la critique de la communauté française de Belgique. Mais il aura fallu attendre deux romans écrits sur le tard: *Mathématiques congolaises* en 2008, et surtout *Congo Inc., le testament de Bismarck* en 2014, traduits dans plusieurs langues et couverts de nombreux prix littéraires, pour que In Koli Jean Bofane simpose comme l'enfant terrible de la littérature congolaise. Un style inimitable, cruel et drôle, un torrent de mots dans un français trépidant, traversé d'éclairs de la langue locale lingala, un panorama de personnages bien dépeints et assez nombreux: par exemple, dans *Congo Inc.* un jeune pygmée mondialisé, un ouvrier chinois abandonné, une anthropologue belge, un casque bleu triste et lâche, un seigneur de la guerre chargé des forêts, une jeune fille shégué, enfant des rues, et avant tout la ville, Kinshasa, la métropole congolaise, au cœur battant, en roue libre, où tout est figé, mais où tout est possible; où tout est interdit, mais où tout est permis, comme dans un jeu vidéo qu'il joue et qui symbolise à la fois le côté global du Congo, mais aussi son aspect irréel, virtuel:

Dans cet univers virtuel, Isookanga incarnait Congo Bololo. Il convoitait tout: minerais, pétrole, eau, terres, tout était bon à prendre. C'était un raider, Isookanga, un vorace. [...] Pour atteindre [ses, P.V.] objectifs, il préconisait la guerre et tous ses corollaires: bombardements intensifs, nettoyage ethnique, déplacement de population, esclavage...[sic]¹

Comme l'homme qui la porte, l'écriture d'In Koli Jean Bofane est selon une des critiques:

[...] une savante mixture d'érudition politique, d'ironie cruelle et de plaisir du bon mot. Ainsi, sans jamais verser dans le complètement sérieux et des tentatives d'écrire un document sociologique ou historique, son roman *Congo Inc.* mélange avec verve toutes les thématiques qui racontent, à travers quelques personnages bien sentis, le réel du pays: l'exploitation du sous-sol, les viols à répétition, la folie de Kinshasa, l'inventivité des ‚shégués‘, enfants de la rue, les exactions du pouvoir des pays voisins, les intérêts des grandes puissances, la vie sexuelle des ‚expats‘, les abus des ONG et des agences internationales.²

Il arrive que le rire dans ses romans devienne jaune et cède la place au haut-le-coeur. En particulier, quand intervient le commandant Kiro Bizimungu, dit Kobra Zulu, maître d'œuvre de l'exploitation sanglante de l'est du pays où les habitants, qui ne peuvent ni se terrer ni disparaître, doivent être épouvantés „de telle sorte qu'ils finissent par quitter la terre de leur plein gré“. (C. 110) Bourré d'ironie, de tendresse, de cruauté quand elle s'impose, mais surtout d'audacieuse imagination, ce roman picaresque n'est pas tellement plus délirant que la réalité d'un pays dont la richesse fait l'objet d'enjeux planétaires.

Dans le présent article, nous allons parler brièvement de trois aspects du roman *Congo Inc. Le testament de Bismarck*, qui nous permettrons de cerner de près non seulement la mondialisation omniprésente dans les écrits de cet auteur congolais, mais aussi de le situer par rapport aux autres écrits congolais ou de l'Afrique subsaharienne, diachroniques et synchroniques. Or, nous allons présenter d'abord la République démocratique du Congo, pays plein de paradoxes, en pleine voie de la mondialisation, telle que décrit chez Bofane, deuxièmement, nous allons aborder le conflit entre la tradition et la modernité, telle qu'elle est personnifiée par le personnage principal, et troisièmement, nous essaierons de situer l'écriture de Bofane, comment elle entre en dialogue avec ses prédécesseurs ou ses contemporains, ce qui sera en même temps notre conclusion.

Congo contemporain à l'heure de la mondialisation

Congo Inc. est un roman décapant, d'un humour caustique qui s'ouvre sur un jeune homme, un Rastignac congolais, du nom d'Isookanga, issu de la minorité ethnique Ekonda, sur laquelle tous les autres personnages du roman s'accordent pour porter un regard condescendant. La petite taille du personnage sera pourtant un élément

central de l'intrigue puisqu'elle le conduira à être tour à tour accepté, manipulé, sous-estimé par les autres personnages du roman.

En attendant de réaliser son rêve, celui de vivre enfin au cœur de la mondialisation, Isookanga laisse défiler sur son écran d'ordinateur, qu'il a d'ailleurs volé à une jeune ethnologue de passage, des jeux de guerre et d'exploitation de son propre pays. Il rejette les traditions *batwa* que veut lui inculquer son oncle et imagine déjà la vie qu'il pourrait mener à Kinshasa. Et, il est vrai que la capitale s'apparente bien au lieu mondialisé imaginé par le jeune homme, où l'on croise les acteurs d'un pillage international, mais aussi de nombreux *shégués*, enfants des rues, dont il va se rapprocher jusqu'à devenir leur représentant. Nous allons encore revenir aux *shégués*.

Une des marques globalisantes et fort caractéristiques du chronotope de ce roman, est la fonction de l'espace, le positionnement géographique élargi des personnages. Mbandaka au Nord du Congo, Kinshasa, Kinsangani, New York, Chongkin, Vilnius. Autant de lieux sont parcourus par une multitude de personnages bigarrés. La nationalité déjà de ces personnages témoigne des aspirations mondialisantes de l'auteur: congolaise, belge, chinoise, uruguayenne, lituanienne, rwandaise, américaine ou française. Les scènes du roman sont également variées et les actions multiples. La République démocratique du Congo est naturellement au cœur de cette narration. Que ce soit de la terre à priori sauvage et *préservée* de la grande forêt équatoriale, ou bien la mégapole Kinshasa, ou encore les villages de l'est du pays, espace où règne l'arbitraire des seigneurs de guerre, éléments supplétifs des compagnies multinationales, donc forcément des symboles et des extrêmes du monde globale. Le Congo est dans le livre au centre de la mondialisation, aussi l'intrigue se déroule également dans une ville secondaire mais pourtant tentaculaire de Chine ou à New York. Au-delà de cet éclatement géographique, la réussite du roman de Bofane est dans le travail sur les personnages qui sont, pour la plupart, motivés par des préoccupations obsessionnelles, celle de la réussite au marché et de la montée au pouvoir. Effectivement, regardés sous cette perspective, y a-t-il une différence entre un haut fonctionnaire chinois employant toute sa puissance pour déposséder un individu, un seigneur de guerre congolais qui ignore ce que pitié et contrition signifient, un haut gradé lituanien des casques bleus, corrompu jusqu'à la moelle ou un jeune pygmée dont l'unique ambition est d'exploiter les ressources de son milieu?

Or, la mondialisation telle qu'elle se présente dans le roman est loin d'être innocente. Elle révèle son côté horrifique, celui de la ruée vers les ressources qui amène le malheur au pays et qui date de la célèbre conférence de Berlin de 1885 où le partage et la division de l'Afrique a eu lieu – d'où le sous-titre du livre *Le testament de*

Bismarck, chancelier allemand qui a organisé la conférence. Comme la République démocratique du Congo abonde en matières premières, dont certaines ne sont présentes en grande quantité que dans ce pays: l'or, les diamants, cuivre, cobalt, et le moins connu coltan³. La richesse naturelle qui pourrait être un grand avantage du pays s'il avait un gouvernement démocratique, devient finalement son abomination et sa malédiction presque infernale. La richesse attire au pays les compagnies multinationales, non seulement les Américains et le Français mais à l'heure actuelle surtout les Chinois, qui occupent de plus en plus d'espace en Afrique. La preuve est plus que tangible: on constate la présence de caractères chinois un peu partout en Afrique, ce que le roman suggère par traduction des titres du livre et des chapitres en chinois. C'est sans doute un clin d'œil ironique au lecteur que presque chaque produit à l'heure actuelle est fabriqué en Chine, comment pourrait-on omettre les livres? Bien évidemment, les échanges du commerce mondial paraissent au premier abord anodins, voire stériles du point de vue éthique, voire stériles, mais l'invisible main du marché cause beaucoup de dégâts, écologiques, sociaux et surtout politiques.

Les nombreuses guerres tribales et civiles, qui ont fait de nombreuses victimes, ont un phénomène corollaire. Les milliers des morts au Congo ont laissé derrière un grand nombre d'orphelins, qu'on appelle *shégués* au Congo. Ils sont ainsi décrits de façon collective, leurs corps portent les mêmes stigmates et leurs traits renvoient aux mêmes souffrances: „Leur physique était remarquable. La précarité avait asséché leurs muscles, les rendant aussi durs et noueux que la corde. Il n'y avait pas d'enfants replets parmi eux. Ils vivaient au jour le jour, s'accrochaient à la vie et au bitume avec les griffes, avec les dents.“ (C. 142) Les *shégués* survivent grâce à leur acharnement, à leur instinct de vie quasi sauvage, auquel renvoie le mot *griffes*. Plus loin dans le roman, les *shégués* se révolteront et apparaîtront, à nouveau, comme une totalité dans une mise en scène, digne d'une chorégraphie, qui dénonce la violence de leur condition: „Les enfants gesticulaient et dansaient en mouvements désordonnés, balançant les bras et les jambes dans toutes les directions, les visages agressifs ou au contraire hilares, la bouche grande ouverte, pour mettre en lumière la dérision de ce monde.“ (C. 143)

Tout comme les *shégués*, Isookanga est livré à la rue et à ses trafics, au cœur de cette communauté d'enfants complètement marginalisés et démunis, qui ne se protègent que grâce à leur nombre, le héros du roman découvre l'importance du lien qui permet de se résister au monde extérieur, ici incarné par les adultes. Il fait aussi la connaissance de Zhang Xia, un jeune Chinois, avec lequel il décide de se lancer

dans la mondialisation en vendant de *l'eau-pire* (l'eau pure dans la prononciation locale), eau censée rappeler à ceux qui la boivent la région d'origine d'Isookanga.

Isookanga entre la tradition et l'(hyper)modernité

Passons maintenant au conflit entre la tradition et la modernité, entre la post- ou l'hypermodernité, ce conflit étant étroitement lié à la mondialisation du Congo où le progrès technologique importé a depuis longtemps dépassé le développement politique, social et culturel. Il s'agit d'une réécriture du conflit classique des anciens et de moderne, qui est pourtant encore plus exacerbé en Afrique pour les raisons mentionnées. Ce conflit est posé en tant que thème et motif fondamental dès le début du roman, dans un dialogue grotesque entre Isookanga et son oncle Lomoma, chef de tribu, qui détient des opinions clairement conservatrices. Pour montrer le conflit de la tradition et de la modernité dans son ampleur, nous reproduisons le dialogue tout entier:

Tais-toi, je ne veux pas savoir! Et maintenant tu passes des heures enfermées seul dans ta case, plusieurs fois par semaine, à regarder des ombres sur un écran. Que crois-tu apprendre avec toutes ces choses que tu appelles modernes? Ceux qui parlent de modernité veulent nous éliminer, Isookanga, mon fils. Écoute-moi bien. Matoi elekaka moto te! Regarde cette tour de métal qu'ils ont placée dans la forêt, elle nous tuera tous, un jour. Pendant ce temps, toi, tu fais quoi? Tu y prends plaisir et tu te trouves, en plus, une machine pour communiquer avec cette diablerie! Ces choses sont mauvaises, crois-moi, moi, ton oncle. Et puis, mon fils, je t'en conjure, arrête de dire ce mot, 'putain', à tout moment. Arrête! Tu scandalises les ancêtres! Respecte-nous! Et ce pantalon que tu portes? Pourquoi le porter de cette façon déshonorante? Un Ekonda peut se promener presque nu, mais il prend soin de dissimuler ses fesses devant les gens. Tu oublies d'où on vient? Sans la coutume, crois-tu que cette forêt qui te nourrit existerait encore? Et nous? Crois-tu que nous serions encore là, à craindre pour notre avenir? Et l'avenir, c'est toi, Isookanga. Souviens-toi que, bientôt, tu devras revêtir les habits de chef.

Le vieux continua à déverser des torrents de paroles du même acabit. Isookanga se montra patient et écouta jusqu'au bout mais il ne comptait pas accorder grande importance aux jérémiades du vieil homme dépassé. Dans un premier temps, il

allait reprendre le jeu là où il l'avait laissé, se débarrasser une fois pour toutes de cet intrigant de Kannibal Dawa. Le jeune Ekonda avait encore besoin de pas mal de points pour se mettre à l'abri. La trousse de secours, contenant les armes furtives qu'il avait réussi à accumuler tout au long des sessions de jeu, ne suffisait pas, ses adversaires étaient redoutables. Il ne savait pas ce que manigançait ce rapace d'American Diggers. Skulls and Bones, Uranium et Sécurité, Goldberg & Girls Atomic Project, tous l'attendaient au tournant, il le savait, mais Congo Bololo n'avait pas dit son dernier mot, il allait les pulvériser un à un, méthodiquement. Après cela, il allait réfléchir aux choses mises en place pour partir à Kinshasa, là où, au moins, on parlait de réseau et d'absence de réseau, de clés USB, d'interfaces compatibles. Là où, au moins, les ombres virtuelles ne faisaient pas peur aux vieillards frileux et rétrogrades qui pouvaient empêcher un jeune homme sérieux d'avancer dans la vie comme il se doit. (C. 14)

Or, Isookanga représente un parvenu congolais postmoderne reposant sur un modèle littéraire européen, même si géographiquement originaire de la forêt équatoriale: c'est un pygmée qui avec son ordinateur portable, veut mondialiser et devenir mondialiste à la fois, c'est un mondialisateur selon les mots de l'auteur même. En devenant mondialisateur, Isookanga veut avant tout quitter les traditions incarnées par l'obscurantisme de la forêt, il veut s'insérer dans le *mainstream*, entrer dans l'échange et surtout communiquer avec le monde. Le monde de l'hypermodernité est représenté avant tout par Internet et par les réseaux sociaux. C'est Internet qui montre la voie à suivre au protagoniste et qui lui offre la vie convoitée. Cependant, cette vie ne se joue pas dans la forêt équatoriale mais dans la capitale de son Congo natal. „Vous êtes dans la mondialisation, vous aussi?“ (C. 203) demande Isookanga, l'air de rien, au Chinois Zhang Xia, vendeur ambulancier de sachets d'eau potable dite *eau pire*. Et de lui vanter alors les vertus du marketing au goût de l'ailleurs: pourquoi ne pas vendre l'eau plus cher en lui inventant une provenance suisse? Naissance de la marque *L'eau pire suisse*, succès garanti dans les rues de Kinshasa.

Ce projet commercial témoigne d'un autre aspect de l'hypermodernité, à savoir son caractère liquide, volatile, instable, pour faire une référence à Zygmunt Bauman⁴: cela concerne non seulement l'argent et sa volatilité, mais aussi le mode *hyperfacile* de déplacement des informations, des capitaux et des entreprises. Par cette critique sociale et politique acerbe, caustique, quoique souvent sous-entendue et occultée par l'humour décuplant de l'auteur, Bofane dénonce la violence, qui est devenue le quo-

tidien du peuple congolais. Il montre combien il est dangereux pour un pays de passer de l'état tribal, primitif, à la mondialisation postmoderne ou hypermoderne, en sautant complètement la modernisation et l'évolution lente de toute technologie au sens général, et surtout en excluant la majorité de la population locale des avantages de celle-ci.

Bofane auteur contemporain de la migritude africaine mondiale

Essayons, en guise de conclusion, dans la troisième partie de cet article de situer In Koli Jean Bofane dans le contexte de la littérature francophone de l'Afrique subsaharienne contemporaine.

Précisons d'abord que Bofane, par son écriture moderne, parfois hypermoderne, s'inscrit dans la littérature francophone subsaharienne actuelle, en renouant avec ce qui représente désormais le canon de celle-ci mais bien sûr en l'actualisant et en rendant compte du contexte tout à fait différent de l'Afrique d'aujourd'hui, continent assez différent de celui de la période coloniale et de la période des indépendances récentes. Par son écriture, l'auteur prend ses distances par rapport aux courants et tendances précédents. Premièrement par rapport à la Négritude, mouvement collectif et identitaire de l'homme noir, caractéristique par une écriture engagée, souvent politique ou politisée, dont l'un des objectifs était de gagner l'indépendance des pays colonisés. En même temps, l'écriture bofanienne se délimite par rapport aux textes des indépendances, dont le but était très souvent d'exprimer les désenchantements amers qu'ont apportés les régimes des indépendances récentes: celles-ci étant perçues comme un beau rêve qui aurait tourné au cauchemar. Car, après les indépendances, les inégalités se sont souvent exacerbées: il y a des noirs au pouvoir et des noirs munis du pouvoir, voire persécutés par le pouvoir, en d'autres mots, après la scission homme blanc/homme noir, il y a le dictateur noir contre le peuple noir. Cette période historique, représentée par des grands auteurs négro-africains tels que Sony Labou Tansi, Henri Lopès ou Alioume Fantouré, semble déjà dépassée et classique, au moins du point de vue littéraire.

Or, comme on peut le voir à l'exemple de Bofane, les écritures francophones contemporaines traduisent une image très bigarrée, éclatée de l'Afrique, à tel point qu'il s'avère désormais difficile de parler d'un courant à la manière de la Négritude des années 1930 et 1940. Le but de l'écrivain d'aujourd'hui est la survie économique sur le marché global et sa reconnaissance lectoriale, surtout en France, en Belgique

ou au Canada. Dans l'Afrique que les jeunes auteurs africains dépeignent, c'est désormais une lutte des noirs globalisés contre des noirs locaux, démunis, qui n'ont aucune possibilité de s'ouvrir au monde et d'en profiter.

D'ailleurs, il est symptomatique que Bofane aurait pu choisir de publier un roman tragique ou dramatique, plutôt, il a choisi un roman comique, qui frise souvent la farce. Effectivement, selon ses propres mots, il a choisi la comédie: „la vie est une vaste comédie. Quelqu'un qui veut supprimer des millions de personnes, pendant la Shoah, au Rwanda, c'est absurde. J'en ris, c'est trop. Pleurer, pleurer, pleurer, oui d'accord mais j'en ris. C'est trop. J'ai pleuré, en pleurant j'espère avoir une réponse à mes questions. Mais je n'en ai pas.“⁵ En riant, nous nous posons des questions, des bonnes questions. Grâce au rire, Bofane semble renouer en partie et malgré ce qui a été dit, avec la poétique établie par le roman de Henri Lopès *Pleurer-rire* et de l'écriture tropicale de *La vie et demie* de Sony Labou Tansi sur la mauvaise gestion du pouvoir par les dictateurs, qui réfléchissent l'état triste de l'Afrique sur lequel il devient impossible de pleurer constamment, il faut en rire d'un rire parfois amer, parfois fou. A la différence de beaucoup ses prédécesseurs, Bofane se permet donc de jouer avec les représentations établies, les stéréotypes et surtout les préjugés par rapport à l'Afrique. Comme nous l'avons déjà dit, son écriture est ludique et légère, même si elle parle des choses graves. Ce faisant, Bofane entame un dialogue significatif avec ses prédécesseurs déjà classiques de la région, comme Senghor, Kourouma, Labou Tansi, Henri Lopès, sans les imiter ou sans être d'accord avec leur écriture. Cependant, il s'inscrit déjà de façon significative parmi les auteurs de sa génération, pour la plupart migrants, du *courant* libre de la migritude⁶, établis à Paris, Montréal, Bruxelles, Genève, voire à Los Angeles. Son œuvre est parcourue de clins d'oeils intertextuels. Pour ne donner qu'un seul exemple, mentionnons un dialogue presque satirique qu'il engage avec son célèbre concurrent et contemporain littéraire, Alain Mabanckou, originaire lui-même du Congo-Brazzaville:

Les odeurs d'aisselles qui la cernaient commençaient à lui faire tourner la tête comme des phéromones. Les femmes présentes lui montrèrent l'exemple en frottant de façon répétée leurs croupes et leurs pubis sur des sexes durs, ne semblant pas impressionnées; on se serait cru dans un roman de Mabanckou. (C. 181)

Nous voyons, à travers cet exemple intertextuel et surtout à travers nos analyses précédentes, que Bofane représente un auteur pleinement intégré à l'écriture de

l'Afrique subsaharienne. Son écriture est moderne est à plusieurs titres universelles, quoique décrivant des réalités africaines et congolaise. Cette écriture se présente bien accessible pour un lecteur belge, congolais, français, québécois, mais aussi américain, allemand, russe ou tchèque.

Notes

- 1 Bofane, In Koli Jean: *Congo Inc. Le testament de Bismarck*. Arles 2016, p. 15. En suivant cité directement comme: C. numéro de page.
- 2 Nicolas Michel: RDC: *In Koli Jean Bofane. Le satyricongolais*. www.jeuneafrique.com/133814/culture/rdc-in-koli-jean-bofane-le-satyricongolais/ [01.02.2020].
- 3 Coltan – colombite-tantalite, qui est un minéral stratégique pour la production de pièces et d'appareils électroniques, comme les condensateurs qui servent à la fabrication des portables, des tablettes des ordinateurs, et ainsi de suite.
- 4 Bauman, Zygmunt: *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge 2000.
- 5 Jean-Christophe Laurence: *In Koli Jean Bofane: défier la mort*. www.lapresse.ca/arts/livres/entrevues/201605/09/01-4979682-in-koli-jean-bofane-defier-la-mort.php [01.02.2020].
- 6 Voir: Christiane Albert: *L'immigration dans le roman francophone contemporain*. Paris 2005; Sophie Lavigne: *De la négritude à la migrétude: une analyse sociologique de la littérature de l'Afrique francophone*. Montréal 2011; Carmen Husti-Laboye: *La diaspora postcoloniale en France différence et diversité*. Limoges 2010.



Stefano Apostolo

Représentations de la minorité cimbre dans l'œuvre de Mario Rigoni Stern

En Italie, le nom de Mario Rigoni Stern évoque avant tout ses livres sur l'expérience italienne en Russie et plus particulièrement *Il sergente nella neve* (*Le Sergent dans la neige*): un roman à forte teneur autobiographique que Rigoni Stern a publié en 1953, exactement dix ans après les événements narrés. Ce livre raconte très clairement les horreurs de la guerre, la vie dans les tranchées, la faim, le mal du pays, la retraite dans le gel de l'hiver russe, la peur et la mort. Dans une telle situation de désolation où tout espoir semble avoir disparu, il est étonnant de voir le protagoniste, le sergent Rigoni, trouver le courage et la force pour survivre et continuer de soutenir ses camarades. Ses souvenirs et sa mémoire semblent lui donner la force nécessaire pour y parvenir. Pendant toute la narration, les scènes de guerre et de vie de soldat sont tressées avec des scènes de la vie quotidienne rurale dans les champs et dans les montagnes de sa terre natale:

Quando sono pronto per uscire la donna mi porge una tazza di latte caldo. Latte come quello che si beve nelle malghe all'estate; o che si mangia con la polenta nelle sere di gennaio. Non gallette e scatolette [...]. Latte. E questa non è più naia in Russia, ma vacche odorose di latte, pascoli in fiore tra boschi d'abete, cucine calde nelle sere di gennaio quando le donne fanno la calza e i vecchi fumano la pipa e raccontano.¹

Dans ce roman, les souvenirs représentent un soulagement et une aide contre la réalité. Ils ont le pouvoir de transporter le sergent Rigoni dans une autre dimension, de lui faire oublier pour quelques instants le danger de sa situation. À la vue d'un groupe de maisons isolées avec leurs cheminées fumantes, il se perd à nouveau dans un rêve, où les éléments de la steppe sont mélangés avec ceux de chez lui:

Voglio anch'io andare in quel caldo, e poi si scioglierà la neve, le betulle si faranno verdi e ascolterò la terra germogliare. Andrò nella steppa con le vacche, e alla sera, fumando macorka, ascolterò cantare le quaglie nel campo di grano.

D'autunno taglierò a fette le mele e le pere per fare sciroppi e aggiusterò le cinghie dei cavalli e degli aratri e diventerò vecchio senza che mai ci sia stata la guerra.²

Ces lignes sont imprégnées d'une nostalgie très forte pour l'enfance de l'auteur, d'un temps vécu sur le haut plateau d'Asiago – un endroit particulier (l'endroit le plus froid d'Italie, avec des pointes de -30° C en hiver), habité par une population particulière: les descendants des Cimbres.

A la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale, l'Italie a gagné une nouvelle région qui est ensuite devenue autonome dans la deuxième moitié du siècle: le Trentin-Haut-Adige. Dans le nord de cette région, on parle un dialecte tyrolien. Un autre dialecte d'origine allemande mais bien différent du tyrolien était parlé jusqu'au 19^{ème} siècle dans les montagnes à la frontière entre le Trentin et la Vénétie et tout particulièrement sur le haut-plateau d'Asiago. Il s'agit du cimbre, un dialecte qui a intégré au cours des siècles des éléments linguistiques italiens et surtout vénitiens. Cet idiome est lentement en train de disparaître (aujourd'hui ces sont surtout les personnes plus âgées qui sont encore capables de le parler) et il n'existe malheureusement pas beaucoup de sources écrites – les deux principales sont le catéchisme en cimbre, *Dar kloane Catechismo*, publié en 1813 et 1842,³ et le *Cimbrisches Wörterbuch* de J.A. Schmelzer, réalisé en 1851 mais publié en 1855.⁴ On parle aussi le cimbre au nord de Vérone (dans les 13 communes) et dans une vallée au sud-est du Trentin (surtout dans le village de Luserna). Il est important de faire une distinction avec un autre ilot linguistique du Trentin, la *valle dei Mòcheni* (Fersental), où on parle également un idiome d'origine allemande, le Mochène, qui est toutefois très différent du cimbre.⁵

Pendant des siècles, l'énigme de la provenance de cette population a intéressé linguistes et historiens: dans le 19^{ème} siècle, des théories selon lesquelles cette population descendrait directement des Lombards ou des Cimbres du Jutland⁶ étaient très répandues.⁷ Ces théories furent reprises dans la première moitié du 20^{ème} siècle par Bruno Schweizer.⁸ Aujourd'hui, les experts sont d'avis qu'il s'agirait de descendants des Bavaois qui auraient migrés vers le sud dans le Moyen-Âge.⁹

Quelle que soit la provenance de cette culture, la population cimbre avec sa langue, ses us et coutumes, ses traditions liées à la vie quotidienne et à la religion, constituent le noyau central des livres de Rigoni Stern, qui était lui-même de descendance cimbre et en connaissait donc très bien les spécificités. Sa production littéraire constitue une redécouverte de ce patrimoine culturel. Ses récits sont pleins de des-

criptions très détaillées de la vie rurale du haut plateau d'Asiago. Avant d'être écrivain, l'auteur se caractérise avant tout comme un habitant du haut plateau, un membre de la communauté cimbre et un paysan en perpétuel contact avec la nature.¹⁰ Il se définit lui-même comme un simple narrateur d'histoires vécues et non comme un romancier:

Io comunque non sono un romanziere, solo un narratore. Il narratore prende le cose dalla vita, da quello che ha visto o sentito raccontare. Uno che prende lo spunto dall'esterno. Il romanziere crea la storia dentro di sé. È uno che inventa, ma la sua storia può anche essere ugualmente vera, perché è la verità di una creazione.¹¹

Triptyque cimbre

Avec *La trilogia dell'altipiano* (*Trilogie du haut plateau*), Rigoni Stern a voulu ériger un monument à son peuple en le représentant dans trois phases historiques très précises. Le premier livre, *Storia di Tönle* (*Histoire de Tönle*), s'occupe des années entre le 1866 et la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale. Tönle est contrebandier, il a vécu toute sa vie entre deux cultures, l'italienne et l'autrichienne, et a travaillé dans toutes les terres de l'empereur Franz Josef jusqu'en 1866, quand la Vénétie a été annexée au nouveau Royaume d'Italie. Il se retrouve alors confiné sur le côté italien, dans l'impossibilité de continuer son travail. Cette démarcation politique signe un moment très important pour la vie de cette population de langue germanique: le nouvel Etat ne se montre pas intéressé à la préservation de la culture cimbre, qui devient de plus en plus isolée jusqu'au début de la Grande Guerre. Asiago et les petits villages tout autour se retrouvent sur la ligne de feu des Italiens et des Autrichiens et sont complètement détruits par les bombardements. Pour la population cimbre, c'est la fin d'une époque, laquelle coïncide avec la mort de Tönle, un des plus vieux habitants du haut plateau. En incarnant toutes les traditions de son peuple, sa langue, ses us et coutumes, Tönle semble devenir une projection de Rigoni Stern.

Le deuxième livre, *L'anno della vittoria* (*L'Année de la victoire*) montre la situation des réfugiés, des habitants qui ont dû quitter le haut plateau pour fuir la guerre. Après deux ans passés dans la misère, parfois méprisés par les autres Italiens à cause de leur dialecte ressemblant à la langue des Autrichiens, les familles cimbres rentrent peu à peu dans leur région et retrouvent les maisons ravagées. Le titre de ce livre est

chargé d'ambivalence et de cynisme: au sortir de la guerre, il n'y a de victoire ni pour les cimbres, ni pour aucun autre peuple italien ou européen. Et pourtant la vie continue, doit continuer. C'est là que réside la vraie victoire évoquée par le titre, la victoire de la vie sur la mort, de la nature qui continue son cours malgré les destructions amenées par la guerre.¹²

Le troisième livre, *Le stagioni di Giacomo (Les Saisons de Giacomo)*, fait un saut temporel de quelques années: on se retrouve en 1928, en pleine époque fasciste. Le jeune Giacomo vit dans son village désormais reconstruit. A cette époque, la morphologie du haut plateau change sans cesse – Asiago a vu la construction d'un aéroport et d'un imposant monument dédié aux morts italiens pendant la Grande Guerre. Et pourtant, le passé ne peut pas s'effacer, il reste toujours là, en silence sous la terre. Le lien entre passé et présent est symbolisé par un des travaux que les habitants font pour survivre: c'est le travail du *recuperante*, celui qui récupère, qui creuse dans la terre et en sort les restes de fortifications militaires, d'armes et de vêtements de soldats pour les revendre.

La *Trilogia dell'altipiano* montre trois voix de trois générations qui se succèdent et deviennent toujours plus étrangères à leur propre terre. Elle est un hommage aux origines: „considero la trilogia formata dalla *Storia di Tönle*, *L'anno della vittoria*, *Le stagioni di Giacomo* un omaggio alla mia gente e alla mia terra; settant'anni di storia vissuta da tre generazioni.“¹³ Le haut plateau devient alors un chronotope, un lieu physique et temporel possédant une importance particulière pour l'auteur, un conglomérat intense de sensations, de souvenirs personnels et de lieux qui ressort des pages de ses livres.¹⁴

La trilogie retrace les changements graduels – et non la fin – d'une société avec une structure propre et une identité culturelle et linguistique bien définie. Le système culturel du haut plateau décrit par Rigoni Stern sert de trait d'union entre les cultures autrichienne et italienne. Une hybridation à travers les siècles était de par son emplacement géographique inévitable. Selon la théorie de Homi Bhabha, les Cimbres se situent dans le tiers-espace (*third space*): il existe des traits communs avec les deux cultures voisines, mais l'identité construite dans le tiers-espace est propre à sa population. Les protagonistes de Rigoni Stern sont bien conscients de cette particularité, en premier lieu les ermites vivant dans les bois et refusant tout rapprochement au monde nouveau qui sort des cendres de la Grande Guerre. Un exemple pour ce genre d'attitude se trouve dans *Storia di Tönle*, lorsque le vieux protagoniste, emprisonné par les Autrichiens, refuse d'être assimilé aux uns ou aux autres:

- Perché parlate così bene il tedesco?
- [...] Ho fatto il soldato in Boemia, e poi ho lavorato per tutte le terre dove comanda l'imperatore Francesco Giuseppe.
- Chi era il vostro comandante in Boemia?
- Il maggiore Fabini.
- Il feldmaresciallo von Fabini, volete forse dire. Ma allora siete un suddito fedele – disse il maggiore con un certo entusiasmo.
- No, – rispose. – Sono soltanto un piccolo pastore e un vecchio proletario socialista.
- Allora siete una spia degli italiani e siete rimasto qui per questo!
- Al diavolo voi e gli italiani. Lasciatemi andare per i fatti miei.¹⁵

Ronnie Ferguson définit également le haut plateau comme un endroit d'ouverture où plusieurs cultures se rencontrent. Il voit dans la *Storia di Tönle* e *Le stagioni di Giacomo* une critique claire à la tentative de centralisation de l'Etat italien du Risorgimento jusqu'au Fascisme:

Far from representing closure of horizons, such rootedness constitutes for Rigoni Stern the precondition for opening towards, and tolerance of, other cultures. The Altipiano was to emerge in his writing not as a closed world but as a frontier community straddling different cultures and languages. Its very existence and persistence, awkward in the context of the irredentist certainties of post-unification and Fascist Italy based on clear-cut frontiers and homogeneous 'national' cultures, would make it a symbol of Rigoni Stern's questioning of (Italian) national identity.¹⁶

L'identité cimbrique influencée et nourrie par les deux cultures voisines a pendant la guerre presque été décimée par ces dernières. Elle est aujourd'hui en voie de disparition: la Première Guerre mondiale a détruit les villages avec leur architecture centenaire et a forcé des familles entières vers l'exil; peu de temps après, le fascisme a imposé une italianisation du haut plateau, et enfin, après la dernière guerre, l'émigration économique a contribué à vider la région. La langue devient alors le symbole le plus fort de l'identité cimbrique, comme remarqué aussi par Sergio di Benedetto:

In quest'ottica assume rilievo la salvaguardia dell'antica parlata dell'Altipiano, il cimbro, ulteriore elemento costitutivo dell'*Heimat* asiaghese. Essa è impiegata nella *Trilogia* soprattutto per indicare i caratteri delle tradizioni locali (ad esempio per descrivere i riti del Natale) o per le indicazioni topografiche. Si tratta di un fattore detonante delle radici comuni, che rivela il legame tra spazio, storia e comunità.¹⁷

Aujourd'hui, dans le haut plateau, il n'y a presque plus personne capable de parler cette langue qui survit uniquement dans quelques expressions d'usage quotidien et dans la toponomastique. Le haut plateau d'Asiago n'est plus un îlot linguistique, tout au plus un îlot culturel qui est maintenu grâce à une coopération efficace entre les communes d'origine cimbre dans les provinces de Vicenza, Verona et Trento.¹⁸ L'importance des livres de Rigoni Stern est à comprendre dans ce contexte de préservation culturelle: ils contribuent à garantir une existence à cette minorité et à lui donner une forme de tradition littéraire pour le futur. Ils sont une référence pour les générations plus jeunes car ils marquent une forte prise de conscience et ont le pouvoir de montrer un passé peu connu. Ils racontent la nature épique des petites choses, des destins individuels qui, dans des époques différentes, se sont mélangés à la grande histoire.

Dans ses trois livres, Rigoni Stern utilise des mots en cimbre, surtout dans les toponymes (Klama, Luka, Petareitele, Bald, Grabo, Stinkar, Prunnele, Moor, Kranzenarecche) et les noms des personnages (T'önle Bintarn, Stern, Matio, Nin Sech, Crist Schenal, Mosè Tripp, Tana, Titta Müller, Tin Squinz). Ces noms n'ont aucun lien avec l'italien et ont une sonorité très allemande. Les personnages chantent des vieux chants traditionnels dont la traduction italienne est parfois également insérée dans le texte, comme avec cette chanson liturgique dans *L'anno della vittoria*:

Bear ist auf gastannet
In z'martarn so zorgannet?
Alle-Alleluia
Dar Crist von allar Klage
Stann auf imm'Osterntaghe
Alle-Alleluia
... Da Kammen au drai Vraughen
Un bolten z'grab auf schiaughen
Alle-Alleluia ...¹⁹

Chi è risorto
Dalla morte e dal dolore?
Alle-Alleluia
Cristo senza lamenti
Risorge il giorno di Pasqua
Alle-Alleluia
... Sono arrivate tre donne
Per vedere il sepolcro di Cristo
Alle-Alleluia ...

Ou comme avec cette chanson populaire dans *Storia di Tönle*:

Scella, scella mearzo,
snea dehin,
gras dehear
alle de dillen lear.
Az der kucko kuck
pluut der balt;
ber lange lebet
sterbet alt!²⁰

Suona, suona marzo,
Via la neve,
Qua l'erba
Tutti i fienili sono vuoti.
Quando il cuculo canta [sic]
Fiorisce il bosco;
Chi vive a lungo
Muore vecchio!

La ressemblance avec l'allemand moderne est ici très claire:

Scella, scella mearzo,
snea dehin,
gras dehear
alle de dillen lear.
Az der kucko kuck
pluut der balt;
ber lange lebet
sterbet alt!

Schalle, schalle März,
Schnee dahin,
Gras daher
alle die Dielen leer.
Als der Kuckuck guckt
blüht der Wald;
wer lange lebt
stirbt alt!²¹

D'autre fois par contre, l'auteur préfère utiliser des mots sans traduction, en donnant ainsi au texte une touche exotique, comme dans le passage suivant, où les „leberbust“ sont à traduire comme „Leberwürste“, mot qui manque dans la langue et culture italienne: „C'è della polenta e latte della Bionda. Ma anche leberbust freschi. Abbiamo fatto il maiale la settimana scorsa“²² La scène suivante montre également une situation de plurilinguisme dans le quotidien de Mario. Il joue avec les autres enfants dans la Grebele (mot cimbrique pour „Grube“, carrière) au jeu du „alt messen“ (arrête toi et mesure) avec des „steiner“, des petits cailloux à lancer:

Gli amici Nino e Mario avevano promesso a Giacomo che nel primo giorno di vacanza sarebbero andati insieme nella piccola cava [...] dove si poteva trovare quel marmo rosa [...]. Volevano raccoglierne alcuni pezzetti per farsi le quattro

palline necessarie al gioco dell'*alt messen*. Si può tradurre in: ,tira, fermati e misura'. [...] a memoria tutti ci si recava lì per cercare le *steiner* da far palline. [...] Quel pomeriggio andarono nella Grebele del marmo.²³

Le poète Andrea Zanzotto – lui-même vénitien de la province de Treviso – affirme que cette langue cimbre est „ripalpata“ de temps en temps dans les œuvres de Rigoni Stern comme un souvenir qui sort des ombres, comme une „vera traccia di un ,noi' comunitario e insieme molecolare tintinno paradisiaco, di un'infanzia che, anche se dolorosa, è come la perpetua infanzia di tutti.“²⁴

L'écho du haut plateau dans la littérature américaine

Un autre auteur bien plus célèbre que Rigoni Stern a trouvé un sens profond dans cette région, surtout dans sa condition de terre de frontière. Il s'agit d'Ernest Hemingway, qui était conducteur d'ambulance sur le front austro-italien pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. Après une période de stationnement à Milan, il fut envoyé sur le haut plateau d'Asiago où il pouvait mieux observer les combats. Suite à une blessure aux jambes, il fut ensuite ramené à Milan. Il décida, une fois la guerre terminée, de rendre un hommage littéraire à cette région. Les romans *A farewell to the arms* et surtout *Across the River and into the Trees* retracent l'expérience traumatique de la guerre sur le haut plateau et offrent ainsi une autre perspective qui complète les textes de Rigoni Stern. Quelques années après la guerre, Hemingway a également écrit un poème très court et peu connu, qui trace en huit vers une ébauche de la région:

Arsiero, Asiago,
 Half a hundred more,
 Little border villages,
 Back before the war,
 Monte Grappa, Monte Corno,
 Twice a dozen such,
 In the piping times of peace
 Didn't come to much.²⁵

Ces villages n'ont certainement jamais eu une grande importance dans l'histoire, ils „didn't come to much“. Et pourtant ces vers évoquent la paix qui régnait sur le haut plateau lorsque la vie des villages était encore intacte, presque idéale, loin des ravages de la guerre qui les a changés pour toujours.

Notes

- ¹ Mario Rigoni Stern, *Il sergente nella neve. Ritorno sul Don*. Turin 2014, p. 70.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- ³ Robertus Bellarmimus: *Dar kelane Catechismo vor z'Beloseland vortrágchet in z'gápřečt von siben Kamëün un a niar halghe gasang* [1812]. Padoue 1842.
- ⁴ Johann Andreas Schmeller: *Cimbrisches Wörterbuch*. En: *Sitzungsberichte der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*. Philosophisch-historische Classe 15 [Volume 2], Vienne 1855, p. 163–274.
- ⁵ C'est dans cette vallée que Robert Musil met en scène l'expédition à la recherche de l'or narrée dans *Grigia*. On y trouve beaucoup de réflexions sur le langage curieux de cet endroit.
- ⁶ Après la Deuxième Guerre d'indépendance italienne, en 1859, lorsque l'Autriche fut vaincue par France et le Piémont dut renoncer à la Lombardie, des détachements autrichiens furent envoyés dans les montagnes au nord de Vérone pour débusquer les déserteurs de leurs propres régiments italiens. Par hasard, pendant une recherche parallèle, j'ai trouvé une lettre du jeune officier autrichien Otto Vogeler (petit-neveu du général Karl von Schönhals, adjudant de Radetzky) à son frère. Il lui parle du village de Giazza, une des 13 Communes: „Meine Compagnie kam auf den nördlichsten Punkt unserer Aufstellung nach Giazza, einem kleinen Ort von himmelanstrebenden Bergriesen umgeben, und mit einer Bevölkerung, noch aus den Zeiten der Cimbern und Teutonen stammend, welche sich ihre eigene Sprache, der deutschen sehr ähnlich, bis jetzt erhalten haben“ (Österreichisches Kriegsarchiv, Nachlass Karl Ritter von Schönhals AT-OeStA/KA NL 793 (B)).
- ⁷ L'auteur lui-même trouvait l'idée d'un lien avec la culture nordique intéressante. Voir: *Segni lontani*, in Mario Rigoni Stern: *Sentieri sotto la neve*. Turin 1998.
- ⁸ Bruno Schweizer: *Die Herkunft der Zimbern*. En: *Jahrbuch für vergleichende Volkskunde*. „Die Nachbarn“. Publié par Will Erich Peuckert. Göttingen 1948, p. 111–129.
- ⁹ En 2008 la IOWA State University a proposé à nouveau une thèse qui verrait les Cimbres de l'Italie du nord descendre plutôt de populations gotiques. Voir: Bruno Schweizer, *Zimbrische Gesamtgrammatik. Vergleichende Darstellung der zimbrischen Dialekte*. Stuttgart 2008. Pour l'histoire et la culture du haut plateau, la source la plus fiable sont les Quaderni di cultura cimbra, publiés par „Istituto di Cultura Cimbra“ et la Regione Veneto.
- ¹⁰ Carlo Sgorlon a peut-être donné la meilleure définition de l'écrivain Rigoni Stern: „[...] sobrio poeta della civiltà alpina. La sua voce pare venire un po' da lontano perché la civiltà che egli rappresenta è fuori mano, silenziosa, sobria, discreta ... Rigoni Stern è il poeta, il cronista, l'antropologo, lo zoologo, l'etologo, l'entomologo, il botanico di questa civiltà“ (cité pour: Ronnie Ferguson: *National Identity in the Novels of Rigoni Stern*. En: *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 38 (2002) [Volume 2], p. 161).
- ¹¹ Mario Rigoni Stern: *Il coraggio di dire no. Conversazioni e interviste 1963–2007*. Turin 2013, p. 9.

- ¹² Rigoni Stern a écrit en 1997 à propos de ce livre: „[...] non è la vittoria militare sull'esercito nemico sconfitto che, risale in disordine e senza speranza le valli che aveva disceso con orgogliosa sicurezza, ma della vita sulla morte, del lavoro sulla distruzione“ (Mario Rigoni Stern: *Come e perché è nato questo libro, préface de Le stagioni di Giacomo*. En: Mario Rigoni Stern: *Trilogia dell'altipiano*. Turin 2015, p. 376.)
- ¹³ Stern, *Il coraggio di dire no* (voir note 11), p. 83.
- ¹⁴ Claude Ambroise a bien exploré le concept de chronotope dans la poétique de Rigoni in Claude Ambroise: *Une écriture chronotopique. Note sur l'œuvre de Mario Rigoni Stern*. En: *La frontière par temps de guerre. Le chronotope de la frontière austro-italienne ou italo-slave dans les récits relatifs aux deux guerres mondiales*. Cahiers du Cercic 19 (1995), p. 15–23.
- ¹⁵ Mario Rigoni Stern, *Storia di Tönle*, In: *Trilogia dell'altipiano*. Turin 2015, p. 68.
- ¹⁶ Ronnie Ferguson, *National Identity* (voir note 10), p. 161.
- ¹⁷ Sergio di Benedetto: *Guerra vs comunità. La trilogia dell'altipiano di Mario Rigoni Stern*. En: *ACME* (2016), Volume 1, p. 185.
- ¹⁸ Il y a à Roana (VI), Giazza (VR) et Luserna (TN) des centres pour la diffusion de la langue et culture cimbre. A signaler également: le portal cimbre de Wikipedia. Wikipedia: *Portal: Cimbre*. <https://bar.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Portal:Zimbrisch&oldid=654315> [01.02.2020]
- ¹⁹ Mario Rigoni Stern, *L'anno della vittoria*. In: *Trilogia dell'altipiano*. Turin 2015, p. 158, omission à l'original.
- ²⁰ Mario Rigoni Stern, *Storia di Tönle*. En: Stern; *Trilogia dell'altipiano* (voir note 19), p. 23. En allemand „gucken“ ne signifie pas „chanter“ mais „regarder“. C'est probablement une référence au fait que traditionnellement dans le pendule à coucou (allemand: Kuckucksuhr) l'oiseau pour chanter sort et donc regarde dehors.
- ²¹ Traduction de Stefano Apostolo.
- ²² Mario Rigoni Stern, *Le stagioni di Giacomo*. En: Stern, *Trilogia dell'altipiano* (voir note 19), p. 267.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 280.
- ²⁴ Andrea Zanzotto: *Da quella neve lontana il fuoco di Rigoni Stern*. En: *Nuova rivista europea* 18 (1980) [4], p. 91.
- ²⁵ Ernest Hemingway: *Complete Poems*. London 1992, p. 49.



La notion de l'exil dans *La Québécoite*

Roman montréalais de Régine Robin

La littérature québécoise a été influencée par une immigration massive notamment lors du XX^e siècle, dont l'empreinte repose sur une mixité inédite des influences issues d'une variation des cultures d'origine qui se croisent dans les alentours du Mont Royal. Le passé de Régine Robin qui est d'origine juive polonaise, ayant vécu son enfance et sa jeunesse en France et étant enfin venue s'installer à Montréal, va ensemble avec le fond de l'hétérogénéité de la société québécoise. La variété du parcours personnel de Régine Robin se reflète dans son roman *La Québécoite*¹ qui contient un large éventail de références à la judéité, aux spécificités québécoises et à l'histoire canadienne ainsi qu'à la situation des immigrants s'étant installés, de même que l'auteure, à Montréal. La judéité et la représentation de l'exil est un vaste sujet que nous ne pourrions pas traiter de manière plus détaillée, maintenant. En tous cas, la notion de l'exil dans la création littéraire contemporaine donc celle de Régine Robin y comprise, a été anticipée par d'autres auteurs dont notamment Réjean Ducharme comme l'a démontré Petr Vurm dans *La création et la créativité de Réjean Ducharme. Une redéfinition du roman québécois*.² Pour revenir au texte de Régine Robin, *La Québécoite* est un roman composé de nombreux fragments qui créent une sorte de mosaïque de souvenirs, d'impressions, d'images détaillées des rues montréalaises et parisiennes, des descriptions des intérieurs, des goûts, des odeurs et des sons. La ville de Montréal, de même que toutes les autres cités évoquées dans le roman qu'il s'agisse de Paris, Vitebsk, Prague ou autres, ne jouent pas que le rôle d'une coulisse. La ville fait partie du récit de manière tout aussi importante que les personnages et les intrigues.

Dans *La Québécoite* ce patchwork topique sert de toile de fond du récit racontant la vie d'une intellectuelle immigrée au Québec. L'auteure s'exprime de son côté au sujet de la rédaction du roman de même que de son expérience liée à son arrivée au Québec ainsi:

Je n'avais aucune autre ambition, en reprenant les techniques du collage, que de fictionnaliser l'inquiétante étrangeté que crée le choc culturel, d'autant plus grand

chez moi, qu'il avait lieu dans une langue commune. Comme quoi la langue commune peut être un leurre. Elle n'est en rien la culture, loin de là! (R. 207)

Le roman est composé de trois parties dont les titres correspondent aux toponymes de la ville résidentielle de la Québécoise: *Snowdon*, *Outremont*, *Autour du marché Jean-Talon*. Les trois parties du livre sont équivalentes aux trois variantes de la même matière ou, autrement dit, aux trois scénarios sur le même sujet. La différence la plus visible entre les trois textes repose sur le statut social du partenaire de la narratrice, cette dernière étant pourtant la même au fil de la totalité du roman. Avec le partenaire varie le lieu d'habitation qui corrèle à la toponymie en tête de chaque chapitre.

Dans la première partie, *Snowdon*, le compagnon de la narratrice est lui aussi un immigré juif „échoué – c'est bien le mot – à Montréal“. (R. 33) L'élément prédominant de cette partie du texte est celui de la judéité, l'héroïne étant d'origine juive polonaise. A Outremont, où se déroule la deuxième partie, la narratrice s' imagine être l'épouse d'un Canadien de souche vivant dans un milieu aisé, contrairement aux deux autres parties du roman qui ont lieu dans des univers plutôt modestes. La société québécoise est vue et décrite par une immigrée, cette fois-ci, installée dans un milieu bourgeois d'Outremont, un quartier élégant de Montréal. Enfin, dans la troisième partie, l'héroïne vit avec un ouvrier d'origine paraguayenne. Ce scénario traite donc la situation des immigrés, des ouvriers et des sympathisants de la gauche. Le lecteur fait ainsi face à une diversité culturelle d'une élite québécoise et celle des immigrés dont la situation était souvent défavorable. Tous les trois textes terminent respectivement par le départ de la Québécoise pour Paris. L'immigration étant un des sujets principaux débouche alors sur un échec, rien ne pouvant retenir l'héroïne dans le pays d'accueil. Prise par la nostalgie, elle n'arrive pas à s'habituer et opte pour le retour dans la ville de son enfance et de sa jeunesse. Cette œuvre de Régine Robin considérée comme roman phare de la littérature migrante contient les éléments typiques à la création littéraire des nouveaux venus, dont la caractéristique a été décrite par Petr Kyloušek:

Plusieurs étapes peuvent se discerner dans l'intégration culturelle et axiologique des écrivains néoquébécois. La première phase est marquée par les expériences, parfois traumatisantes, de leur pays d'origine [...]. Les œuvres des auteurs immigrés enrichissent la culture canadienne par leurs témoignages, en élargissant les horizons. La deuxième phase souligne la confrontation de l'ancien avec le

nouveau, de la culture d'origine avec la canadienne qui se tendent le miroir [...]. La troisième étape consiste en l'interaction et l'interpénétration axiologique – de la culture d'origine, du milieu immigré, de la société canadienne ou québécoise – qui reflètent la complexité de la condition d'immigré.³

La nostalgie omniprésente dans *La Québécoite* est liée aux souvenirs de la jeunesse parisienne, le texte évoque aussi le passé traumatisant de l'écrivaine qui a vécu en clandestinité pendant la seconde guerre mondiale, cachée avec sa mère dans des divers endroits du quartier de Belleville à Paris. Si la famille la plus étroite a survécu la guerre, tous les autres membres de la famille polonaise, une cinquantaine de personnes, ont été exterminés.

Selon certains, il s'agirait d'un des premiers romans québécois dit postmodernes. Cet épithète est dû notamment à la structure formelle du roman: le texte est fragmenté, plusieurs fils narratifs sont interposés sans aucun signe préalable qui aviserait le lecteur sur le changement du context, certaines pages ne contiennent que le programme de télévision, les résultats de la ligue nationale, des longues listes des noms de stations de métro, des noms des magasins, des restaurants, des banques et autres. Très souvent, le lecteur se trouve face à une citation, courte ou longue, la source n'étant pas indiquée dans la plus grande partie du texte. L'appréciation de la lecture du roman *La Québécoite* exige une passion et une approche active du côté de lecteur afin de comprendre de nombreuses allusions, citations et références qui font partie de cette belle aventure littéraire.

Les étapes de l'exil: la liberté

Si la notion même de l'exil impliquait à son origine un bannissement, le fait d'être exclu de la société, elle se rapporte plutôt à la fuite, vu que, dans la plupart de cas, les exilés quittent leur pays d'origine suite à une oppression qu'ils y subissent. Il s'agit donc plus souvent d'une fuite que d'un bannissement. Il nous est facilement compréhensible et imaginable, même sans avoir vécu les périples de l'exil à titre personnel, que l'installation dans le pays d'accueil fait naître une sensation qui s'impose, celle d'un nouveau début, d'une nouvelle vie qui commence, de nouveaux horizons qui s'ouvrent, tout cela germant grâce à la liberté presque immédiate si souvent surgie lors de nouveaux commencements. La liberté se manifeste naturellement sur le plan personnel et aussi dans le processus de la création littéraire. Un certain ravissement de la nouvelle liberté acquise dans le pays d'accueil peut

traduire non seulement la joie de celui qui la vit mais le témoignage de cette joie peut refléter les différences entre les deux pays, celui d'origine et celui d'accueil. Ainsi, dans *La Québécoise*, nous avons l'occasion de nous rendre compte d'un certain décalage entre la France et le Québec qu'on peut voir dans notre extrait, témoigne d'un épanouissement inattendu de la conscience féminine.

Pourtant tu aimais ce pays, tu y respirais plus librement qu'à Paris. Ce pays t'était apparu comme un lieu de parole féminine, un lieu où elles seules avaient quelque chose à dire, à crier. Tu avais dévoré cette littérature, en avais aimé la hardiesse revendicative, la hardiesse de ton, le bonheur d'écriture. L'écriture, sans doute le véritable pays de ces femmes en quête d'un pays. Ici, en dehors des hiérarchies pesantes de la France, tu serais plus relaxe dans ta peau de femme – à part entière – égale – toi même. Les femmes d'ici avaient un air de liberté inconnu de toi, un autre rapport à leur corps. Elles ne se croyaient pas obligées de ressembler à des gravures de mode. [...] Toi qui ne marchais qu'en rasant les murs et en baissant les yeux, tu assistais émerveillée à la naissance de cette liberté. Toi, la petite fausse Française. Sois belle et tais-toi – mais n'ayant jamais été belle, tu avais été autorisée à titre exceptionnel à laisser libre cours à ton bavardage. On avait emprisonné ton corps et, ici il te semblait que ton corps t'était rendu. Une peau, des ongles, des cheveux. Tu aimais ton corps pour la première fois. Neuve ici. (R. 138)

À côté de cette liberté personnelle, un nouveau champ s'ouvre de même au niveau de la création, donc de l'écriture. Ceci peut être lié aux circonstances politiques ou culturelles au cas où l'écrivain avait quitté un pays où la création artistique est soumise à la censure qu'elle soit politique, religieuse voire à celle de la bien-pensance, bref un endroit où la liberté d'expression n'est pas le droit de chacun. L'écrivain se retrouve donc libre des contraintes liées au régime politique de même qu'aux règles établies en fonction des traditions. Les raisons politiques, économiques ou sociologiques mises à part, Régine Robin théorise sur le plan purement littéraire en faisant une comparaison de la situation de l'écriture migrante, donc celle réalisée par les auteurs venus d'ailleurs, au statut de la littérature mineure. Robin traduit, ici, le terme emprunté à Kafka, à savoir *die kleine Literatur*. Selon Régine Robin, l'écrivain qui pourrait appartenir à cette catégorie – là se retrouve dans un espace artistique infiniment étendu grâce à une non-existence de l'autorité qui érigerait des doctrines: „L'absence de traditions leur laisse le champ libre. Ils ne sont pas traumatisés par la

stature d'une grande figure littéraire, d'un Goethe par exemple. Ils peuvent innover à leur guise.“ (R. 212) Il s'agirait ainsi d'une création insoumise à une autorité quelconque, notamment au niveau de la forme plutôt qu'à celui du contenu. *La Québécoïte* en sert d'exemple par excellence notamment par sa structure narrative qui elle-même a fait déjà l'objet de nombreuses analyses conçues par des lecteurs et académiciens épris de cette œuvre extraordinaire. Nous observons donc un lien direct entre l'exil et la liberté acquise sur le plan personnel de même qu'à l'égard de la création littéraire.

Les étapes de l'exil: la marginalité

Une fois s'étant installé dans un certain confort, avoir eu à se réjouir d'une nouvelle liberté, l'immigré passe à une autre étape lors de laquelle il se rend compte de son statut d'étranger, de sa non-appartenance à la société d'hôte, à ses traditions, à sa collectivité. L'éblouissement *d'être là* (là où l'immigré a voulu être, donc dans son pays d'accueil), être ainsi *enfin libre*, devient dominé par la prise de conscience du fait de *se trouver ailleurs, à côté, de ne pas appartenir*.

Quelle angoisse certains après-midi – québécoïté – québécoïtude – je suis autre. Je n'appartiens pas à ce Nous si fréquemment utilisé ici – Nous autres – Vous autres. Faut se parler. On est bien chez nous – une autre Histoire – l'incontournable étrangeté. Mes aïeux ne sont pas venus du Poitou ou de la Saintonge ni même de Paris, il y a bien longtemps. Ils ne sont pas arrivés avec Louis Hébert ni avec le régiment de Carignan – Mes aïeux n'ont pas de racines paysannes. Je n'ai pas d'ancêtres coureurs de bois affrontant le danger de lointains portages. Je ne sais pas très bien marcher en raquettes, je ne connais pas la recette du ragoût de pattes ni de la cipaille. Je n'ai jamais été catholique. Je ne m'appelle ni Tremblay, ni Gagnon. Même ma langue respire l'air d'un autre pays. Nous nous comprenons dans le malentendu. Je sors de l'auberge quand vous sortez du bois. Par – dessus tout, je n'aime pas Henri Bourassa, je ne vibre pas devant la mise à mort du père Brébeuf, je n'ai jamais dit le chapelet en famille à 7 heures du soir. Je n'ai jamais vu la famille Plouffe à la télévision. (R. 54)

Nous nous amuserons un autre jour à faire une exégèse détaillée de cette description du génie canadien auquel Robin ne nous initie que par des traits schématiques, pour le moment, nous nous contentons d'observer le vécu de celle qui écrit.

La douleur issue de la marginalité, du détachement voire du déracinement peuvent aboutir non seulement à la frustration ou à d'autres effets désastreux, mais au contraire, ces sentiments peuvent parfois s'avérer étonnamment féconds. L'immigré s'étant trouvé, suite à la séparation des siens, dans un tête-à-tête psychanalytique avec soi-même, il devient d'autant plus motivé à évacuer son trop plein d'émotions et cette situation, dans le cas de l'artiste, aboutit dans l'encouragement à la création. Étant donné les conditions dans lesquelles ce dernier se trouve, son inspiration jaillit de la nostalgie. Avant de continuer à théoriser sur ce sujet-là, nous voyons le témoignage de Régine Robin qui décrit cet état d'âme de l'artiste aboutissant dans l'encouragement à la création.

Et puis, bien entendu, l'écrivain émigrant est aux prises avec son pays d'origine, qu'il l'ait quitté pour des raisons politiques, économiques, ou tout simplement personnelles. Il lui faut faire un certain travail du deuil, ou un réaménagement mémoriel. Ce travail n'est pas simple et c'est souvent pour cela que l'on se met à écrire. Pour se supporter ailleurs, pour creuser en soi une nouvelle altérité, pour domestiquer la nostalgie et mettre à distance l'inquiétante étrangeté du dedans-dehors. Qui suis-je à présent, et quelle place puis-je me faire dans cette société à trois places (le Canada, le Québec, Montréal)? (R. 209)

Les étapes de l'exil: la nostalgie

Malgré la notoriété de ce terme, nous ne résistons pas au plaisir d'avoir l'occasion de rappeler son étymologie qui explique cet état d'âme parfaitement sinistre:

Du latin *nostalgia* créé en 1678 par le Suisse M. Hofer dans le titre de sa thèse de médecine avec les mots grecs *nostos* 'retour' et *algos* 'mal, souffrance' sur le modèle des mots médicaux en *-algie*. *Nostos* est le nom dérivé de *nesthai* 'revenir, retourner (chez soi)' qui contient une racine indoeuropéenne dont le premier sens est 'retour heureux, salut'. On retrouve cette racine en grec dans le nom propre *Nestôr* 'celui qui rentre heureusement ou qui ramène heureusement son armée'. *Nostalgia* traduit le mot suisse alémanique *Heimweh* 'mal du pays' appliqué aux Suisses à l'étranger, surtout aux mercenaires. *Nostalgie* a été précédé par les expressions *Maladie du pays*, *mal du pays*. Il est passé au XIX^e siècle dans l'usage courant, se référant à un état de regret mélancolique du passé ou d'une chose idéale que l'on n'a pas eue.⁴

Dans l'origine du mot, nous voyons, donc un rapport direct, entre les termes *départ*, *exil*, *absence* et le mal du pays voire le désir du retour impliqué dans le mot *nostalgie*. Cette révélation étonnante, pour certains, rentre parfaitement dans le cadre de notre observation des étapes de l'exil. Il paraît évident que la personne ayant quitté son entourage est saisie d'une certaine tristesse. Pourtant, il peut paraître surprenant à quel point l'origine du mot *nostalgie* relève d'un lien aussi étroit avec le départ, voire avec l'exil, et que son emploi tel qu'il est répandu de nos jours, donc un état d'âme attristé, éprouvant un regret, ne date que depuis un ou deux siècles. Nous ne pouvons que nous réjouir du rapport étymologique comme nous le voyons de même dans la réalité littéraire et dans la réalité tout court.

Le sentiment de nostalgie reflète à la fois le regret de ce qui était, qui est une expérience plutôt courante car on est nombreux à regretter le passé, le temps révolu, en observant un affaiblissement irréversible des capacités physiques et intellectuelles au cours des années. Après des exilés, la nostalgie s'impose avec d'autant plus de ferveur que l'étape de transition entre avant et après a pris une forme de rupture, qui tranchera à jamais la biographie de l'immigré, rendant la prise de conscience du changement et du déroulement de la vie très présente. La borne imaginaire est donc manifestée de manière très nette, contrairement au quotidien du sédentaire qui voit sa vie passer non pas toujours paisiblement mais souvent sans un point de repère tranchant. Dans une partie du texte, Robin attribue cette nostalgie envahissante au personnage de Mime Yente, la tante de l'héroïne:

Elle aurait mis quelques bûches dans le foyer du grand salon et une longue soirée d'hiver commencerait ainsi, lente, intime, douloureuse. La nostalgie de Jitomir la gagnerait à des années de distance. Pas de Londres où elle aurait tant lutté avec Moshe, pas de Paris où elle serait allée témoigner au procès Schwartzbard – non de Jitomir sur le Teterév, de la maison paternelle à une verste de la ville, une petite maison blanchie à la chaux perdue au milieu des tournesols, écrasée de soleil avec en arrière une aire où l'on construisait des cabanes de branchage pour la fête de Soukkot. Des jardins à l'entour, la ville à une verste de là. Il y a longtemps, très longtemps. Elle essuierait une larme entre deux bouffées de pipe en regardant le lac gelé. [...] Il faudrait la rassurer. Bilou grimperait sur ses genoux, et elle, sa nièce un peu désemparée, gagnée par l'angoisse, loin de son piano devrait lui promettre aux prochaines vacances de l'amener à Jitomir en Ukraine, Jitomir en Volhynie, Jitomir sur le Teterév (R. 158)

L'extrait montre, certainement non pas par hasard, le détail paradoxal de l'exil, celui du désir de retourner dans son pays d'origine qui avait pourtant été quitté pour des raisons non négligeables, parfois même pour la question de survie. La notion de la nostalgie, cachant le nom de Nestor, celui du guerrier homérique qui *rentre heureusement* se trouve ainsi accomplie dans la totalité de son acception. L'exilé, ayant dû se battre, souvent, pour pouvoir vivre dans un autre pays, la terre promise se révèle, au fur et à mesure, moins accueillante qu'elle ne paraissait au début. En effet, le sujet du retour souhaité dont l'effet n'est pourtant pas confirmé dans le texte, revient à la fin de chacune des trois parties du roman l'héroïne:

Un jour elle aurait décidé de partir. Mime Yente n'aurait même pas essayé de la retenir. Elle aurait pris un 747 Air France. Départ de Mirabel à 20 h 45. Les livres suivraient en fret aérien et certains meubles en container par bateau. Elle se serait retrouvée rue de la Mare à Paris, dans le vieux quartier de son enfance, le regard plein d'étoiles nouvelles. Elle aurait tenté à nouveau de tout recommencer. Elle aurait repris le métro. Ligne 10, gare d'Orléans – Austerlitz – Porte d'Auteuil, sans jamais s'égarer au-delà de Grenelle, rêvant à des neiges lointaines, à de grands ciels bas, au Saint-Laurent pris par les glaces, à cette qualité de la lumière qu'elle ne retrouverait plus jamais, à Mime Yente et à son bonheur perdu. (R. 89)

Nous avons esquissé les traits du récit de Régine Robin racontant les situations qui surgissent lors du parcours de l'exilé. Celui-ci se trouve face à une mixité d'impressions, d'intuitions et de sentiments dont le désir ou la nécessité de quitter le pays d'origine, la découverte de la nouvelle liberté et ensuite les difficultés de s'intégrer et de trouver sa place dans la société d'accueil. Cette expérience crée un milieu propice à la création artistique, donc à l'écriture comme en témoigne Régine Robin; l'écriture devient une sorte de remède aidant à passer les phases d'adaptation et de recherche d'un équilibre quelconque. Il sera certainement passionnant d'étudier d'autres auteurs ayant vécu à peu près la même expérience que l'auteure de *La Québécoise*. Nos trois sujets de réflexion sur les étapes de l'exil pourront être développés par un quatrième, celui de *l'impossibilité de retour*, sentiment qui s'impose nettement dans le dernier extrait que nous venons de citer. En effet, physiquement, la narratrice de *La Québécoise* a pu revenir dans son pays natal car les conditions politiques le lui permettaient, or pour de nombreux exilés qui doivent leur statut aux bouleversements politiques, aux conflits sociaux, religieux voire militaires dans leur pays: pour ces gens-là, le retour reste bel et bien irréalisable. L'héroïne de *La*

Québécoise est donc rentrée, elle a accompli son désir de retour, celui-ci est pourtant devenu un échec à son tour après la tentative ratée de la recherche du bonheur à l'exil. Le lecteur capte la nouvelle nostalgie, cette fois-ci pour le pays abandonné, donc pour le Québec. Dans le prolongement de cette confession, la réflexion aboutit au constat que le retour, effectivement, n'est pas possible, car tout bouge, tout change, et on ne retrouve jamais ce qu'on avait quitté dans le même état, ceci étant conclu, depuis les millénaires, dans la maxime *on ne se baigne jamais deux fois dans le même fleuve*.

Notes

- 1 Régine Robin: *La Québécoise. Roman*. Montréal 1993 (Typo 88). En suivant cité directement comme: R, numéro de page).
- 2 Petr Vurm: *La création et la créativité de Réjean Ducharme. Une redefinition du roman québécois*. Francfort-sur-le-Main: 2014 (Canadiana 16).
- 3 Petr Kyloušek: *Nous eux moi. La quête de l'identité dans la littérature et le cinéma canadiens*. Brno 2009 (Opera universitatis Masarykianae Brunensis facultas philosophica 387), p. 135.
- 4 *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française*. Publié par Alain Rey: Paris 2016, p. 1512.



A Hungarian housemaker in India

Rózsa G. Hajnóczy's *Bengáli tűz* in a globalized context

Bengáli tűz is a famous Hungarian journal, published in 1944 for the first time. Rózsa G. Hajnóczy (1892–1944), the author of *Bengáli tűz*, spent three adventurous years with her husband in India, residing in the Shanti Niketan Ashram of Rabindranath Tagore. Her husband Gyula Germanus was a renowned orientalist, a leading Hungarian scholar of Islam and was invited by Rabindranath Tagore to tutor at Visva-Bharati. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was a famous Bengali polymath and a poet, and as such, the first non-European poet to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.¹ Hajnóczy accompanied her husband during his stay of three years and recorded all her experiences. *Bengáli tűz* is often described as a travel journal or a novelistic voyage. Rózsa G. Hajnóczy was taking her notes between 1928 and 1931, before the independence of India from Britain. Since the first Hungarian publication in 1944, some sources say it came out in 1943, it has acclaimed more than a dozen editions and a big number of readers. The second edition of *Bengáli tűz* was published in 1972, and the English translation, *Fire of Bengal*, was made from that edition by the Hungarian Eva Wimmer and her husband David Grant and was published in Dhaka in 1993.² A translation into Hindi was done by Kartik Chandra Dutt and got published in 2011 under the title of *Agni-parva–Santiniketan (Ek Hungarian Gribvadbuki Diary, अग्निपर्व – शांतिनिकेतन (एकहंगेरियनगृहवधुकीडायरी) (Hajnóczy, 2011).*³

It is a novelistic voyage or travelogue based on authentic first hand experiences from the tropical land of India. The journal was written during the interwar era, and the author also shared her experiences with *Szepesi Hírlap*, a Hungarian language regional newspaper published in Czechoslovakia. India has always been an exotic and mysterious destination for people from the western side of the world but in *Bengáli tűz* light was shed on a new outlook of India from an Eastern European point of view instead of a British (Western) colonizer's point of view. The empathetic Hungarian behaviour towards India was manifested as the Indians struggled for Independence from Britain, just like Hungarians had done for the independence of their own country in various historical periods. This common background explains the sympathies of Hungarians with India for their Fight for Freedom against Britain: "Probhat babu said – We are not masters of our country. You Hungarians no doubt

hat babu said – We are not masters of our country. You Hungarians no doubt sympathize with our fight for freedom, but you too fought to overthrow the Austrians. I know your history – Kossuth and Dick. But you won your freedom and your life is happy.”⁴ (H. 65)

The image of India can be seen by the perspective of a Hungarian author and people are able to know some hidden and untouched aspects of India from this journal. New facts are uncovered so Hungarians can get a clearer image of India and expand their knowledge about that country. India was in the phase of freedom struggle during her stay, so she was an eye-witness of these events. The Hungarian writer witnessed how racially prejudiced English people behaved towards Indians and mentioned it with the example of a train incident where a British person misbehaved with an Indian even if the Indian had a ticket for the train.

Hajnóczy did not just write facts about India but also captured the essence of all the different nationalities under the same roof of Shantiniketan along with various aspects related to multiculturalism and cultures influencing each other, including trivia related to their lifestyles. Intercultural aspects are also frequently present in *Bengáli tüz*. As the Afterword to the English translation puts it, “Hajnóczy met people from different countries like Sweden and America, and Missionaries in Agra from the time when she wasn’t staying in Shanti Niketan and was travelling around in India during the third year of her stay.” (H. 495)

During the span of her stay in India, she met an Irish lady married to an Indian man, a Russian couple, an Iranian couple, and British people too. At the beginning of her journey, she met and shared experiences with people from different countries.

She compared the eastern and the western world in terms of their social, political, religious, devotional, and traditional aesthetics (change of food, climate, and clothes), adding multidisciplinary aspects to her work: “The north Indian cuisine, bearing the influence of the Persian, the Turkish, and the Arabian had a close resemblance to the Hungarian cuisine as well which also offers many oriental flavors.” (H. 571) Other comparisons include her husband’s remark about a north eastern tribal Indian minority with Germans. “The Nagas have distinguished the Europeans Precedent.” (H. 337) On other occasions, the writer compares the cities, for instance “Hyderabad is a big city similar to the size of Italy” (H. 337), or “the basic distinction between The Eastern world and The Western was shown by labelling ‘Srinagar’ as ‘Venice of Asia’.” (H. 515)

Another interesting fact is that Shanti Niketan itself, where the author’s journey started, was a little global village as people from all over the world were gathered

there for academic purposes. Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was a renowned Bengali Polymath and Poet – the first non-European poet to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. His main literary works were published in Bangla (the native language of Bengal). His most famous works are *Gitanjali* (poetry, 1910), *Gora* (fiction, 1910), and *Ghare Baire* (fiction, 1916). They got translated into many languages including English, Hindi, Hungarian, German.⁵ He also penned down the lyrics for India’s and Bangladesh’s National Anthem. Tagore was the founder of an Ashram called Shantiniketan which was an institute and the first center of Comparative Literature in India. He invited teachers from all around the globe to Shantiniketan to distribute valuable knowledge of different domains to the international students present there. Hajnóczy’s husband, Gyula Germanus, was one of those teachers. Hajnóczy’s journal helped more and more people know about the ashram. It also provides us with a critical outlook on social rituals of those days. Aside from that, the journal also showed us India’s spirituality and the peaceful coexistence of various nationalities present in the ashram. The journal also sheds light on some new and undiscovered facts about India and about the world famous poet, Rabindranath Tagore.

The author’s perspective about life went through a remarkable change. She had tears in her eyes when she left Hungary for India as she missed her home but after three years when she departed from India, she was crying again, but this time it wasn’t for either India or Hungary. She cried as she missed the notion of the entire *world*. Hajnóczy’s journey started with a cultural shock and ended up in making her a well-informed person about a new culture. The author met with a drastic climate change as she arrived in Calcutta in mid-April. The beginning of the summer season is not a pleasant time for anyone, may it be a native or a foreigner in India. She found the way Indian people dressed very different. She saw women in Sarees instead of skirts and men were wearing dhoti-kurtas instead of pants and shirts.⁶ The food also proved to be a big problem for her as she was not accustomed to spicy food but she eventually adapted herself to the environment. Her diary is a series of significant experiences which also tell us the story of change in the author’s perspective about life in general. It also shows us diverse colours of a foreigner’s life in a foreign country through the terms like racial discrimination, cultural shock, language barrier, etc. – as she herself stated: “All of us are born with the same eyes, yet we see things differently.” (H. 04)

As a result of a deep study regarding the comparisons between the two cultures, her final statement proves the acceptance of the differences present between the

cultures: “It is a tension which goes beyond literal divisions between ‘East’ and ‘West’.” (H. 588)

Apart from the different cultures, the presence of different languages at the same time in the journal made it more globalized. Hajnóczy met several people from different countries including Russia, Italy, Japan, Afghanistan, Germany, Britain, the United States and ended up by getting influenced by them. Through this international gathering of people, she could get in touch with other languages, like Bangla, Hindi, English, Arabic, and German. Even though she was not able to understand any language that was spoken in India (may it be Bangla, Hindi, or English), eventually she learned a bit of them and was able to carry out basic communication.

The following statements from the journal support the presence of diversity from all the languages in the journal: “Everyone wanted to speak in their respective mother tongue including Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Oriya, Telegu, Kannada, etc. in the meeting but they all agreed to communicate in English at last.” (H. 390) Hajnóczy also mentioned that “Sometimes Gertund whispers in German with me.” (H. 313) She also noticed that Persian is the cultural language of the North Indian people: “Every Muslim of any pretension must know Persian, just as we Hungarians should know German.” (H. 573) Concerning Hindi language, she had problems using ‘kal’ for tomorrow and yesterday. (H. 472) The references to different nationalities, cultures and languages gave a veritable atmosphere of globalization to Hajnóczy’s book. The author scrutinized women belonging to various nationalities but still found a common ground for emotional aspects with them.

It is worth noting that Hajnóczy’s name is not mentioned in the new Hungarian biographical lexicon nor in the new Hungarian lexicon of Hungarian writers in the mid-twentieth century, even if *Bengáli tűz* was one of the most widely read books among the female readers of Hungary.

The journal displays a clear picture of not only India but the Indian sub-continent as a whole with respect to its physical representation. The author reviews India before independence when it was under British rule and Pakistan and Bangladesh were still a part of it. Some of the cities mentioned in the book (Lahore, Peshawar, and Dhaka) are now located in various countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Dimensions, habits, atmospheres surprise her: “Peshawar is only an overnight journey from Lahore – nothing by Indian standards.” (H. 509) “Lahore is a completely oriental city. The majority of the population is Muslim, giving it the look of some of the Near-Eastern Turkish or Arabian cities.” (H. 507) “Our host is an

Afghan solicitor, Ahmed Khan Kidpai, now we were to live in true Afghan style.”
(H. 509)

Conclusion

In my view, *Bengáli tüz* contains a lot of traits which make it an authentic piece of literature in a globalized context. It has several elements associated with multiculturalism and facts related to the various styles of living. The presence of various distinctive nationalities under the same roof of Shanti Niketan makes the primary theme of this book more globalized. *Bengáli tüz* is also considered as a travelogue to a different continent. The descriptions by Hajnóczy cover many different nationalities while her traveling in India makes this journal more diversified. The author tries to describe a variety of features of various nationalities while keeping a common concept as a base.

Beside diversity playing a major role in the journal, various other elements, like a common emotional state of the female characters belonging to different nationalities regarding love, friendship, relationships in general and their devotion regarding their respective nations and cultures also play an important role in the journal. Therefore, the original and authentic mix of similar and different opinions around the different nationalities attaches a globalized element to it, like a garden full of flowers of different colours.

Finally, it can be stated that the features of this journal make it a tempting piece of literature for its readers. This journal originally written by Rózsa G. Hajnóczy in Hungarian, and afterwards its English, Hindi and Bengali translations make it accessible in other countries of the world.

Endnotes

- 1 A. B. M. Shamsud Doulah: Rabindranath Tagore, the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, and the British Raj: Some Untold Stories. Singapore 2016, pp. 4–10.
- 2 Rózsa Hajnóczy: Fire of Bengal. Translated by Eva Wimmer und David Grant, Dhaka 1993. Henceforth cited as: (H. page number).
- 3 साहजानोसजर्मनस, कार्तिकचंदरदत्तद्वाराअनुवादितअग्निपर्व - शांतिनिकेतन (एकहंगेरियनगृहवधुकीडायरी)
(Rózsa Hajnóczy: Agniparva – Santiniketan (Ek Hungarian Grihavadhuki Diary. Translated by Kartik Chandra Dutt. New Delhi 2011).
- 4 A few lines later she confessed that: “I was wondering who the Hungarian named Dick was and then I realized that in English pronunciation the name would be that of Ferenc Deak!” (H. 65).
- 5 Shamsud, Rabindranath Tagore (see endnote 1), pp. 4–10.
- 6 It is a garment worn by male Hindus, consisting of a piece of material tied around the waist and extending to cover most of the legs. Men typically wear the dhoti with a kurta. Saree is a garment traditionally worn by ladies. It consists of a piece of cotton or silk elaborately draped around the body.



Ahmed Joudar

The influence of transculturalism on writers in exile

The cross-cultural writings of Naim Kattan

In recent years, the political changes that took place in the world have brought up many problems including the question of cultural affiliations and the extent of their association with identity. This trend of diversity reveals an urgent need to re-assert the concept of citizenship, the main principle, which preserves the unity of the country. In this paper, I am going to examine to what extent cross-cultural writers make an impact on transcultural literature, how the theme of mobility in literature is influenced by the waves of migration, exile, life in the diaspora, and, recently by the neo-nomadic paths. Moreover, I am going to explore the concept of transculturality relying on the findings of highly reputed thinkers like Fernando Ortiz, Wolfgang Iser, and Mikhail Epstein. Based on their views, I will discuss the transcultural elements in contemporary Canadian literature by offering a survey of two novels – *Farewell Babylon* and *Paris Interlude* – from Naim Kattan's trilogy.

The concept of transculturation

The development of the concepts of “transculture”, “transcultural” or “transculturation” has passed through different stages, thus there are several definitions both on the local and on the global level. It was Fernando Ortiz¹ who introduced and developed the concept of “transculturation” in the 1940s. In his view, the most important point is to explore how the “weaker” cultures crossed beyond the trajectories of assimilation and produced a union between old and new cultures to reach a coherent body. The term appears on two different levels, that of “national cultures” and that of “dominating and dominated” cultures. These assumptions are built on the level of “national cultures” as well as on the cultures which transit from the “periphery” or “margin” to the center. Katalin Kürtösi mentions that the “margin [...] would be locations on an ‘orbit’ far from the centre, where the artists (or small group of artists) work partly in isolation, partly in more or less regular contact with the centres.”² Thus, most artists and explorers prefer the movement from the margin to the center, because the center has the dynamic feature

of contemporary cultural transformations. Often people think that “a person or place on the ‘margin’ is cultural ‘backward’, ‘underdeveloped’, ‘not sophisticated’ therefore cultural products of the margin can be of local interest at best.”³

German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch also theorized on the notion of “trans-cultural”, adding a new element to the term of “transculturality”. He believes that cultures cannot be in a closed circle or have inner homogeneity and outer separation. All cultures have a wide variety of mixing features and permeation since they go beyond the traditional concept of culture and pass through traditional boundaries. Welsch points out that the “deep differences between cultures are today diminishing more and more, [...] contemporary cultures are characterized by cross-culture cutting elements and in this sense are to be comprehended as transcultural rather than monocultural.”⁴ All in all, there are two main approaches to commonalities and differences between cultures. Some believe that commonalities make an influence on the merging cultures while the other trend claims that the cultural differences are the starting point for merging cultures, and commonalities come then on a second level.

The third representative of the theory of “transculture” is the Russian thinker Mikhail Epstein. According to him, “culture frees humans from the material dependencies of nature; it also creates new symbolic dependencies on customs, traditions, conventions, which a person receives as a member of a certain group and ethnos.”⁵ Epstein asserts that “transculture” represents the development of cultures and it stands in front of “globalism and isolating pluralism”.⁶ “Transculture” frees humans from personal cultures and customs as well as from their mother tongue. Epstein takes into consideration the cases of migrant people who cross borders and still keep their cultures, languages, and traditions or those who liberate themselves from their past, and successfully integrate two or more cultures, keeping a balance between them.

The levels of transculturality

Welsch divides transculturalism into two different levels: The main feature of the first (global) level is that modern cultures are hybrids, as a result of the wide migration movements which have expanded in recent years and due to the use of modern technologies, particularly, modern communication technologies, that make an impact on the communities, cultures, and traditions, and also on languages. Nowadays there is practically no community with a “pure” culture, thus each culture

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has been influenced by other cultures, or, to cite Edward Said, “all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic.”⁷⁷

The second (individual) level refers to the fact, that transculturalism has an impact not only on the global but also on the individual level. Cultural plurality is decisive in terms of cultural construction. Therefore, cultures are hybrid on the individual level as well. For instance, exiles, migrants, diasporic, and cross-cultural writers have complex cultural orientations and are engaged in transnational exchanges. As Edward Said in his article *Reflections on Exile* clarifies, „most people are principally aware of one culture, one home, or one setting, exiles are aware of at least two, giving them a plurality of vision, giving rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions.“⁷⁸ Thus, these writers can no longer be considered to belong primarily to a single (or original) national framework but, by a transpiration process, have developed a trans-cultural sensibility and can express it through their writing. Writers who move away from their own native cultures or homelands tend to challenge conventional categorizations in their works.

The apprehension of losing cultural differences

Cultural diversity refers to multiple orientations of individuals within a society, but at the same time, they adopt diversity within a unit that ultimately forms the cultural identity of the society. The most important characteristic of the identity of any society is its ability to formulate the diversity within the unit so that it becomes the center of a combination of these differences. In Edward Burnett’s view, culture is “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.”⁷⁹ Burnett argues that cultures often merge because of contemporary developments or as a consequence of political issues (migrations, refuge, exile), therefore some intellectuals are against this merge because cultures might lose their own specific features. Moreover, all human cultures seek to preserve their identity, which gives them a distinctive character from other cultures. Hence, the existence of this conflict between these cultures is inevitable because there are some world powers which try to impose their cultural models on all cultures. This possibility fills some with a fear that some cultures would disappear under the control of a single cultural model.

Concerning the danger of losing cultural differences, Welsch points out that “these supposedly uniform cultures nevertheless exhibit new forms of inner diversity, that the transcultural networks which arise sometimes differ even from one individual to the next. We are thus, both conceptually and emotionally, bound to the concept of difference.”¹⁰ In the process of the uniformization between cultures, there will be great differences because people will build their identity on diverse cultural elements. Hence, the individual identity will be a web of diverse elements including commonalities and differences so that this net will resemble a colorful mosaic of extraordinary identities. In addition, these differences will be even greater when people draw on several and diverse cultural elements. Identity networks are woven from partly the same and partly from different threads which are not all the same color and pattern. Differences no longer emerge between different kinds of monolithic identities, but between identity configurations that have some elements in common while differing in other elements, namely in their arrangement as a whole, and often in their complexity.

Transcultural writers and transcultural literature

In the global age, there is a group of imaginative writers who left their original homeland by choice or force for several reasons (racism, religion, politics, or ethnicity). These writers developed a transcultural sensibility in order to express their experiences through their writing. Obviously, the scenario faced by cross-border writers at the time of their arrival at the host location included dislocation and culture shock. Some of them could not bear the new conditions or were frustrated by a new language, a new cultural milieu, and different traditions from their own, while others met a suitable environment. People in the latter group could easily get integrated into a new culture although they carried on with their own traditions and culture with a gradual blending of old and new. These writers have distinctive features like becoming bilingual, physically immersing themselves in multiple cultures or territories, manifesting a flexible identity and cultural diversity, thus they could express themselves benefitting from transcultural sensibility.

Arianna Dagnino proposed a list of creative features of transcultural writers to prove a close connection between lived experience and creative narratives on the transcultural frontier. She points out that cross-cultural writers always tend to:

(a) Set their novels in more than one country. Most importantly foreign settings are not used as exotic stereotypes functional to the growing market of global mass fiction – the so-called ‘postcolonial exotico’, (b) create characters coming from more than one cultural background or who are immersed in more than one culture, (c) display a proliferation of narrating voices and tell a story from ‘a multiplicity of perspectives’, (d) work in more than one linguistic code and narrative genre, thereby creating texts characterized by a mix of linguistic/cultural spaces and genres.¹¹

These elements become typical features of the transcultural writers when facing a “clash of civilizations” and contribute to developing transcultural identity and sensibility, which lead to the development of transcultural literature in the global age. These elements are discovered through the writers’ choice of themes, characters, setting, as well as the use of dialogue, plot construction, or language performed.

Is Naim Kattan a transcultural writer?

Naim Kattan (Iraqi, Jewish, French-Canadian) is one of the contemporary writers who comb different cultural orientations. He was born in Baghdad in 1928 where he studied law, then he continued his studies at the Sorbonne in Paris with a French Scholarship to study French literature. Kattan practiced cultural and social activities in Iraq until 1947, then in Paris from 1947 to 1954 as he mentioned in an interview: “I personally started writing in Baghdad, publishing short stories and articles in Arabic, and participating in the creation of two literary reviews, *Al-Fikr al-Hadith* (Modern Thought) and *Al-Waqt al-Dha’i* (The Time Lost).”¹² Kattan was forced to choose exile when the Iraqi Government refused to renew his passport. He decided to immigrate to Canada (Montreal) in 1954 where he has been actively participating in cultural life ever since. Kattan has personally experienced the painful process of transculturation, first as an exile, then as an immigrant.

He joined Quebec’s literary community where he practiced his literary activities as a writer, critic, professor, publisher, and editor and wrote more than fifty books (novels, short stories, and essays). He speaks several languages (Arabic, French, English, Hebrew, Italian, Dutch, and Portuguese). *Reality and Theatre*, an autobiographical essay, is perhaps the most important work by Kattan. It received the France-Canada Prize in 1971. His books include a short story collection *Dans le désert* (published in

1974), his trilogy *Adieu, Babylone* (1975), *Les Fruits arrachés* (1977) and *La Fiancée promise* (1983). *Le Gardien de mon frère*, his latest novel, was published in 2003.

Kattan has transformed his private life into a public narrative through his semi-autobiographical novels. The trilogy as a whole portrays Kattan's personal trajectory: The first volume (*Farewell Babylon*) is an account of a twelve-year-old boy growing up in Baghdad between 1940 and 1947 as member of the Jewish community that constituted roughly 30 percent of the total population in Iraq at that time. The second volume of the trilogy, (*Paris Interlude*) presents the protagonist of the novel as a narrator called Meir. The events of the second volume take place in France, Germany, and Italy from 1947 to 1954. The third volume (*La Fiancée promise*) continues the story of Meir after he had migrated to Canada in 1954.

Kattan's novels and short stories are a resource of personal experiences. His memory is often seduced by nostalgia or sharpened by the need to bear witness, an element that is a constant and often implacable companion. Kattan's novels are characterized by special features like physical, emotional, linguistic estrangement, distance, and struggle. These tensions resonate in his narrative as they do for displaced people in general. As Kattan has different orientations of cultures, his novels are often located in-between spaces of three or four cultures, and he tries to connect the persistence of the past within the hegemony of the present. Kattan can be included in the category of culturally and physically mobile writers whose sense of identity and belonging is rooted in a complex mix of linguistic and cultural declination who take multiple trajectories to reflect themselves in their narratives.

Transcultural elements in *Farewell Babylon* and *Paris Interlude*

Kattan's trilogy explores themes frequently occurring in "mobile" literature, as it is the case of exile and immigration, fear and grief, confusion and dislocation, alienation and the loss of identity, the conflicts between the past and the present, between the present and the future. His protagonist in the three parts are narrated in the first person singular. His trilogy often deals with the themes of the female body, discrimination, minorities, and his own experiences as well as with cross-cultures and super-diversity culture.

In this paper, I explore the elements of transcultural from the end of the first volume of Kattan's trilogy (*Farewell Babylon*), when the protagonist decides to start

his first journey in his life to cross the border and go to Paris. The narrator portrays the moment of moving from one world to another the following way:

These faces looking at me, moving away from me, which I saw through the window of the bus - they were Iraq. All that remained of it for me. And I hoped I would be able to take away forever, within myself, its last reflection. It had to be so. In that way, my childhood would be preserved. I would enter the new world without cutting off a privileged part of it, without dispersing my dream and memories.¹³

The ending of the first volume is a kind of mixture between the desire to achieve the goal of completing his studies and the feeling of sadness, about leaving his family, friends, and homeland. The citation shows how the protagonist carries with him history, culture, tradition, relationship, childhood, and experiences. The sad moment is not only to be far from the family and friends but also to be far from the land of his ancestors, and Babylon, the city where Nebuchadnezzar exiled Jews.

In another scene of the novel, Kattan shows how Jews connect to Babylon when he describes the students visiting Babylon and what their teacher told them about history:

Only the Jews can feel the upheaval of a living past under these piles of stones. [...] We came here as captives, the slaves of Nebuchadnezzar. But we triumphed over defeat. On this ground, we wrote the Talmud. The descendants of captives, the sons of slaves were great scholars, great philosophers. Are we worthy of our ancestors?¹⁴

These words suggest that Jews are connected to that location not only physically but also in soul and imagination. Surely, the title of the first novel *Farewell Babylon* involves evidence of the dream of Jews to return to the land of their ancestors. Kattan clarifies this idea in his book *La Mémoire et la Promesse*, evoking his feelings when he says:

Je suis parti de Bagdad, emportant le rêve d'un lieu fixe, héritier de vingt-cinq siècles d'histoire en un point donné. Nous étions entourés de nomades, les empires s'étaient édifiés puis effondrés, et nous, les fils de prisonniers de Nabuchodonosor étions toujours là et pourtant nous étions nous aussi des

nomades, nous avons appris qu'il n'y a de lieu que de passage et que Dieu habite tous les lieux.¹⁵

Paris Interlude, the second volume of Kattan's trilogy, continues the story from the first volume's ending. The protagonist Meri leaves for the United States by boat, so New York is the first station in the second voyage after he leaves Iraq. The second volume is richer in transcultural elements than the first one. It is illuminating to compare the two endings. In the first volume, the last moment is when he leaves his family, friends, and homeland while in *Paris Interlude* the last moment presents the protagonist leaving Paris and his friend Anne; there is no family, no relatives, not many friends, and even no homeland: "Anne ... I am going to the United States, I've got my visa and my ticket."¹⁶ An important common feature is however that in both parts when he leaves, there is a new world, culture, and unknown future waiting for him, "I was in America. A new world was waiting for me. I was arriving empty-handed, unknown to anyone. Beneath my carapace, I was laden with conflicting memories. I was carrying Europe with me."¹⁷ The major difference is that when he leaves Iraq, he carries Babylon and the history of his ancestors but in the second part as he says that he carries Europe. When he leaves for the first time, he does not realize that he might not be able to return to his homeland and that it is the last meeting with his family in the land of his ancestors. Leaving Paris, he is aware of the fact that he would never return. The first voyage is by his own choice to pursue his studies but in the second case he is forced to leave the city, it is a kind of exile. In the first volume, his family and friends know about his travel while in the second volume, the protagonist is wondering how to tell his friend Anne his leaving for the United States: "How could I convince her that this was the only way for us, out of our own choice, protecting one another?"¹⁸

Conclusion

In the global age, political and economic conflicts move writers across borders and increase mobility. As a result of this mobility, several writers have contributed to the development of transcultural literature, fostered transcultural orientation and transcultural modes of creative expressions. Transculturalism is not limited to two cultures being in contact but also includes in-between places linking two or more cultures. The new blend of cultures manifests features from all participating cultures

but at the same time, they have particular qualities which differ from others. Ortiz highlights that “the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: The offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them.”¹⁹

Endnotes

- 1 Fernando Ortiz: *Cuban Counterpoint. Tobacco and Sugar*. London 1995, pp. 97–103.
- 2 Katalin Kürtösi: *Modernism on the ‚Margin‘ - The ‚Margin‘ on Modernism. Manifestations in Canadian Culture*. Augsburg 2013, p. 61.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Wolfgang Welsch: *On the Acquisition and Possession of Commonalities*. In *Transcultural English Studies Theories, Fictions, Realities*. Ed. by Frank Schulze-Engler and Sissy Helff . New York 2009, pp. 3–37.
- 5 Mikhail Epstein: *Transculture. A Broad Way between Globalism and Multiculturalism*. In: *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 68 (2009), 1st issue, p. 327.
- 6 Ibid., p. 330.
- 7 Edward Said: *Culture and Imperialism*. New York 1994, p. xxix.
- 8 Edward Said: *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. London 2013, p. 186.
- 9 Edward Tylor: *Primitive Culture Volume 1*. New York 2016, p. 13.
- 10 Welsch, *On the Acquisition and Possession of Commonalities*, (see endnote 4) p. 4.
- 11 Arianna Dagnino: *Transcultural Writers and Novels in the Age of Global Mobility*. West Lafayette 2015, p. 183.
- 12 It is a part of an interview with Naim Kattan in Paris in May 2018, made by the author of this article.
- 13 Naim Kattan: *Farewell Babylon: Coming of Age in Jewish Baghdad*. London 2009, pp. 217–218.
- 14 Kattan, *Farewell Babylon* (see endnote 13), p. 79.
- 15 „I left Baghdad, took away with me the dream of a fixed place, heir of twenty-five centuries of history at a given point. We were surrounded by nomads and empires, which had built up and then collapsed. We were the sons of prisoners of Nebuchadnezzar still there and yet we too were nomads. We have learned that all places are passageways and that God inhabits all places.“ [translated by the author, A.J.] from Naim Kattan: *La Mémoire et La Promesse*. Paris 1979, p. 14.
- 16 Naim Kattan: *Paris Interlude*. Toronto 1979, p. 206.
- 17 Ibid., p. 208.
- 18 Ibid., p. 207.
- 19 Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint* (see endnote 1), p. 103.



Trail in the blizzard: Interwoven identities in Orhan Pamuk's *Snow*

Orhan Pamuk was born in İstanbul, Nişantaşı in 1952. As a writer who has a strong connection with his birthplace, Pamuk shows the spatial and spiritual reflections of this neighborhood and its surroundings in his fiction. This particular territory of İstanbul where Pamuk was born and grew up was mainly inhabited by non-Muslim communities, such as Armenians, Greeks, Jews, etc. in the Ottoman Empire era. The Turkish families that lived with them throughout the centuries acquired a peaceful co-existence feeling most, and had become tolerant to differences as being part of a multicultural community. Orhan Pamuk was born into this kind of Turkish family; secular, relatively modern and wealthy. Accordingly, it is possible to observe that not-always-peaceful multicultural context surrounding Pamuk's fiction as a predominant sphere, along with the reckoning of his privileged, arguably serene, and erasing past in comparison with other lifestyles in Turkey. Some might call this reckoning over the past – not only regarding the actual past, but also the past as told through literature – “secular blasphemies”¹. I call it a secular confession, a well-measured opportunity to set a stage up for his confrontation with the faults of the Turkish ruling class, or “White Turks” (Beyaz Türkler in Turkish), as they are called since the 1990s. Christoph Ramm explains briefly the connotations of the epithets White Turk, and its opposite “Black Turk”:

The stereotypical ascriptions siyah Türk (black Turk) and beyaz Türk (white Turk) emerged in the 1990s, when members of the urban secular establishment in Turkey began to use these terms in order to distinguish themselves from social groups having a rural background and a religious outlook. In this view the city-based ‘white Turks’ appear as modern, educated and cultured, while the ‘black Turks’ from Anatolia are depicted as primitive, underdeveloped and parochial. Politically the label ‘white Turk’ was also applied to members of the Kemalist bureaucratic-military elite, the label ‘black Turk’ to supporters of the Islamic political movement, which increased its influence in those years and later merged into the successful Justice and Development Party AKP.²

It would not be wrong to say that the foundation of this cultural divide lies in the *Westernization Movement* started with the *Imperial Edict of Reorganization* (Tanzimat Fermanı in Turkish) and proceeded with the republican regime established by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) in 1923. Enlightened, progressive, and secular principles of the new republic did not find a response in the vast majority of the population, creating its own minority elite at the same time. Mardin points out that the extremity on the level of behaving like a Westerner has created a disintegration between the different layers of the society and its traces can be tracked in literature.³

In another work, Mardin draws attention to the disaccord between the laicism the reformists have tried to implement and the religious concerns of the people. Atatürk awaited long to see the emergence of a new individual unchained from the religious bonds, that otherwise hold him or her in the captivity of the “idiocy of traditional, community oriented life”⁴. Success was impossible. Only a fraction of urban Turks evolved into the liberated individuals whom Atatürk imagined, and the conservative front managed to be alive, though mostly underground, till the Millennium, growing stronger and becoming more and more radicalized.

The fundamental White Turk and Black Turk, the modern and the conservative, the highbrow and the philistine conflict overlapping the country’s geographical fate which dooms it to be stranded between the demanding streams of two powerful cultural poles, so to say, casts a long shadow over Pamuk’s fiction. It has a similar influence on the most mature examples of Turkish literature, namely the works of Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (1889–1974), Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar (1901–1962), and Oğuz Atay (1934–1977).

Among all Turkish writers, Tanpınar has the strongest influence over Pamuk’s authorship, as he says. Through Tanpınar’s ideas, he explains his own approach to the problematic love-hate relationship with the West exercising a significant impact on the identity confusion of Turkish intelligentsia, or even of the *petit bourgeois*. In *Other Colours*, his collection of essays, Pamuk observes Tanpınar’s faint admiration for Western culture beneath his praise for Andre Gide, which is quite similar to the cynical inclination to the West noticeable in his own writings as well:

I know that I can best grasp Europe as a concept if I approach it with two contradictory thoughts in mind: first, the dislike that Gide felt for other civilizations – for my civilization – and, second, the great admiration that Tanpınar felt for Gide and through him for all of Europe. I can only express

what Europe means to me if I fuse the contempt with the admiration, the hate with the love, the revulsion with the attraction.⁵

Pamuk constructs his fictional universe based upon these ontological, paradoxical, geopolitical conflict patterns while utilizing various postmodern tools, beginning with metafiction. Putting an overt self-reflexive image of himself as an author into his stories, mainly through resonating his voice in the narrator's voice, Pamuk obtains the opportunity "to question the very existence as well as the nature of extratextual reference"⁶, as it is usual in all metafictional practices in art. But, adding a historical perspective to this inquiry of representation creates a double-layered referentiality paradox. As Linda Hutcheon argued, postmodernist historiographic metafiction plays around this complex question concerning the nature of real and its representation: "Is the referent of historiography, then, the fact or the event, the textualized trace or the experience itself?"⁷. Orhan Pamuk's fiction is no exception to it. "With the writing/artist characters at the center of his fictional world, Pamuk implicitly tells his readers to acknowledge the text's fictionality and his new role in its reconstruction."⁸

This focal characteristic of Pamuk's novels enables him to challenge the so-called realities narrated in the official Turkish history writing. Involved in a newer and inverted version of a historical fragment as a narrator, or even as a protagonist, Pamuk creates postmodern narratives with a transparent political content. Girding an antagonistic attitude brought Pamuk the Nobel Prize in literature, in 2006, although he had been rewarded with the famous insulting "Turkishness" case the previous year.⁹ As a result of accusations of insulting Turkish values, norms, and the founding fathers, especially Atatürk, and advocating the Armenian genocide, Pamuk had to face countless death threats, and eventually, had to leave the country. This trial generated serious conflicts between Turkey and the European Union with respect to the freedom of speech and concluded with Pamuk's short-term exile in the USA, although he never admitted that he was in exile.¹⁰

Among all Pamuk's postmodern novels *The White Castle* (1985 original, 1990 in English translation), *The Black Book* (1990 original, 1994 in English translation), *My Name is Red* (1998 original, 2001 in English translation), *Snow* (2002 original, 2004 in English translation), and *The Museum of Innocence* (2008 original, 2009 in English translation) are considered the most distinguished ones.

Pamuk's historiographic metafiction is highly related to the modernization story of Turkey, which can also be interpreted as an attempt at Westernization. For the

supporters of Turkish modernization, to be modern always implied following the West and its moral and institutional values. However, the imitation did not always carry an intellectual or institutional aspect. Mostly, it was performed rather as a superficial copying of Western lifestyle and culture, including clothing, behaviour, Western-style dances and music. As a result, Turkish people were struggling an unsolvable identity crisis for more than 150 years. Therefore, the principal theme in the literature for the romanticist, modern or postmodern writer has been the identity struggle between the West and the East.

The roots of the conflict go back to the administration of Mahmud II, a reformist sultan of the Ottoman Empire, reigning between 1808 and 1839, who tried to divert the course of the empire towards the West. The reason behind all this was the consecutive blows on the battlefield – in both the military and the cultural aspects. It seemed to Mahmud II and his staff that with their scientific and technical developments, the Western countries had figured out how to succeed in the race of civilizations. Following the reign of Mahmud II and his reforms, an irrevocable desire for democratic and libertarian ideas appeared. In this respect, Tanzimat Fermanı, the *Les Jeunes Turcs* movement, the *Committee of Union and Progress*, and finally Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his Republican People's Party arose as the forefathers and organizers of the reformist, progressive, and libertarian ideologies in the late 19th and the early 20th century.¹¹ From then until now, the most substantial political, cultural, and ideological determiners of Turkey have been strongly influenced by the outcome of this diversion, which poised a crisis of identity. Additionally, the biggest portion of the prominent literary work of Turkish literature themed around this crisis ended up creating a dichotomy. This “dichotomy first begun in the public space, then ripped the society in two and finally installed itself into us, into individuals by deepening and altering its activity”¹² as Tanpınar asserts. *Snow*, Orhan Pamuk's first and last political novel – as he calls it – can be considered to belong to the same category. The following quotation from the novel is a persuasive example to summarize the writer's skeptical conviction on the identity matter and the relationship with the West:

„All I'd want them to print in that Frankfurt paper is this: We're not stupid, we're just poor! And we have a right to want to insist on this distinction. [...] Mankind's greatest error," continued the young Kurd, "the biggest deception of the past thousand years is this: to confuse poverty with stupidity. [...] People might feel sorry for a man who's fallen on hard times, but when an entire nation is poor, the rest of the world assumes that all its people must be brainless, lazy,

dirty, clumsy fools. Instead of pity, the people provoke laughter. It's all a joke: their culture, their customs, their practices. In time the rest of the world may, some of them, begin to feel ashamed for having thought this way, and when they look around and see immigrants from that poor country mopping their floors and doing all the other lowest paying jobs, naturally they worry about what might happen if these workers one day rose up against them. So, to keep things sweet, they start taking an interest in the immigrants' culture and sometimes even pretend they think of them as equals. [...] when a Westerner meets someone from a poor country, he feels deep contempt. He assumes that the poor man's head must be full of all the nonsense that plunged his country into poverty and despair. [...] and the first Western man I met in the street turned out to be a good person who didn't even despise me, I'd still mistrust him, just for being a Westerner, I'd still worry that this man was looking down on me. Because in Germany they can spot Turks just by the way they look. There's no escaping humiliation except by proving at the first opportunity that you think exactly as they do. But this is impossible, and it can break a man's pride to try.¹³

It was in 2002 when Orhan Pamuk published his remarkable novel *Snow* and it was the same year that the *AKP* Party celebrated the first of many election victories to come. On the day of its foundation, this party seemed to adopt the moderate Islamist doctrine, in addition to its highly acclaimed liberal and progressive policies. Its founder being Turkey's recent President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. As years passed, the table has turned and the party and Erdoğan showed his vengeful intentions to acquire more power for the sake of a radical Islam.

The history of the modern Turkish Republic of dealing with the Islamist movements in the country has never been a simple, silent acceptance of the rise of pro-Islamist parties. One of the many military coups took place on the 28th of February of 1997. Although it was not an actual coup d'état in the sense of taking the power over the country by the armed forces, there was a particular junta that the military prepared for "an action plan against reactionary forces". This action was later believed to have been consolidated by the *Welfare Party*. The *Welfare Party* being the precedent party of Erdoğan's *AKP*, and Erdoğan being member of both Parties at a time, when *AKP* was the leading party in the coalition government.¹⁴ This infamous military action was later referred to as the *postmodern coup* in journalist pieces.¹⁵ Pamuk's eighth novel *Snow* is indeed the postmodern narrative of this postmodern coup process upon a small scaled version of Turkey depicted as Kars in the novel.

In the novel, Kars is a small city in northeastern Turkey having a cold, snowy, misty atmosphere, and a complicated history corresponding with the identity issue discussed above.

Linda Hutcheon has coined the term *historiographic metafiction* for the postmodern fictional works that have a historiographical attribute accompanied by the self-reflexive character¹⁶. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967) by Gabriel García Marquez, *The French Lieutenant's Women* (1969) by John Fowles, *Ragtime* (1975) by E. L. Doctorow, *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie, and *The History of the Siege of Lisbon* (1989) by Jose Saramago can be counted among the most well-known representatives of this genre. The same goes for Orhan Pamuk by his entire oeuvre which was appreciated by the Nobel Prize in literature in 2006. Accordingly, I want to point out the feature of historiographic metafiction enabling the reliability of the non-fictional, by questioning official discourse and history books, because of their origin as deeds of the ruling state, empires, or ruling classes.¹⁷

We can characterize Pamuk's fiction as the sum of attempts at historiographic metafiction upon the various historical epochs or fragments of Turkey from medieval times to contemporary history: indifference to scientific and technological developments by Turks in 17th century and the East and West identities in *The White Castle* (1985); representing taboo and patronage issues in the 16th Century Ottoman Empire – as well as all Muslim communities of the time – in *My Name is Red* (1998); or a love story with the background of a class difference cliché set in the atmosphere of 1980 coup d'état in *The Museum of Innocence* (2008), are just a selection of topics with which he has carefully portrayed some fragile periods or severe milestones in Turkish History. Not surprisingly, his efforts to touch the sore points, including his interviews in which he denounced Turkey for the mass killing of one million Armenians and thirty thousand Kurds, have irritated the people whose alliance and *raison d'être* were grounded on an unsullied image of the past.

On one hand, the reconstruction of a particular fragment of the past previously written by some other writer ensures the questionability of historiography.¹⁸ On the other hand, an author's self-reflexive involvement in his own narration yields the inherent notion of the representability of the real.¹⁹ We may omit a detailed discussion of the proportion of trans/intertextuality in postmodern texts, but especially in historiographic metafiction, it is the dialogic function which can re-narrate authentically an existing historical narration by referring to its author's other fictional creations. In this respect, the self-reflexive mechanism in Pamuk's fiction operates

through setting the author-narrator in the center of the meta-narration and appearing as an alternate reality, in which the entirety of the characters, figures, and entities wander freely.

Snow is the story of three days in the life of the poet Ka, who has just returned to Turkey from his 12 years of political exile in Frankfurt in order to attend to his mother's funeral. In the meantime, he is addressed by a newspaper to conduct an inquiry for the upcoming election in Kars, in addition to the young female suicides investigation in town, which are related to Islamist activist working against the ban of headscarves at universities. Ka, whose name alludes conspicuously to Franz Kafka's dazed and confused protagonist K., wanders through his investigation under a heavy snowfall and a blizzard which conceals any trace that might be connected to the suicide cases. The constant snowfall not only obscures the trails of any kind of crime whatsoever, but also buries the architectural excellence of Kars, otherwise symbol for the history of numerous nations throughout time and the leftovers of several cultures. Kars' multicultural past and relatively less multicultural present forge an overview of the interwoven identity being discussed within the novel.

Kars is a city in the northeast of Turkey and the site of the events taking place in *Snow*. Kars had belonged to the Armenian Kingdom for a long time and the Byzantine Empire for a short term until Seljuk Turks settled into Anatolia and captured the town. This happened in 1064, and later on, it was conquered by Georgian Atabegs, had its share from the grand Mongol Invasion, witnessed the wrath of Tamerlane, passed from hand to hand during the Anatolian beylik period until it went to the hands of Savafid Shah of Iran. Then, it experienced a constant change in its ownership between the Ottoman Empire and the Safavids, in the wake of incessant battles and subsequent agreements. From 1828 to 1918, the city was under the Russian administration and as a result of Russian occupation, a considerable number of Russian officers settled into the town.²⁰ Besides the remarkable architectural relics from the ancient Armenian Kingdom, Russians, too, bequeathed splendid examples of Baltic style buildings during their administration.

With its multicultural structure, Kars appears a subtle choice to project Turkey's confusing ideological predicaments. Moreover, under Kars' foggy, obscure, snowy atmosphere, an unsolvable crime story interwoven with a political battle offers a perfectly fitting domain to make it more and more impossible to disentangle. In the Kars of the novel, there are radical Islamists, terrorists, sheikhs and cults who want to live under sharia law, besides the head-scarfed girls who are being forced to take off their head-scarves to enter the universities. Here the reader finds Kurdish guerilla

fighters or terrorists, sympathizers of *PKK*, the Kurdish freedom party or terror organization; unemployed and idle Kurds who are torn between the state and the disruptive local dynamics. There are also rambling communists and neo-nationalists, together with ex-communists and neo-Islamists, nationalists, Kemalists, state officials, Gladio-like the-state-within-elements, soldiers and adventurers who can stage a coup d'état together with theatre players. It is impossible to detect any hint of the possible developments of the events, even though it is the weather forecast which seems to play the biggest role, since it is snowing constantly and everyone is waiting for it to stop.

Ka blames himself for being born in a middle class, non-religious, relatively wealthy family, and mainly acts with a sort of guilty consciousness when he encounters the actual figures of an ideological fight. Even his exile is a result of a misunderstanding, since he has never been a strong defender of an unfavorable political view. Although he has not put any treachery into action, somehow, he finds himself there in Kars, among all other traitors of the state. As an intellectual having contact with the West, he is seen as a good opportunity to inform the West about the anti-democratic actions in Turkey and its oppression upon Islamists, Kurds, Communists, women, and so on. As a matter of fact, Pamuk, as a novelist, fulfils the demand, which Ka as a poet has tried and failed in the fictional narration in *Snow*. The passage quoted earlier conveys the main idea that it is about repositioning yourself and reinventing your identity against Europe or the West. At the end, every identity issue is tangling at the point of an invention, a fiction; nothing more than a story.

Modern Turkey's biggest struggling dates back to the reign of Mahmut II, who was a reformist Sultan of the Empire and fancied to make it a modern country. All his successors saw the country's salvation in a radical process of Westernization. But from the beginning of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, for a significant amount of the population, the imitation of the West has been abnormal, unacceptable, and not necessary. To them, the real salvation lies in embracing Eastern identity, the religious and moral sublimity of Islam, and conserving the high cultural values by accepting the inheritance of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, this struggle can be told as the summary of modern Turkey, whilst Kars, with its transcultural structure haunted by the ghosts of the past, can be seen as a small-scale projection of Turkey. The coup d'état which is executed by the theatre players and local army commanders taking advantage of the blocked road owing to the blizzard is the narrative simulation of the postmodern coup d'état, which is nothing more than a simulacrum as well.

Endnotes

- 1 Erdağ Gökнар: *Secular Blasphemies. Orhan Pamuk and the Turkish Novel In: NOVEL. A Forum on Fiction.* 45 (2012), 2nd issue, p. 322.
- 2 Christoph Ramm: *Beyond ‚Black Turks‘ and ‚White Turks‘. The Turkish Elites‘ Ongoing Mission to Civilize a Colourful Society.* In: *Asiatische Studien - Études Asiatiques.* 70 (2017), 4th issue, p. 1356. Although it might be needless to say, I still would like to indicate that this party was founded by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (1954–), the current president of the Republic of Turkey, and it has been leading the country as the sole ruling power since 2001.
- 3 Şerif Mardin: *Tanzimat‘tan Sonra Aşım Batılılaşma.* In: *Türk Modernleşmesi.* 4 (2000), pp. 40–41.
- 4 Şerif Mardin: *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey.* Syracuse 2006, p. 213.
- 5 Orhan Pamuk: *Other Colours. Essays and A Story.* [Übersetzt von Maureen Freely]. New York 2007.
- 6 Linda Hutcheon: *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory Fiction.* London 1988, p. 153.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Semra Saraçoğlu: *Self-Reflexivity in Postmodern Texts. A Comparative Study of the Works of John Fowles and Orhan Pamuk.* Ankara 2003, p. 38.
- 9 Erdağ Gökнар, *Secular Blasphemies* (see endnote 1), p. 301.
- 10 However, *The Telegraph* published a news about Pamuk’s escape to the USA and about his concerns on his life with the title *Turkish novelist flees to US ‚in fear for life‘*, see Damien McElroy: *Turkish Novelist Flees to US ‚in Fear for Life‘.* In: *Telegraph.* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/1542686/Turkish-novelist-flees-to-US-in-fear-for-life.html> [01.02.2020]. In the meantime Pamuk stated that he did not consider himself in exile, vgl. *Orhan Pamuk Not in Exile.* In: *Bianet.* <https://bianet.org/english/politics/96893-orhan-pamuk-not-in-exile> [01.02.2020].
- 11 Carter V. Findley: *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire. The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922.* Princeton 1980; M. Şükrü Hanioglu: *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire.* Princeton 2010.
- 12 Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar: *Yaşadığım gibi.* Istanbul 1996, p. 24.
- 13 Orhan Pamuk: *Snow.* [Übersetzt von Maureen Freely]. New York 2005, pp. 275–276.
- 14 For broader information about the rise and fall of the Islamist movements in Turkey see: William Hale and Ergun Özbudun: *Islamism, Democracy and Liberalism in Turkey. The Case of the AKP.* London 2009.
- 15 Cengiz Çandar: *Postmodern Darbe* [Postmodern Coup]. In: *Sabah.* (28.06.1997).
- 16 Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (see endnote 8), p. 5.
- 17 Ibid., p. 55.
- 18 On questioning the factuality of historiography, see Hayden White: *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe.* Baltimore 2014.
- 19 Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (see endnote 8), p. 22.
- 20 The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica: *Kars.* In: *Encyclopædia Britannica.* <https://www.britannica.com/place/Kars> [01.02.2020].



Displacement and exile identity in Iris Murdoch's *The Flight from the Enchanter* (1956)

The Flight from the Enchanter (1956) is Iris Murdoch's second novel and perhaps the only one that vividly reflects her views on contemporary social and political issues. It is a post-war novel in the sense that it was written amidst the greatest moral chaos of the twentieth century. As a tragic outcome of the Second World War, the modern world suffered from the loss of pre-war ideals on humanity and the collapse of the European civilization. Europe was going through the repression of two totalitarian regimes and it was the time that was characterized by the greatest number of emigrations to England. Murdoch's book recounts this problem and in case we approach the novel as a piece of literature filled with philosophical ideas, a definition that Murdoch herself often used when describing the moral issues in her fiction, it is closely related to Sartre's, and even more to Camus' existentialism. Like Camus, Murdoch was increasingly sceptical about the rising socialist regime in Europe after the war and was deeply concerned with "the horrors of war and the dangers of tyrannical and totalitarian regimes, with questions of good and evil and the madness that can grip both individuals and societies."¹ She called the twentieth century "our Hitler and after age"² and the human condition during and after the Holocaust is at the centre of her vision. As Peter Conradi notes, "war made Iris think anew about human wickedness and irrationality. If there is a common influence on both her philosophy and her fiction, it is surely Hitler."³ The central issue of Murdoch's philosophy and fiction is the post-war human condition in a world that was suffering from a moral crisis and that "[has] not recovered from two wars and the experience of Hitler."⁴ She claims in a 1957 BBC interview with T.R. Fryvel:

[W]e are not so comfortable in society as our grandfathers were. Society itself has become problematic and unreliable. So it is that the person who is literally an exile, the refugee, seems an appropriate symbol for the man of the present time. Modern man is not at home, in his society, in his world.⁵

For Murdoch, exile represents twentieth century modernity where society is no longer capable of providing the stability and comfort that characterized the period

after the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The modern man lives in a constant exile in a society that is not his own anymore.⁶ He is haunted by the trauma of the war, and his struggle is to make sense of his past and to give meaning to his identity in a morally shaken world. Murdoch extends this view in a 1987 interview where she argues that the refugees depicted in her novels are based on images of suffering, on “kinds of people that one has met,”⁷ and as such they “are windows through which one looks into such terrible worlds.”⁸ Accordingly, the apparently comic tone in Murdoch’s fiction is frequently shaded by a form of realism inspired by the classical Russian novel, whereby exile involves the departure from the motherland, the unsettling state of marginality, and the blurring boundaries between cultures and identities. Moreover, the concept of displacement allows her to expand her ideas on power, suffering, and the ethical problems of good and evil.

Marginality, displacement and the split nature of exile identity are central themes of *The Flight from the Enchanter*. Among Murdoch’s twenty-six novels, this book embraces most effectively her empathy with refugees. Although Murdoch rejected the idea that her fiction bears with any autobiographical references, it is not difficult to explore some real-life characters and events that might have inspired her art. In this respect *The Flight from the Enchanter* recalls some of her personal experiences as a worker for the *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (UNRRA) in the European refugee camps and her friendships with German-speaking exiles in England. As Peter J. Conradi notes, in the early stages of writing, each of the central characters in *The Flight from the Enchanter* “were to have been refugees – not merely Mischa Fox, Nina and the Lusiewicz brothers, but also Rosa Keepe and Peter Saward who, under a different name, appeared to be a Central European writing a history of the Jews.”⁹ The final version of the book seizes the concept of displacement as a specificity of the Central European exiles, and extends it to one of the major concerns of the post-war human condition. Her idea that the collapse of civilization made each individual a refugee is partly influenced by her wartime involvements and partly by her reading of Sartre who “privileged the cultureless outsider hero.”¹⁰

Murdoch’s central argument is that totalitarianism as any other forms of power is the result of a social process in which the crowd willingly subordinates itself to a higher authority. There are two types of exile characters in the novel to support this argument. One is the traumatized Peter Saward, who is constantly haunted by the past and whose inner struggle to overcome its shadows represent the anxiety of the first and the second generations of wartime soldiers and Holocaust survivors. The

other is the mysterious Mischa Fox, an European exile, an outcast whose survival rests on his ability to subordinate other people to his power and who succeeds in overcoming his own suffering in the past by transferring it to others. This power-play is present in Murdoch's every novel of Iris Murdoch. Like Elias Canetti, Murdoch sees the totalitarian leader as a ruler whose survival is rests on the myth that the mass creates around him and that originates in the mass's internal yearning for being controlled. She claims:

As for manipulating people, people are manipulated in real life, and I think the notion about power which was being hinted at in the discussion is real too, that people are not only manipulated by others but want to be so [...] People very often elect a god in their lives, they elect somebody whose puppet they want to be, and a group of people can elect somebody in this sense as their leader, or their angel, or their god or whatever it might be, and then, perhaps, almost subconsciously, are ready to receive suggestions from this person.¹¹

A.S. Byatt notes that some of the dominant images of *The Flight from the Enchanter* are "pursuit and flight, hunt and capture, enchantment and enslavement."¹² These images represent the dynamics of power and as such link the novel to Aesop's *The Fox and the Crow*, an ancient fable on trickery and manipulation. The metaphorical names of Mischa Fox, Hunter Keepe and Calvin Blick further support this argument. However, what makes this fable-like narrative highly complex is that in this play of manipulation neither the fox nor the crow are completely innocent.¹³ Shaking off responsibility by endowing somebody else with power was a typical trait of Hitler's regime in which those people, Germans and East Europeans alike, who took part in the massacre of thousands of Jews, continued to hand all the faults over to the ruling power system under which they committed their crimes and continue living without the slightest touch of guilt.

Mischa is one of the most enigmatic figures in the novel and perhaps the most ambiguous one of all of Murdoch's magicians. Drawn from the real-life character of Canetti, he is the embodiment of the exotic, mysterious, Faustian figure with a split identity. Although we hardly find out anything about Mischa's personality, his past, or the motives of his actions, some details might be tracked down behind the suspense that Murdoch develops to perfection in her later novels, especially in *A Severed Head* (1961).¹⁴ We get to know that he is from a European village, that as a child he was traumatized by the death of the one-day chicken he was given as a competition

prize and that later he murdered young kittens out of pity. According to Pamela Osborn, for Mischa “killing removes both the contingency and inevitability of experiencing loss, since they gain control of when and how death occurs.”¹⁵ It should be added that the trauma of the past dissociates Mischa from the other characters, arousing not only fear but also compassion, another chief source of power. The tormented and the demonic sides of his personality make Mischa relatively helpless and one is tempted to read the novel’s opening passage on the vulnerability of monsters as a reference to Mischa himself. Such a tormented Faust cannot exist without his Mephistopheles, and in this case, it is Calvin Blick who represents Mischa’s evil side. Elias Canetti argues in *Crowds and Power* (1960): “Power is impenetrable. The man who has it sees through other men but does not allow them to see through him. He must be more reticent than anyone; no-one must know his opinions or intentions.”¹⁶

Here, the weapon of power rests on the possession of a secret. The ruler has the power to exercise authority as it is he who has accurate information about the secret, and the revelation of this secret might be fatally destructive. The ruler’s knowledge of this secret nourishes his power while he keeps other people under the control of his invisible ruling eye. His power is enigmatic to others because he can maintain control without anybody recognizing his presence. All totalitarian systems in the twentieth century rested on such ruling eyes: the control of other people without the slightest chance of recognizability took form in the secret police agencies in the time of Hitler and the socialist era where complete populations were spied on, arrested and tortured for their actions deemed dangerous or against the regime. Calvin Blick embodies this manifestation of power. He is the „ruling eye“ that is hidden from everybody: like in a Hitchcock movie, he appears suddenly and unexpectedly in situations of danger, he watches everybody from shadowy corners, and he makes photographs to blackmail others. The underground dark room in Mischa’s hell-like house, where he exposes the photographs of his victims, has the air of a torture chamber with its tall dark machine, its hot-plate and electric fire.

The Polish Lusiewicz brothers represent yet another side of power. Standing for the rootless refugee torn between two cultures and two identities, they symbolize the split nature of refugee identity. This duality is present in almost every little element of their existence. As twins they signify the two halves of the same identity and as such are counterparts to Mischa and Calvin. They also share sexually the same women and keep their mother to bear witness to each of their actions. Their power rests on their capability of generating pity, compassion and a sadomasochistic desire

for the mysterious in Rosa Keepe. They arrive in England as helpless refugees, like children depending on the protection of others. Yet, the more they obtain the language and the necessary skills for survival, the more they gain superiority in this game of power. Their way of commanding the language and asserting themselves to the foreign culture becomes for Rosa „an instrument of terror“¹⁷. They are also capable of violence and in a symbolic act they kill their mother by burning her the same way as Hitler burned down their homeland.

The figure of the mother is of particular importance here. Like in Murdoch's other novels written in the Gothic genre, the mother here represents the motherland and all the desires, anxieties, fears and traumas connected to it. The mother's constant presence embodies the unbreakable tie between the brothers and their Polish roots, while it also conveys the haunting presence of their traumatic past. On one hand, the homeland is a symbolic place standing for the suffering of the past and the threat of being deported. On the other hand there is also the hope that the homeland will become again the promised land that would altogether signify the end of rootlessness. As a place that is highly associated with trauma, it also consists of memories that affect the individual and that should be hidden and repressed. Any attempt to betray this secret would represent a threat “not only to the possessor, which in itself might not matter, but also to all they concern.”¹⁸ When Hunter warns Stefan Lusiewicz to reveal his knowledge about the brothers' birthplace to throw them out of the country, Stefan threatens to kill him and eventually burns his hair.

Robert Coles notes on Simone Weil that she was “forever on the move, morally and spiritually and politically and culturally, so that, by the time Hitler forced her and her family into exile, she was already chronically displaced.”¹⁹ This leads to the assumption that although Weil's displacement was something that was decided for her, but on the whole it was a “deliberate ethical choice”²⁰. Murdoch, who read Weil's *The Need for Roots* (1949) while she was working for the UNRRA,²¹ might have gained a deep understanding of this form of displacement. Still, as Byatt argues, in *The Flight from the Enchanter* the moral crisis of each character is that they are “not free”²². Their displacement is not a matter of ethical choice but something that is imposed upon them externally. The tragedy resulting from this situation is that although there is an agency for immigrants called the SELIB (Special European Labour Immigration Board) that “regulates immigrant permits, and holds all the immigrants' identity documents,”²³ and allows them after five years of work to ask for naturalization,²⁴ “in fact once they're here no one is going to bother their heads about them” (TFE. 97). This unjust procedure arouses some pity in Hunter, who also notes that “[i]t

would be a sad thing for a man [...] to have his fate decided by where he was born. He didn't choose where he was born" (TFE. 99). This part of the novel powerfully reflects on the lack of freedom that all refugees coming to England were forced to live through: they were forced to live with the discriminating policy of the foreign land, the everyday manifestations of prejudice and the constant fear of being de-ported at any time.

This lack of freedom is preliminary to the inner conflict of Nina, the dressmaker. Having no given surname, Nina is the archetype for the rootless refugee with a loss of identity. She appears to Annette Cockayne as "some sort of refugee' [...] [who] spoke with a charming and quite undiagnosable foreign accent" (TFE. 41). As a nameless survivor, she is the most vulnerable among Mischa's slaves. Yet, she has hate for all authorities and for their mysterious interconnection with each other, something that was shared by many other refugees fleeing from Hitler (see TFE. 145). Nina lives in a world of continuous torment. She tries to escape from Mischa by fleeing to another continent. Her fear of Mischa is paralleled to her anxiety of being deported, of being pushed back from one form of power to another without any hope for freedom. Her frustration takes shape in her constant nightmare in which her sewing machine chases and swallows her up along with a map of all the countries in the world like a heartless beast. Nina's tragedy is that she desperately yearns for being freed, yet everybody, not only the people from her immediate social environment but also the broader English society, fail to help her.²⁵ As White claims, although "English society is politically strong,"²⁶ it is also "[c]allous, unthinking, ac-cidental"²⁷ and indifferent to the refugee. If we read Murdoch's novel as a commen-tary on the contemporary English society's attitude toward refugees, the strength of this argument is obvious. For a person like Nina, "a soul without a nationality, a soul without a home" (TFE. 264), there is no possibility to escape (TFE. 265). Nina's crisis reaches its peak in the scene where she desperately prepares to return to her homeland, a home that represents for her both spiritual and physical extinction:

She had finished packing her case. Everything was ready. She looked into her handbag. She had in it a very large sum of money and her passport. She stared at her passport, and it seem to her suddenly lie a death warrant. It filled her with shame and horror. She took it in her hand and it fell open at the picture of herself. It was an old picture taken in the worst days of her fear. At the Nina whose hair was golden a younger black-haired Nina stared back, anxious, haggard and fearful. Here was her very soul upon record, stamped and filed; a

soul without a nationality, a soul without a home. She turned the faded pages. The earlier ones carried the names of the frontiers of her childhood, frontiers which no longer existed in the world. The later pages were covered with the continually renewed permits from the Ministry of Labour. The Foreign Office which had issued this document had disappeared from the face of the earth. Now nothing could make it new. It remained like the Book of Judgement, the record of her sins, the final and irrevocable sentence of society upon her. She was without identity in a world where to be without identity is the first and most universal of crimes, the crime which, whatever else it may overlook, every State punishes. She had no official existence. (TFE. 263–264)

Nina's suicide is inevitable since there is "[o]nly one frontier remained, the frontier where no papers are asked for, which can be crossed without an identity into the land which remains for the persecuted, always open" (TFE. 265). The pursuit of freedom, the attempt, with the words of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, to find "lines of flight"²⁸ from both individual and social repression and to "realiz[e] [our] freedom in difference and through differentiation,"²⁹ is at the heart of the novel's moral issue. Displacement in this sense as a form of belonging to a minority signifies a political action that challenges all forms of individual or social power and domination. It is a non-static position that involves a continuous metamorphosis, a way of becoming and that altogether de-stabilizes steady social and political norms as well as identities.³⁰

The Kafkaesque form of becoming an animal is present in the characters' desire to escape from the power they are enslaved to: "to think in terms of degrees of freedom, and to picture, in a non-metaphysical, non-totalitarian and non-religious sense, the transcendence of reality."³¹ Accordingly, the novel is filled with animalistic references. The fox in Mischa's surname recalls the classical parables and Aesop. He frequently refers to the ones enslaved to him as his "creatures" and watches Annette "as one might watch a bird" (TFE. 81). Nina is described as "a small, artificial ani-mal" (TFE. 76). At one point, Hunter is referred to as "an animal whose protection was not teeth but flight and camouflage" (TFE. 229). Upon their arrival at England, the Lusiewicz brothers appear to Rosa as "dejected and colourless, like half-starved, half-drowned animals" (TFE. 43).

The symbols of hunting (Mischa's purpose to take over Rosa's feminist journal the *Artemis*) and escaping in the novel are tightly connected to Murdoch's philosophical idea on the ability of attention. Freedom for her, such as love, manifests itself

in our ability to acknowledge to the “other-centered reality of the world”³². Thus, both freedom and love are “the extremely difficult realisation that something other than the self is real.”³³ The lack of attention drives Nina to commit suicide. Annette’s liberation from the enchantment of Mischa results in her capability of looking at the world and attending to it in all its colours, smells and sounds. For Rosa, this freedom is ambiguous. Her escape from Mischa and her successful attempt to save the Artemis from being bought up by him allows her to give a new meaning to her life. Yet, she carries the moral responsibility of being inattentive to Nina and, although indirectly, assisting to her death. This sense of guilt makes any moral reconciliation for Rosa impossible and the closing chapter of the novel is permeated with melancholy.

As Martin and Rowe claim, the novel’s conclusion suggests that the end of World War II and the victory of Socialism and the Labour Party in England and Europe, did not bring the anticipated liberation and that “the age of austerity continued”³⁴. The collapse of society and the ruling totalitarian regimes led to the emergence of thousands of refugees. When Peter shows Rosa the photographs on Mischa’s childhood there is a strong sense of looking back to a lost world to which there is no return. Thus, Murdoch’s novel can be read as a social commentary on the twentieth-century totalitarian regimes, which were responsible for the collapse of the European civilization and which produced their own exiles, without the promise of freedom and reconciliation. In this respect Murdoch extends the concept of displacement to meditate upon the various manifestations of the abuse of power as well as the general social indifference toward the exiled. By doing so, the novel expresses sharp criticism on both the ruling totalitarian regimes and raises awareness for the individual’s social-political involvements and responsibilities.

Endnotes

- 1 Maria Antonaccio: *A Philosophy to Live By. Engaging Iris Murdoch*. Oxford 2012, p. 5.
- 2 Iris Murdoch: *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. London 2003, p. 120.
- 3 Peter J. Conradi: *Iris Murdoch. A Life*. London 2001, p. 597.
- 4 Iris Murdoch: *Existentialists and Mystics. Writings on philosophy and literature*. Harmondsworth 1999, p. 287.
- 5 Conradi, *Iris Murdoch* (see endnote 3), p. 239.
- 6 See Miklós Trócsányi: *Mindenki külön?: londoni beszélgetés Iris Murdoch Kal*. In: *Élet és Irodalom*. 8 (1977).
- 7 Conradi, *Iris Murdoch* (see endnote 3), p. 239.
- 8 Ibid.

- 9 Peter J. Conradi: *The Saint and the Artist. A Study of the Fiction of Iris Murdoch*. London 2001, p. 65.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- 11 Jean-Louis Chevalier: *Closing Debate, Rencontres avec Iris Murdoch*. In: *From a Tiny Corner in the House of Fiction. Conversations with Iris Murdoch*. Ed. by Gillian Dooley. South Carolina 2003, pp. 73–93, here p. 74.
- 12 A.S. Byatt: *Degrees of Freedom. The Early Novels of Iris Murdoch*. London 1994, p. 40.
- 13 Peter Conradi: *Holy Fool and Magus: The Uses of Discipleship in Under the Net and The Flight from the Enchanter*. In: *Iris Murdoch, Philosopher*. Ed. by Justin Broackes. Oxford 2014, pp. 118–133, here p. 131.
- 14 See Miranda Seymour's introduction to the 2001 edition of *A Severed Head* [1961], London 2001.
- 15 Pamela Osborn: *Another Country. Bereavement, Mourning and Survival in the Novels of Iris Murdoch*. (unpublished doctoral thesis) Kingston University 2013, p. 198.
- 16 Elias Canetti: *Crowds and Power* [1960]. New York 1978, p. 292.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 295.
- 19 Robert Coles: *Simone Weil. A Modern Pilgrimage*. Woodstock / Vermont 2001, p. 5.
- 20 Christopher J. Frost und Rebecca Bell-Metereau, Simone Weil: *On Politics, Religion and Society*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi 1998, p. 20.
- 21 Priscilla Martin and Anne Rowe: *Iris Murdoch. A Literary Life*. Basingstoke / New York 2010, p. 28.
- 22 Byatt, *Degrees of Freedom* (see endnote 12), p. 42.
- 23 Frances White: *The world is just a transit camp. Diaspora in the Fiction of Iris Murdoch*. In: *Iris Murdoch Review*. 2 (2010), pp. 6–13, here p. 8.
- 24 Iris Murdoch: *The Flight from the Enchanter* [1956]. London 2000, p. 97. Henceforth cited as: (TFE. page number).
- 25 White, *The world is just a transit camp* (see endnote 23), pp. 8–9.; Martin / Rowe: *Iris Murdoch* (see endnote 21), p. 32.
- 26 White, *The world is just a transit camp* (see endnote 23), p. 11.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Eugene W. Holland: *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Œdipus. Introduction to schizoanalysis*. London / New York 1999, p. 121.
- 29 Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's Anti-Œdipus* (see endnote 28), p. 121.
- 30 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis / London 1986.
- 31 Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (see endnote 4), p. 293.
- 32 Trócsányi, *Mindenki külön?* (see endnote 6), p. 8.
- 33 Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (see endnote 4), p. 215.
- 34 Martin / Rowe, *Iris Murdoch* (see endnote 21), p. 33.



Un roman historique minoritaire

La Bataille de Kerguidu de Lan Inisan

Quand Jules Michelet parle dans son *Tableau de la France* de la Bretagne, il affirme à propos de la langue bretonne: „Le vieil idiome, miné par l’infiltration continuelle de la langue française, recule peu à peu.“¹ Malgré les pronostics pessimistes du texte publié en 1833, la langue bretonne persistait en Basse-Bretagne, dans la communication quotidienne, dans la culture populaire et elle se répand même grâce aux journaux (telle revue légitimiste *Feiz-ha-Breizh*) et à la littérature, quoique peu nombreux et sans œuvres comparables à la production française de l’époque.² Or, en 1877 et 1878 paraît en deux volumes l’œuvre qui se distingue par son ampleur et par son style élaboré et qui deviendra un best-seller breton: *La Bataille de Kerguidu* de Lan Inisan, prêtre de Plounevez-Lochrist dans le pays de Léon. Ce livre peut être considéré, en quelque sorte, comme le premier roman moderne rédigé en breton et il n’est traduit en français qu’en 1977. Déjà par son titre, *La Bataille de Kerguidu et autres événements survenus en Basse-Bretagne pendant la Révolution de 1793*, le livre annonce sa thématique historique: tout le récit se déroule pendant l’époque révolutionnaire et le livre se classe ainsi dans le courant du *Roman de l’Ouest* qui traite la contre-révolution en France. C’est cette œuvre *minoritaire* et historique que nous voudrions présenter dans notre communication.

Un prêtre breton et son œuvre

À la différence de la majorité des autres auteurs du *Roman de l’Ouest*, l’abbé Alain-Marie Inisan (1826-1891) n’était ni écrivain professionnel ni journaliste mais il passait sa vie comme prêtre dans diverses paroisses de la Basse-Bretagne.³ Depuis les années 1870, il commence à rédiger en breton: il collaborait avec la revue *Feiz ha Breizh* où il publie en 1874 le texte *Toull Al Lakez* (*Le Trou au valet*). La liste des œuvres de Lan Inisan se clôt par *Buez Sant Fransez a Asiz* (*Vie de Saint François d’Assise*), publié en 1889. *La Bataille de Kerguidu* reste donc l’œuvre la plus longue et importante de l’abbé Inisan. Nous l’avons désigné comme le premier roman moderne écrit en breton. Néanmoins, nous devons préciser la terminologie car il s’agit plutôt du

recueil de vingt-neuf contes, seize dans le premier et treize dans le second volume. Faute d'une vraie ligne narrative, les contes sont connectés par leur thématique et par le personnage du narrateur, l'ancien Chouan Ian Pennors.

Le thème et surtout le ton du livre est fortement influencé par le milieu qui formait Lan Inisan. Son pays, l'ancien diocèse du Léon, représentait avant la Révolution une société rurale cléricale typique dont les piliers étaient la noblesse nombreuse mais pauvre, le clergé influent⁴ soutenu par la majorité de la population⁵ et la classe des paysans. Il faut également rappeler l'aspect linguistique: les administrateurs révolutionnaires (outre les fonctionnaires locaux) et les soldats venus dans le pays étaient francophone tandis que la population était majoritairement bretonnante. A la fin du XIX^e siècle, de nouveau, le régime républicain semble menacer la position du breton.

C'est alors ce milieu rural et fortement conservateur qui représente le monde mental de l'auteur de la *Bataille de Kerguidu*. Peut-il nous surprendre que l'abbé Inisan, prêtre issu d'une grande famille rurale, défendait dans ses ouvrages les positions légitimistes et strictement ultramontaines? En effet, la publication de *La Bataille de Kerguidu* s'inscrit dans le contexte de la lutte entre le parti royaliste et les défenseurs de la jeune III^e République.⁶ Le livre était immédiatement accueilli par le milieu traditionaliste breton comme en témoigne l'épître de l'évêque Augustin de Saint-Brieuc publié en tête du second volume, saluant le récit qui fait „vibrer toutes les cordes religieuses et patriotiques de notre Bretagne.“⁷ Regardons maintenant comment la position de l'abbé Inisan traverse trois aspects déterminants du livre, son caractère historique, populaire et minoritaire.

La Bataille de Kerguidu – ouvrage historique

Nous pouvons sans doute désigner *La Bataille de Kerguidu* comme la littérature historique car le récit se déroule entièrement au passé et il est présenté comme les mémoires d'un participant direct des événements concernés, c'est-à-dire de la révolte en Léon du printemps 1793, provoquée par la levée en masse. Néanmoins, l'image du passé présentée par le livre s'avère très spécifique, parce que la mission du livre, plutôt que de transmettre le savoir historique, consiste à décrire la société bretonne traditionnelle dans son conflit avec la Révolution.

Quelle est donc la vision de la Révolution présentée par le livre? Sans aucune hésitation, le narrateur Ian Pennors (et donc l'auteur lui-même) la rejette en bloc. La

vision du monde polarisé et manichéen, typique pour tout le Roman de l'Ouest, est dans le cas de *La Bataille de Kerguidu* fortement sensible. Comme le constate René Galand: La peinture que fait Ian Pennors de la Bretagne sous la Révolution n'a donc ni l'objectivité ni l'intégralité que l'on exigerait de l'historien. Elle implique un modèle idéologique fondé sur une série d'oppositions binaires: bien/mal; religion/athéisme; passé/présent; conservatisme/révolution; monarchie/république; Bretons/étrangers; paysans/citadins.⁸

L'image de l'histoire se forme ainsi par cette grille de lecture nette et univoque: par exemple, tous les Bretons sont „les braves et les honnêtes gens“, en revanche les Révolutionnaires sont décrits comme impies, brigands et scélérats. Il n'est pas ainsi surprenant que l'abbé Inisan ne se soucie pas de la vérité des faits évoqués. Il s'agit par exemple de l'exagération des cruautés des Républicains au Léon, ou du destin de certains participants des événements.⁹ Même l'épisode central du récit, la bataille de Kerguidu, s'écarte nettement de la réalité historique. Tandis que la tradition estime les pertes à quatre cents insurgés et plusieurs dizaines de soldats, les chiffres attestées par les recherches modernes sont beaucoup plus modestes: elles ne dépassent quelques morts pour les Républicains (dans l'affaire de Saint-Pol, mais non à Kerguidu) et au maximum quelques dizaines d'insurgés.¹⁰

Nous pourrions citer encore d'autres exemples d'imprécisions historiques ou d'anachronismes abondants. C'est que le but du livre n'est point de faire un tableau de l'histoire véridique. L'auteur recourt au passé pour créer l'image de la société bretonne idéalisée, du combat résolu entre le Bien et le Mal qui peut servir à l'exemple du présent. Presque chaque chapitre se termine par une morale¹¹ et l'intention éducative du livre est donc évidente. Si l'auteur prétend écrire le passé et s'il se montre hostile à la Révolution, c'est pour s'adresser au présent et pour critiquer la société actuelle avec son impiété, sa décadence des mœurs en général.¹² Quant à son avis par rapport à la République, l'auteur ne nous laisse aucun doute:

On dirait bien que la République est la mère de tous les scélérats qui vivent dans notre pays ; du moins se placent-ils sous son aile. [...] Aujourd'hui, aussi bien en ville qu'à la campagne, quand vous verrez un homme ivre, couché par la boisson sur le chemin, frappez-lui l'épaule, relevez-le et conseillez-lui de dire: ‚Vive le Roi!‘ et vous le verrez tourner la tête en criant ‚Vive la République!‘ [...] Ce que je dis ici ne signifie pas que tous les partisans de la République soient des crapules mais pour vous montrer à vous et à tous les autres que tout ce que le pays compte de voyous prend parti pour la République. Voilà pourquoi Ian Pennors ne sera

jamais Républicain, car il ne lui sera jamais facile de se mêler à des ivrognes, à des galériens, à des assassins, à des débauchés et à des impies. (I. 130)

Le lien établi entre le passé et le présent est donc très marqué. L'auteur souligne sans cesse les méfaits révolutionnaires pour mettre ses lecteurs en garde contre le système politique actuel¹³: „Ne viendra-t-il plus dans notre pauvre pays d'hommes assez impies pour tenter d'en renouveler l'expérience? Dieu nous en garde!“ (I. 40) ou „Quand reviendra la vieille habitude de décapiter les prêtres? Plus tôt peut-être que beaucoup ne le pensent.“ (I. 173) Et dans le cas du service militaire obligatoire qui était la cause immédiate de la révolte de 1793, l'auteur incite ses lecteurs à se révolter de nouveau, au cas de nécessité. Le premier volume se termine ainsi par la déclaration suivante: „Jeune gens de Basse-Bretagne, si vous devez comme nous, prendre les armes, quitter la maison de votre père – ce n'est pas moi qui vous le demande – pour défendre votre pays, vos prêtres et votre religion, suivez l'exemple de Ian Pennors et de ses camarades, et vous aurez obéi à la volonté divine.“ (I. 181)

En ce qui concerne l'image de l'histoire dans le livre, notons également la présence du discours propre au genre des légendes: il semble parfois que l'abbé Inisan crée une sorte de la martyrologie bretonne. Il dit par exemple à propos des femmes de la famille Le Saint qui cachent les prêtres réfractaires: „Elles prirent le risque de perdre leurs biens et leur vie; cela ne comptait pas; ce qu'elles cherchaient avant tout, c'était la gloire de Dieu, le bien de la religion, le salut des âmes. Est-ce que, dans l'Antiquité, les premiers chrétiens n'ont pas agi de la même façon, à l'égard des martyrs?“ (I. 268) Ou plus tard, il raconte à ses lecteurs l'histoire d'un certain Corentin qui, attendant son exécution à la prison, désire à mourir „à peu près à l'heure où mourut autrefois notre sauveur Jésus-Christ, pour nous tous, sur la croix du mont Calvaire.“ (I. 314) Nous pouvons donc constater que *La Bataille de Keryidu*, malgré sa dimension historique indiscutable, peut être lu plutôt comme un recueil de contes édifiants au message moral combiné avec des éléments polémiques qui appartiennent plutôt au domaine de la propagande politique et même au discours hagiographique.

La Bataille de Kerguidu – ouvrage populaire

Yves Le Berre constate que „La Bataille de Kerguidu a été le seul ouvrage profane en prose qui ait connu en langue bretonne ce qu'on pourrait aujourd'hui appeler „la diffusion en masse“.“¹⁴ Nous pouvons désigner *La Bataille de Kerguidu* comme un roman populaire, pour sa popularité énorme de même que pour sa forme qui ressemble à la production française de l'époque. Or, le roman populaire en breton n'est pas tout à fait comparable avec les romans en français parce que la forme de sa diffusion était différente.¹⁵ Le livre était destiné d'abord à la lecture à haute voix dans les foyers des paysans bretons ce qui explique plusieurs éléments de sa structure: Lan Inisan a su choisir une stratégie narrative appropriée au public visé.¹⁶

Il est possible de distinguer plusieurs éléments qui font du livre une „fausse littérature orale“ (I. 765) et qui témoignent au talent de narrateur extraordinaire de l'abbé Inisan. D'abord, c'est la séparation du livre en contes plus ou moins indépendants. De même, le narrateur mène sans cesse le dialogue avec les lecteurs pour donner l'impression d'une vraie communication: „Je vais vous en avoir assez dit, en vous contant ce qui se passa aux quatre coins de notre région, pour vous faire comprendre combien tous pouvaient être las de tant méchanceté, de stupidité et de cruauté“ (I. 157) ou „*Comme je vous l'ai montré* [souligné pour J.S.]“¹⁷, les Républicains faisaient la guerre à leurs concitoyens“ La diffusion orale explique également l'emploi abondant des dialogues qui favorisent la lecture à haute voix, par exemple dans le chapitre 9 où un groupe de jeunes Bretons décide de punir les soldats pour leurs crimes:

Le soir tombe, dit Robert Menguy, ces misérables et lâches assassins ne vont pas tarder à se mettre en route. [...] Ils devront passer le pont de Kerjean. C'est là qu'ils trouveront la mort, je vous le jure, si vous m'obéissez.

- Oui, oui, nous obéirons, nous ferons tout ce que tu voudras, Robert Menguy, et s'il faut marcher à la mort, nous marcherons.

- Mon projet n'est ni de vous envoyer à la mort, ni de mourir avec vous. Fourrer du plomb bien dur et froid dans le crâne des assassins que vous savez, les abattre tous, comme des chiens enragés, voilà mon projet.

- Bravo, bravo, Robert Menguy, ta main, que je la serre. Bien que tu sois encore jeune, tu es un homme de tête et de courage. (I. 127)

La description exagérée des cruautés peut également servir à satisfaire le goût du public pour le dramatique.¹⁸ Nous pouvons remarquer également la mélange des styles qui sert à amuser ou à émouvoir les lecteurs: Les épisodes dramatiques et tragiques¹⁹ alternent avec les anecdotes comiques qui doivent tourner en ridicule le comportement des *Bleus*: un prêtre intrus doit se cacher dans l'auge des cochons pendant l'attaque des Chouans (chapitre 23), un soldat ivre est blessé par le bélier (chapitre 23), etc. Un autre ingrédient indispensable du roman populaire est l'aventure comme le prouve le héros principal du livre, de Ian Pennors. C'est lui qui raconte aux lecteurs ses propres expériences de la bataille de Kerguidu et qui se distingue par son héroïsme après la bataille: comme la réponse au meurtre d'une famille innocente, jetée dans le puits (chapitre 19), il extermine vingt-six soldats républicains en une seule nuit (chapitre 21). Plus tard, il passe sans être aperçu dans la ville de Berven pleine de soldats et il place au clocher de l'église l'écharpe noire pour prévenir les autres Bretons de l'échec à Kerguidu.²⁰ De même, il faut également comprendre le message moral dans le contexte de ce caractère *populaire* du livre: le statut du prêtre et ainsi d'une personne digne de confiance donnait à Lan Inisan une bonne opportunité de persuader ses lecteurs, paysans et roturiers.

***La Bataille de Kerguidu* – ouvrage minoritaire**

Pour terminer notre communication, nous nous voudrions demander demander en quoi consiste le caractère *breton* du livre présenté. Selon nous, le livre se caractérise d'abord par sa fidélité aux traditions culturelles locales et, encore plus, par la conscience d'une certaine identité bretonne, fondée sur un système de valeurs solidement établi.

La culture bretonne se distingue par une forte tradition du folklore, des contes, des légendes et des chants appelés *gwerz*.²¹ Cette tradition se manifeste naturellement dans *La Bataille de Kerguidu* qui exploite plusieurs sources de la culture populaire, y compris les chansons.²² Or, en parlant du caractère minoritaire du livre, l'élément le plus important à mentionner est certainement la conception de l'identité bretonne défendue par l'auteur. Elle est résumée dans ses traits fondamentaux par les propos de monsieur de Kerbalannec, chef des insurgés à Kerguidu. Dans le combat, il encourage ses hommes par les termes suivants: „Debout et en avant, hommes de Bretagne! Chargeons les Révolutionnaires! Donnez, de toute vos forces, de vos fléaux et de vos faux. C'est pour votre Dieu, pour votre pays et pour votre Roi que vous

combattez. Courage donc, hommes de Bretagne, et pas de quartier.“ (I. 167) L'identité bretonne telle qu'elle est présentée par Lan Inisan, repose ainsi sur trois piliers: la Patrie, Dieu, le Roi, correspondant aux trois oppositions binaires omniprésentes: Bretons/étrangers; fidèles/impies; *bonnêtes gens*/Républicains et tout en général à la frontière entre le connu et l'inconnu, entre moi et l'autre, entre l'identité et l'altérité.

La notion de la Patrie revient à plusieurs reprises dans le récit. Pour terminer le récit de ses exploits, Ian Pennors affirme: „Ce que j'avais fait, je l'avais fait pour l'amour de Dieu, pour les Bretons, mes compatriotes et pour la Basse-Bretagne, ma patrie.“ (I. 250) La Patrie pour l'auteur, c'est la Basse-Bretagne et le pays étranger, c'est la France mais leurs frontières sont tracées par les critères linguistiques: les compatriotes sont ceux qui parlent breton, cependant tous les francophones sont les étrangers et peu importe s'ils proviennent de Paris, de Rennes ou de la Normandie.²³ L'autre terme clé pour le système des valeurs de Lan Inisan est Dieu et ainsi la religion. Tout l'univers de *La Bataille de Kerguidu* est fondé sur la foi profonde et sincère et sur l'éthique chrétienne assez conservatrice, voire archaïque. Dans cet univers, Dieu²⁴ et Satan²⁵ interviennent directement dans les affaires humaines. Dieu ne manque pas de punir les méchants²⁶ et de récompenser ses fidèles, fût-ce dans l'autre monde: „Dieu n'abandonne jamais ceux qui suivent ses voies: parfois, il est vrai, on connaît quelques douleurs en ce monde, mais on est bien récompensé dans l'autre.“ (I. 330) De même, l'auteur insiste sur la fidélité absolue à l'Eglise catholique (les assermentés sont sans exception décrits comme les renégats et les impies) et sur la place fondamentale des prêtres dans la société. L'Eglise est garant de la paix sociale et le prêtre, c'est une autorité qui guide le peuple. (I. 20) Le troisième terme clé de l'identité bretonne dans le livre, le Roi, peut être compris comme la fidélité à l'ordre établi, au système social hérité des ancêtres. Dans le monde mental de *La Bataille de Kerguidu*, le désir de liberté,²⁷ d'égalité, de progrès est un acte de rébellion contre l'ordre social, instauré par Dieu lui-même. (I. 19)

Pour terminer, constatons encore une fois que *La Bataille de Kerguidu* se distingue par un système des valeurs archaïque, voire anachronique qui souligne son caractère minoritaire. Écrit en breton, émanant des traditions locales et s'adressant au public autochtone, le roman combine les valeurs légitimistes avec le nationalisme radical, fondé sur les critères linguistiques. Par ces valeurs, le récit se nourrit d'une certaine conscience de l'identité bretonne et il la forme en même temps. Cette identité tient tête aux défis du temps de la publication: à l'avènement du régime républicain, aux attaques faites à l'autorité des prêtres, accompagnées par la mise en place de l'éducation laïque et finalement à l'influence toujours croissant du français qui menace de

remplacer, voire d'anéantir, *brezhoneg*, la langue des ancêtres. La narration séduisante de Lan Inisan n'est pas donc très persuasive au niveau factuel mais elle démontre bien l'importance de cette période historique pour les défis du présent de même que le monde mental des paysans de la Basse-Bretagne. *La Bataille de Kerguidu* est l'expression d'une culture et d'une nationalité de plus en plus marginalisées par les temps modernes et en même temps, il s'agit de la fabrication d'un mythe historique *par excellence*.

Notes

- 1 Juliet Michelet: *Tableau de la France*. [1861]. Paris 1962, p. 13.
- 2 „Les genres les plus courts sont les plus représentés dans cette catégorie [des œuvres originales écrites en bretonne, J.S.]: cantique, chanson, article de périodique, conte morale [...]. Mais de roman, point. Ni tragédies, ni comédies vraiment originales.“ Jean Balcou et al.: *Histoire littéraire et culturelle de la Bretagne*. Paris 1997 (Romantisme et littératures populaires. De la Révolution de 1789 à la Troisième République 2), p. 264.
- 3 Il passa également une certaine période de sa vie en poste en Normandie, depuis 1865 il était professeur au collège de Neubourg. Ibid., p. 17.
- 4 Pendant la Révolution, 90 % de prêtres en Finistère nord a refusé le serment, à savoir le nombre le plus important en toute la Bretagne. Anne Bernet: *Histoire générale de la Chouannerie*. Paris 2000, p. 44.
- 5 La source très intéressante pour cet aspect de la Révolution est le recueil des chansons populaires bretonnes, publiées en édition bilingue en 1937. Voir: Henri Pérennès: *Poésies et chansons populaires bretonnes concernant des événements politiques et religieux de la Révolution française*. Rennes 1937. Un grand nombre de chansons recueillies traitent en effet de la situation de l'Eglise et se montrent, pour la plupart, très hostiles envers les prêtres assermentés, les intrus.
- 6 La réédition du livre en 1902 représente de nouveau un enjeu idéologique majeur qui réagit à la politique de laïcité et aux attaques de l'État contre les congrégations religieuses. Albert Laot: *La Bataille de Kerguidu. Révolte contre-révolutionnaire en Basse-Bretagne, mythe et réalité*. Morlaix 2013 (Skoll Vreizh 66), p. 70.
- 7 Lan Inisan: *Emgann Kergidu. Ha traon-all e'hoarvezet e Breizh-Izel, epad dispac'h 1793* [1878]. Brest 2014. En suivant cité directement comme: I. numéro de page.
- 8 René Galand: *Histoire et Idéologie. Emgann Kergidu*. En: *French Faculty Scholars'hip* 30, p.15.
- 9 Par exemple le héros du conte 16, le prêtre Jean Le Breton qui aurait dû participer à la bataille de Kerguidu, était en réalité incarcéré à Quimper depuis 1792. Laot, *La bataille de Kerguidu* (voir note 6), p. 72. De même, l'histoire de la vie d'Anne Le Saint, exécutée pour avoir protégé les prêtres réfractaires ne correspond pas tout à fait à la réalité historique. Voir: Abbé Livinec: *Bro-Leon sous la Terreur. Anne Le Saint, MM. Le Gall et Corrigoù. Trois victimes de la Révolution à Plouénan*. Morlaix 1929.
- 10 Laot, *La bataille de Kerguidu* (voir note 6), p. 58–60.

- 11 A la fin du chapitre 6 qui raconte la mort d'un prêtre intrus, le narrateur constate: „tout ce que je sais, c'est que celui qui renie son Dieu, qui abandonne sa religion, qu'il soit ou non prêtre, finit toujours mal.“ (I. 106).
- 12 Par exemple, le livre mentionne à plusieurs reprises l'abus de l'alcool: „nos ancêtres estimaient que l'eau-de-vie leur faisait perdre leur bon sens et raccourcissait la vie. C'est peut-être pour cela qu'on vivait beaucoup plus vieux autrefois qu'aujourd'hui“ (I. 205) ou quand l'auteur parle du fermier Pierre Le Saint, il dit: „On ne le voyait pas, comme on voit, aujourd'hui, hélas, trop de jeunes gens, courir les auberges et les tavernes, buvant un verre avec celui-ci, un verre avec celui-là.“ (I. 265.) Nous pouvons en juger que l'alcoolisme présentait un grave problème à la campagne bretonne de l'époque.
- 13 „Il s'agit de la réactivation de la mémoire contre-révolutionnaire et d'établir la continuité entre les ennemis d'hier et ceux d'aujourd'hui.“ (I. 751).
- 14 Balcou, *Histoire* (Voir note 2), p. 33.
- 15 Sur la question de la littérature populaire en breton, voir: Yves Le Berre: *La littérature moderne en langue bretonne, ou les fruits oubliés d'un amour de truchement*. En: *Bibliothèque de l'École des chartes* 159 (2001), Volume 1, p. 45–48.
- 16 Balcou, *Histoire* (Voir note 2), p. 24.
- 17 Ce passage prouve de nouveau la volonté de l'auteur d'influencer l'avis de ses lecteurs; (I. 157).
- 18 Voir le massacre des moines de Saint-Aubin: „Les pauvres moines, le corps transpercé, la crâne brisée par les balles, roulaient de leurs durs couchés sur le sol: le sang coulait à terre et se figeait un peu plus loin à leur côté!“ (I. 54–55)
- 19 Dans le chapitre 26, après avoir reproduite une chanson sur la mort du prêtre réfractaire Branellec, l'auteur s'adresse aux lecteurs: „Votre cœur n'est-il pas ému ? Les larmes ne vous montent-elles pas aux yeux, quand vous entendez chanter une aussi poignante complainte?“ (I. 297)
- 20 Ian Inisan sait bien travailler avec l'effet dramatique. La description de l'aventure à Berven est ainsi très longue et détaillée et on remarque l'emploi des commentaires, des explications ou du monologue interne pour que les lecteurs puissent s'identifier avec le narrateur: „Ian Pennors, en ce moment, c'est ta vie que tu joues [...] Eh bien Ian, dis-je, vas-tu rester dans l'embaras? [...] Ian Pennors, tu fais une sottise.“ (I. 242)
- 21 *Gwerz* est un chant breton racontant une histoire, depuis l'anecdote jusqu'au récit historique ou mythique. En ce qui concerne ce phénomène de la culture populaire bretonne, voir par exemple Eva Guillourel: *La gwerz, entre source historique et source poétique. La spécificité d'un discours chanté porté sur la société rurale d'Ancien Régime*. En: *Actes de colloque*, Carhaix 2005, p.67–76.).
- 22 Par exemple, *La Complainte de M. Branellec* du chapitre 26 se trouve également dans le recueil des chants bretons sur la Révolution (Pérennès (Voir note 5), p. 402–413) ou dans le chapitre sur l'émeute à Saint-Pol-de-Léon, l'auteur cite un *gwerz* qui aurait dû provenir du XVI^e siècle, *ar Fal'ibun* (le Faucou).
- 23 Le terme employé en breton *Gal* désigne tout l'individu francophone.
- 24 Ian Inisan présente le début et la fin de la Révolution comme la volonté divine: „En ce temps-là, les hommes ne faisaient pas de très jolies choses sur la terre. Dieu, fâché de voir les péchés du pays, abandonna ses enfants à leur caprice.“ (I. 38); „Grâce à Dieu, cette tempête se calma. Dieu, du haut des cieux, eut pour la Bretagne un regard miséricordieux; on avait coupé assez de têtes, versé assez de sang. Il ramena la paix dans notre pays.“ (I. 318).

- 25 Les partisans de la Révolution sont présentés comme les compagnons du diable: „Mais que dis-je, les citoyens ou le diable? L'un et l'autre, je le jurerais, car le diable habite le cœur des Républicains et c'est pourquoi ils vont toujours de pair.“ (I. 202).
- 26 Ainsi l'auteur constate à propos d'un traître: „Dieu l'avait vu, Dieu l'avait entendu, et voilà que Dieu le frappait, car son heure était venue.“ (I. 329).
- 27 Quand l'auteur parle de l'obligation militaire, il ne cache point son dédain pour le système républicain avec ses valeurs: „A notre époque, on entend des imbéciles crier: Liberté! Liberté! Quand donc y a-t-il plus de liberté qu'il y en avait en ce temps-là? Ce sont pourtant ces imbéciles qui vous font croire que les paysans d'autrefois étaient à la merci des Nobles.“ (I. 158).



Aesthetics in translation

Daniel Santana Jügler

Tourists do not enter the depths of hell

Illusion and deceit in Pedro Juan Gutiérrez' *Ciclo de Centro Habana*

In December 1999, the Spanish performance and conceptual artist Santiago Sierra hired six young Cubans in Havana for thirty dollars each, for let him tattoo a horizontal line on their backs. Since he began to stand out in the international artistic scene in the early 1990s, Sierra's work has not been free from controversy, especially because of its aggressive and transgressive character. One of the most recurrent and distinctive motives of his artistic work consists precisely in hiring people so that, in exchange for a tiny sum of money, they perform unproductive and meaningless tasks.

Beyond any discussion about ethical, moral and social issues (and without wanting to minimize a relevant debate), I consider it crucial to highlight an important (and sometimes ignored) aspect of Sierra's remunerated works: the role art has assumed under the economic and mercantile precepts imposed by the capitalist ideology. When Sierra hires people with economic needs to be part of his artistic performances, we are clearly in presence of a classic employer-employee relationship, which can be analysed by applying the precepts of Marxist economic theory about labour (surplus value, abstract labour, concrete labour, etc.), but in this case we are analysing the work of an artist and, consequently, the economic-mercantile mechanisms under which the artistic world works today.

Going back to the example of the six young Cubans who were tattooed, it is interesting to remark that that the performance took place in Havana, the capital of a country governed by the concepts of an ideology conflicting to the type of economic relationship described in the previous paragraph. In December 1999, Cuba began to leave behind, slowly and laboriously, the disastrous effects of the economic crisis known as the Special Period. The country was changing profoundly: social inequality was increasing and the social problems (prostitution, drugs, racism, etc.), against which the Cuban government dedicated much of its efforts since the triumph of the Revolution in 1959, proliferated. Taking into account the economic misery and the increase in the cost of living, the possession of as many US dollars as possible became a goal in the everyday life of all Cubans. Even if it meant getting a line

tattooed on the back – in a gesture that retains many similarities with the marking of livestock.

A year later, in November 2000, Sierra returned to Havana to carry out another performance. On that occasion, he hired ten men to masturbate in front of a camera in exchange for twenty dollars each. Neither the video nor the photos resulting from the performance show the faces of the men who were hired to be part of an artistic action that has many aspects in common with the act of prostitution. Although the action of the young people who were tattooed seems sufficiently demeaning, in this case Sierra takes a step further by meddling in the innermost privacy of the human being, stripping him of his dignity. At first glance, it might seem that the act of not showing the men's faces pursues precisely the aim of saving the dignity of the participants, but in reality the opposite effect occurs. Sierra fragments their personality, objectifying and denigrating them to the category of mere objects of pleasure (in this case artistic pleasure); while by focusing the camera on the male reproductive organ, specifically at the instant of ejaculation, the artist is not only able to exert his power over human flesh, but also in essence over the reproductive capacity of the human being. Everything is just a matter of money.

Based on these considerations, it is impossible to not establish a clear parallelism between the performance of Sierra in November 2000 and the story entitled *Con Basilio en la misma celda*, by the Cuban writer Pedro Juan Gutiérrez. In this story, Pedro Juan – autodiegetic narrator and some kind of alter ego of the Cuban author – describes a passage of his life in which he offers sexual services to foreign women in exchange for money:

Éramos doce o trece tipos, parados en la calle, atrás del Hotel Noiba. Frente a nosotros se detuvo el taxi de Chiquitico, que era socio de nosotros y le cobraba veinte fulas al que ganara el concurso. La señora era elegante. Hasta tenía un collar de perlas. Se le veía cara de vieja mandona. Y se puso a observarnos sin prisa. Para escoger bien. En esos casos lo que se acostumbra es mostrar el material, para que la clienta vea bien lo que se lleva a casa y que después no se queje porque es muy chiquita o muy grande, o muy flaca o muy gorda.¹

At first glance, this could seem one of the many sexual scenes that characterize Gutiérrez' narrative work. His books are precisely marked by a profusion of sexual scenes which on several occasions explicitly border on pornography and that even address certain paraphiliae, as is the case of paedophilia. In this sense, the scenes

with exhibitionistic characters are very interesting. According to the narrator of *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, they fulfil: “una hermosa función social: erotizar a los transeúntes, sacarlos de su stress rutinario, y recordarles que a pesar de todo, apenas somos unos animalitos primarios, simples y frágiles. Y sobre todo insatisfechos.”²² However, what is striking in the case of the lady with the pearl necklace is that it is a scene completely devoid of spontaneity and naturalness, in which everything seems too calculated and artificial. There is no surprise or flush. She owns the money and therefore she is in a position to demand that her wishes be satisfied. Sex is in this case reified, treated as a commodity that is given a price depending on the compliance (or not) of certain parameters.

Both Sierra’s performance and the fragment of Gutiérrez’ story clearly show the situation of economic and social crisis that gripped Cuba after the collapse of the Socialist Bloc and the disappearance of the USSR. In that historical context, the Cuban economy was fully oriented towards tourism, which from then on became the main source of revenue for the country. The increasing presence of foreign visitors on the island brought considerable changes both on the level of architectural landscape and the social relations – for example, through the proliferation of private businesses or illegal activities, as is precisely the case of prostitution.

However, I believe that the fragment previously cited and analysed contains a much greater complexity, which goes beyond the simple fact of trying to show the economic and social problems of the country since the 1990s. It is a fragment that can also allow us to decipher the keys of the relationship established between Pedro Juan Gutiérrez and his readers (mostly non-Cuban), who buy his books looking for an authentic and reliable representation of Cuban reality of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Pedro Juan Gutiérrez as reality master

Since the publication of *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, the literary career of Pedro Juan Gutiérrez has not been without controversy. First of all, because his texts have often been labelled as dissidents, subversive and deeply critical of the Cuban political system – in many cases dogmatically.³ Such a critical approach to his literary work derives fundamentally from the harshness with which Gutiérrez portrays the reality of Havana since the late 1990s, oversaturated by social problems that had (and still have) a very poor diffusion within the official Cuban discourse. Secondly, because his books confront readers with a constant challenge of concepts and ideas like

civility, morality and political correctness; and question dichotomies such as good-bad, fair-unfair, allowed-forbidden, right-wrong, etc. His narrative work therefore hits against the system of values and beliefs of the readers, leading them to a limited situation in which self(-reflection) becomes inevitable and imperative. There are few issues that escape Gutiérrez's pen (prostitution, drugs, racism, emigration, censorship, corruption, among others), who does not decorate his narrative with a particularly stilted prose, but offers a simple and sober literature.

Especially controversial have been his books within the Cuban literary field, to the point that up-to-date *Trilogía sucia de La Habana* has not been published on the island, while Gutiérrez's other works, although having been published, have barely received the media attention they deserve. Additionally, outside Cuba his narrative work was compared to that of authors such as Charles Bukowski or Henry Miller, and was promoted with comments that tend to emphasize the authentic and realistic character of it:

[...] die Tatsache, dass er dem Leser das tägliche Nichts Kubas nicht aus der vor Repressalien sicheren Distanz des Exils, sondern aus der ungeschminkten Innenperspektive ins Gesicht schleudert, verleiht Gutiérrez erstem ins Deutsche übersetzten Buch ein hohes Maß an Authentizität und macht es zu einer der interessantesten kubanischen Erscheinungen seit langem.⁴

Taking all of this into account, it is not surprising that his narrative work has been so successful among non-Cuban readers, who see quite a reliable alternative to official tourism guides – which naturally do not include that *other* Cuban reality on their pages – in Gutiérrez' texts.

In this regard, it is noteworthy that Gutiérrez has become more important in the international literary scene, in the midst of a context in which Cuba has been increasing its popularity as a major tourist destination worldwide year after year. Among the main causes of the recent boom and popularity – in addition to the strong economic investments made by the Cuban government in the tourism sector – is the improvement of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, which reached its peak in March 2016, when the former US President Barack Obama made an official visit to the island.⁵ Since then, Cuba has aroused great interest in the US tourism industry and has also received special media attention, not only in traditional media, but also via new social media like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

A curious consequence of such a progress in diplomatic relations between the two countries was the considerable increase in European tourists on the island, who observe the course of this political evolution with scepticism. The objective pursued by many of those tourists is to visit the country as quickly as possible, before things change: before the revolutionary and socialist project completely ceases to exist and before Cuba ends up being invaded by the *American way of life*. Starting from the idea that the search for authenticity of other regions underlies all tourist experience,⁶ in the case of Cuba, the political component adds a little more incentive to the adventure of wanting to go beyond the *front regions* (appealing to the dichotomy established by Dean MacCannell),⁷ in order to visit the *back regions* and witness the *authentic authenticity* of the country.

This is a movement that usually occurs not only in physical, real tourism, but which is also present in another way of visiting the island, which is much more abstract: mainly through photography, cinematography and literature. There are many works from the Cuban art scene that, since the 1990s, have dissected the reality of the country, showing it with all its contradictions, complexities, heterogeneities, social problems, disappointments, frustrations, fears and hopes, and that also responded to the growing international interest (with voyeuristic overtones) to know the private life of the Cubans.

In this sense, Gutiérrez' narrative work, especially his so-called *Centro Habana Cycle*, stands out. As I mentioned earlier, his literature has often been promoted with comments that insist on the idea that his books offer an authentic picture of Havana's reality during the last two decades – and certainly, there are several elements that create this illusion. First of all, the fact that the author usually appeals to the most important characteristics of the autobiographical pact, especially the identity established between author, narrator and protagonist. The image of Gutiérrez himself also appeared on the cover of several editions of his books and he even affirmed in many interviews that his texts tend to have a strong autobiographical character. Finally, it is also remarkable the use of a language oriented on the street slang used by the people in Havana.

However, regardless of the literary (and market) strategies mentioned above, and based on the ideas presented by Isabel Exner,⁸ I think that the realistic effect of Gutiérrez' work comes mainly from the abject, dirty and pornographic aesthetics that characterize his narrative texts. This perspective allows him to eliminate any distance between text and reader, thus preventing any kind of intellectual reflection:

Wie es Oliver Jahraus für die Genres der Pornographie und des Horrors beschrieben hat, sind Schmutz und Sexualität, bzw. schmutzige Körperlichkeit in Gutiérrez' Texten also nicht so sehr Teil eines authentisch *Dargestellten*, sie haben zunächst nicht hauptsächlich mit mimetischer Präzision oder ‚Detailtreue‘ gegenüber einer konkreten realen Welt zu tun, sondern sie sind vor allem ein quasi-strategisches *Mittel der Darstellung* zur Distanzlöschung.⁹

Taking these considerations as a starting point, it is logical to ask why these narrative strategies are used in a work that presumably shows the Cuban reality as it is, and this without any retouching. Why seek to eliminate the distance between reader and literary text, which prevents at the same time any possibility of objective reflection and aesthetic pleasure?

When trying to decipher the dynamics of the relationship established between Gutiérrez and the foreign readers, the observations made by Esther Whitfield¹⁰ on the coincidences that can be traced in the *Centro Habana Cycle* between the figure of the voyeur and the figure of the tourist, are very illuminating. Certainly, this literary cycle is full of scenes with voyeurs, “seeking self-sufficiency in a world where even sex, as Pedro Juan experiences all too frequently, can cost money.” (W. 124) The attitude of the voyeur (seeking pleasure through the act of observing) does not differ in any way from the attitude of tourists, who try to immerse themselves in Centro Habana¹¹ in the most intimate and private space of the daily life of the Cubans – exactly the same attitude of the foreign readers who buy Gutiérrez' books.

However, as noted by Whitfield, the figures of the voyeur and the tourist are continually exposed in the *Centro Habana Cycle*, as they can be discovered in their desire to experience pleasure at the expense of snooping in the privacy of others. Such a process of unmasking is carried out in the first place by the characters of the diegesis themselves – when in *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*, for example, Pedro Juan (protagonist) discovers two policemen who were watching through the window while he was having sex with a woman. And, in the second place, through the proper exercise of writing and reading. Only the readers have the power to surprise Pedro Juan when he is masturbating on his roof, while he is observing a threesome between a man and two women. Such power can be a double-edged sword, because when witnessing this scene, the reader ends up becoming basically a kind of *supervoyeur* who experiences pleasure (not necessarily sexual) observing both the threesome and the scene of Pedro Juan's onanism: “The intimacy with Pedro Juan to which his

autobiographical exposure obliges his readers affords them vicarious access to his own experience as a voyeur.” (W. 124)

In this sense, the story entitled *My dear drum's master* is of a similar interest. Pedro Juan (protagonist) appears as a music teacher and shows a European tourist the basic rules of Cuban percussion. The curious thing about this story is that Pedro Juan does not have the slightest interest in his student learning something – the only thing that he wants is the easy money he can earn through his cunning. Taking this relationship between Pedro Juan and the European tourist – whose nationality is never exactly mentioned – to a higher level, it can be also said that it is the same relationship established between Gutiérrez and the foreign readers, who see in the Cuban author a kind of *reality master*, capable of showing an authentic picture of contemporary Cuba. In this regard, in the novel *El Rey de La Habana* a striking description can be found of the area (in Centro Habana) where the Hotel Deauville is located:

De noche el lugar se cubre de jineteras y chulos, travestis, mariguaneros, gente de provincias que no se enteran de nada. Pajeros, vendedoras de maní, jineteros con ron y tabaco falsificado y coca verdadera, puticas recién importadas desde las provincias, músicos callejeros con guitarras y maracas, vendedoras de flores, triciclos con sus taxi-drivers multioficio, policías, aspirantes a emigrantes. Y algunas mujeres infelices, algunas viejas, algunos niños, los más pobres entre los pobres, que se dedican a pedir monedas incesantemente. Cuando un turista incauto y melancólico aterriza en esta fauna no agresiva, pero pícara y convincente, generalmente cae fascinado en esa trampa. Finalmente compra ron o tabaco mierdero, creyendo que es original y que él es un tipo hábil y con una buena estrella. A veces, meses después, se casa con una de aquellas espléndidas muchachas o forma pareja con un muchacho-pinguero. Después de esas proezas, el turista le asegura a sus amigos que ahora es feliz, que la vida en el trópico es maravillosa y que le gustaría invertir aquí su dinero y tener una casita junto al mar, con su negrita complaciente y atractiva, y abandonar el frío y la nieve y no ver más a las educadas, cuidadosas, calculadoras y silenciosas personas de su país. En fin, cae en trance hipnótico y sale de la realidad.¹²

Is not this the same trick, which is applied by Gutiérrez when he deceives his readers? Undoubtedly they also fall into a hypnotic trance and immerse themselves in another reality that they believe is authentic, special, unique and, to a certain extent, forbidden. In this sense (and returning to the motive of the voyeur and the

analogy between this figure and that of the tourist/reader) the following scene taken from *Carne de perro* is enlightening, in which Pedro Juan (protagonist) travels to Guanabacoa (another municipality in Havana) to visit Miriam (one of the many female characters of the *Centro Habana Cycle*):

Yo, desde el camino, miro a través de la ventana abierta y no me atrevo a entrar. Grandes macizos de hierba alta me protegen. Ellos no me ven. Pasa un tipo en bicicleta. Me mira insistentemente. Cuando se aleja, me grita: Ten cuidado, aquí a los mirahuecos les entramos a machetazos.¹³

The use of the deictic *here* marks a clear difference with a *there* that is more than obvious: Centro Habana. The implicit conclusion is that in Guanabacoa the hardness and the reality are different. In that municipality people are not so welcoming towards voyeurs (tourists do not dare to get there). They do not even visit the area (quite central, by the way), where the famous Cuatro Caminos market is located, between the municipalities of La Habana Vieja and El Cerro:

Este es un barrio muy pobre. Peor que el mío. En Centro Habana pasan turistas y la gente se las arregla para venderles algo, estafarlos, robarlos, lo que sea y como sea. Siempre se les quita algún dólar. Pero los turistas no entran en las profundidades del infierno. Prefieren tomar las fotos desde el Malecón. Es una gran aventura observar el terremoto desde la periferia y evitar el epicentro.¹⁴

The image that Pedro Juan Gutiérrez shows of Centro Habana, therefore, is no less constructed or staged than what is shown, for example, in tourist catalogues and guides, or in the streets and restored buildings of La Habana Vieja. Taking advantage of the possibilities offered by this municipality (a central but marginal neighbourhood, located halfway between two of Havana's most frequented areas by tourists: La Habana Vieja and El Vedado), he offers a literary product that does not show the reality of the city (and by extension of the country) of the last two decades in a reliable and authentic way. He only satisfies the expectations and demands of foreign readers regarding what they imagine under the expression of *Cuban reality*:

Tourism and publishing each have buoyant markets focused on special period Cuba, markets whose interests and aesthetic codes coincide and that Gutiérrez reduces to a particularly sordid market in watching. His sexual performers'

willingness to be watched, and their delight in their power to humiliate their observers, establishes this market as based on a somewhat uneasy bargain: the books stage scenes that gratify their spectators, but the reader who succumbs to such gratification must accept exposure. (W. 126)

It is a process in which Gutiérrez resembles the figure of the architect, who has to respond to the demands of his clients (in this case, machismo, prostitution, sex, racism, drugs, violence, etc.), without giving up to capture his signature (his narrative aesthetic) on the frontispiece of the finished work. After all, as in the fragment of the lady of the pearl necklace, they are the ones who have the money.

Endnotes

- 1 Pedro Juan Gutiérrez: *Trilogía sucia de La Habana*. Barcelona 1998, p. 225.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–102.
- 3 Isabel Exner: *Schreiben, Welt und Ordnung. Transgression, Stereotyp, Repräsentation in Pedro Juan Gutiérrez' Trilogía sucia de La Habana*. In: *Iberoromania*. 61 (2005), pp. 94–95.
- 4 Florian Borchmeyer: *Symphonie der Saureien*. www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/rezensionen/belletristik/rezension-belletristik-symphonie-der-saureien-163003.html [01.02.2020].
- 5 At this point it should be noted that such optimism has been held back since 2017 because of the measures adopted by the administration of president Donald Trump, who has imposed numerous prohibitions on both American tourists who travel to Cuba and companies that wish to establish economic and commercial ties with the island.
- 6 As highlighted by Jonathan Culler (*Framing the Sign. Criticism and its Institutions*. Oxford 1988, pp. 153–168), Dean MacCannell (*The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. Berkeley 1999, pp. 91–106) and Esther Whitfield (*Cuban Currency. The Dollar and "Special Period" Fiction*. Minneapolis 2008, pp. 22–32).
- 7 According to MacCannell, the *front regions* represent everything that has been previously designed to accommodate and satisfy the tourists' curiosity; while the *back regions* exist apart from the official tourism industry and it is where you can really witness the authenticity of the place visited.
- 8 Isabel Exner: *Schmutz. Ästhetik und Epistemologie eines Motivs in Literaturen und Kulturtheorien der Karibik*. Paderborn 2017, pp. 237–271.
- 9 *Ibid.*, pp. 260–261; emphasis in original.
- 10 Whitfield, *Cuban Currency* (see endnote 6), pp. 122–126. Henceforth cited as: (W. page number).
- 11 The most overpopulated municipality in the country, with a high rate of social problems.
- 12 Pedro Juan Gutiérrez: *El Rey de La Habana*. Barcelona 1999, pp. 39–40.
- 13 Pedro Juan Gutiérrez: *Came de perro*. La Habana 2012, p. 98.
- 14 Pedro Juan Gutiérrez: *El insaciable hombre araña*. Breslau 2013, p. 98.



The chronicles of *El Faro*

An epistemological analysis of the concept *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* by G.C. Spivak in a salvadoran newspaper

The main aim of this paper is to present a summary of the results coming out of the comparative analysis of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *An aesthetic education in the era of Globalization*¹ and the compilation of investigative journalism *Crónicas Negras*², published by the Salvadoran newspaper *El Faro*. The intent of my research was to consider the journalistic work of *Crónicas Negras* together with the work of Spivak (considering *An aesthetic education in the era of Globalization* as the major source) in a comparative literary perspective, in order to trace interrelations of epistemological value. I will first outline the theoretical frame and then pick several examples from *Crónicas Negras* to showcase the text analysis of the actual research.

The publication of *An aesthetic education in the era of Globalization* by the literary scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offers a platform to examine the traces between the established discourse of alterity and the global happenings in actuality. She further discusses the relevant question of the representation of alterity and the current issue of interdisciplinarity. These two points of reference serve as guide for the methodological design of this research paper. In regard to the question of alterity, Spivak's definition of the figure of the subaltern is of decisive importance because she develops a new interpretation of the concept by Gramsci. In her widely read paper *Can the subaltern speak?*³, Spivak points out the question of agency and ideology that are often misread when discussing subalternity. Here, she reveals a contradiction within the concept of subjectivity that can only be solved in terms of political articulation. She concludes that expressing subalternity exclusively in relation to the political in this position can be unmistakably described as a position "cut-off from lines of social mobility" (AAE. 439). Inserting the matter of the state as a benchmark of political agency, is here the gain. Therefore, with her redefinition of subalternity, it is possible to shift to a direct perspective on subalternity, regarding it within the political context (first and foremost as a question of political agency) and secondly, as a matter of education, which according to Spivak's disciplinary work, should be directed towards the aesthetic.

Furthermore, she enunciates literature as a sphere to observe the construction of subjectivity and of alterity. This is the point that Spivak repeatedly stresses in *An aesthetic education in the era of Globalization*, taking the aesthetic into account when talking about subjectivity in at least two ways: The literary enables the conscious experience of the own perceptual skills and can likewise enable the opening of an ethical reflex that triggers epistemological change. It is then literature which can be considered in the context of epistemology and the role of the literary becomes highly relevant. It is important to observe how literary education takes place and which processes can be traced back into aesthetic cognition. Spivak defines the aesthetic as “the schooling of our senses” (AAE. 19), being the vehicle that transports the components of our own specific world view. In this case, perception can be analyzed as the main platform for the concretization of ideology: an argument that addresses the already raised question of ideology in *Can the subaltern speak*, and that is being further developed in *An aesthetic education in the era of Globalization* to also attain central issues of pedagogy and literature.

The term of “aesthetic education” is conceived in reference to Friedrich Schiller’s work of *On the aesthetic education of man*. The marked link towards the Enlightenment is essential to understand Spivak’s proposition on how to deal with its legacy, inherent within academia and within the tradition of education. She speaks of an “abuse of the enlightenment” and decodes the etymology of the word “abuse” to set it up not only in its meaning of “misusing” something, but also in the sense of “using from below” as a kind of sabotage (AAE. 2-3). This dimension “from below” is the dimension she is trying to regain when talking about the building of the schooling of our senses: it can be understood as a critique in which the process of learning is consciously highlighted and productively applied to change the epistemological outcome which would otherwise generate exclusively expected results.

Schiller’s conception of “the aesthetic education of man” is a strategic point of departure for Spivak’s proposition for two reasons: the proximity that Schiller has to Kant, as a representative of the Enlightenment, and secondly, because Schiller, coming from the literary field, proposes a productive conception of the relation between sensuousness and reason. It is at this crossroad where Spivak can strategically put her interpretation to work. Spivak describes Schiller’s work as an „unintended mistake“ (AAE.19). Schiller describes the transcendence of his “Spieltrieb” concept as being in the tradition of Kantian philosophy⁴. The dynamic described within the “Spieltrieb”⁵ creates a productive outcome out of the interchange between sensuousness and reason, creating a kind of balance. Kant on the other hand understands

sensuousness and reason as being hierarchically organized and this is where Spivak locates Schiller's mistake (AAE. 19, 24). This step is decisive because it shows an unintended misreading as a paradigm for using the Enlightenment in the way Spivak captures in the term of „abusing the Enlightenment“. The result of this kind of “false” reading is an operative productivity that recognizes reading as the mechanism that has to be of central importance when observing strategies of education.

The idea of an “epistemic damage” can serve as an introduction to understand the problem addressed by Spivak within the field of education. Spivak describes an existing “epistemic damage” that accompanies the dynamics of our educational system and which is anchored on the grounds of ignoring the meta-dimension of learning (AAE. 5). The average educational system is designed to teach content, but does not pay attention to the cognitive process that marks our perception. Therefore, we are not able to determine the contents of our learning as relative, or indeed as interchangeable, but we determine them as truth, or good, or right. In the long run, this erases the traces of the specificity and subjectivity of learning, that would otherwise mark the specificity of individual perception (AAE. 6). Thus, we have an omnipresent state of mind, in the form of an ideology that has justified itself as unquestionable reason. Spivak already notes this in *Can the subaltern speak?*, when she criticizes the naïve perspective of Foucault and Deleuze: their belief that they have a neutral perspective above the subject of discussion (CTSS. 66-67). The connection that has to be noticed here is Spivak locating the “epistemological damage” on a general level: it is not an exclusive problem of the subaltern, thus locating the problem of education beyond a context reserved exclusively for postcoloniality (AAE. 62).

“The Era of Globalization” as it is presented in the title of Spivak's book, refers to the critical concept of globalization as the context within which education is taking place. Spivak's diagnose is that solely capital and data are affected by globalization, leaving everything else to damage control (AAE. 1). This critique of globalization focuses on the role of the state as a trading institution and on its relation to the institutionalized humanities. The deficiencies being treated as damage control become obvious when looking at the development of the humanities and education, especially in the field of democratic behavior (AAE. 493). The dynamics of political representation and participation are being neglected when the interests of capital and data dictate the direction in which a state will steer. Hence, the critique being made here observes globalization going hand in hand with capitalism. An explicit highlighting of the traces of this specific global development is where literature can come into play. This is why globalization has to be considered when talking about

an aesthetic education as the political ground of actuality. The question of agency and subjectivity in a capitalist context is addressed here in order to understand what democratic habits can mean:

Now in order to be able to restrict singularity by agential intuition, an immense labor of infrastructural change, to make resistance count, to make it recognizable, must be undertaken. This is where aesthetic education kicks in, sees the way reasonable agency is nestled in the permission to be figurative – the right to the metonym/synecdoche political performance of collectivity. (AAE. 437)

Political agency here is described in terms of aesthetic elements (the figurative dynamic of metonym and synecdoche). This argument elaborates two crucial points from Spivak's reading of Marx, namely the juncture between aesthetics and politics at the epistemological level. The first matter considered is the conflict of desire and interest and its operative role as an element of social change. What is the key agency factor for the subject to actually want to use the modes of production for the construction of the social welfare state? That means the shift of the distribution of the surplus value from a capitalist to a socialist distribution can be considered in terms of desire (and not only of interest) and can perhaps be reached, as Spivak proposes, not by "accessing the ethical reflex directly, [but] rather [...] by insist[ing] on an epistemological preparation into the possibility of a relationship without relation: the reflexive re-arrangements of desires" (AAE. 11). The second matter being considered here, is the problem of representation. Spivak's reading of Marx's 18th Brumaire about the workers trying to make their interest valid in their own name,⁶ exposes the important dilemma on the different meaning of representation getting lost in translation (CTSS. 71) and impulses a solution of literary science: the understanding of rhetorical forms as a way of approaching the agency factor that is interconnected with representation, in the sense of a subject being able (or not) to take part of a discourse:

My project has become more and more not only to study the subaltern (always in the sense of 'cut-off from lines of social mobility') but to learn (as from figuration – because I am a literary person) from them in order to be able to devise a philosophy of education that will develop, [...] 'habits of democratic behavior', or 'rituals of democratic behavior', or 'intuition of the public sphere' [...] By now it should be clear that 'insertion into the public sphere' means for

me the effort to create the possibility of metonymizing oneself for making oneself a synecdoche, a part of a whole, so that one can claim the idea of the state belonging to one. (AAE. 439)

The contextualization of literature and the humanities within the critical diagnosis of globalization dictates the promoting of democratic behaviour as the core task of aesthetic education. The epistemological sphere is being taken into account as a possible platform of change, within which the implementation of specific cognitive devices can take place. The terms of “rearrangement of desire”, „learning to learn from below“, „double bind“ and “training of the imagination” can be understood as mechanisms that operate epistemological change. In respect thereof, the concept of “double bind” showed a broad potential for the text analysis presented in this paper and therefore I will proceed to expose the general notion of “double bind”.

Spivak takes the metaphorical source of the concept from the educational scientist Gregory Bateson and his writings on schizophrenia as a trans-contextual gift (AAE. 4). Bateson describes the parallel existence of different states of mind as a characteristic inherent to human condition. A characteristic that can be understood as tuning the perception to receive more than one content at a time. This is then interpreted by Spivak as follows:

In the contemporary context, we can call this the double bind of the universability of the singular, the double bind at the heart of democracy, for which an aesthetic education can be an epistemological preparation, as we, the teachers of the aesthetic use material that is historically marked by the region, cohabiting with, resisting, and accommodating what comes from the Enlightenment. (AAE. 4)

Both the content and the structure of the idea of the double bind are directed towards reaching a dimension that is able to contain several epistemological values at a time. The transcendental dimension is not meant here, so the conflicting forces do not have to become resolved, but can cohabit in the imagination. It is this difference that will set the mark for a new way of thinking about the relationship between imagination and epistemology:

Where imagination is a name in Kant for a structural moment with programmed functions in an architectonic of faculties, in Schiller it is a phenomenal human

capacity. [...] Schiller misses the hierarchy where, in Kant, the intellect trumps the imagination. (AAE. 24)

The reference to Schiller and his misreading of Kant reappears once more as a fundamental component of the concept of aesthetic education.

If the “double bind” is a possible starting point for epistemological change, the concept of “training the imagination” can be interpreted as the sphere of action, where the actual work of an aesthetic education can take place. This dynamic is de-scribed by Spivak specifically as “training the imagination for epistemological performance” (AAE. 465). The reason to shift the focus of cognition in the direction of imagination, is to open a new perspective on the observation of epistemological processes. This regards the actual building of (epistemic) habits as well as the con-struction of special cognitive dimensions, as it is the case of faith in religion or faith in the nation state. These two cognitive spheres are similar in the way that they are no longer questioned once they have been integrated into the epistemic personal sphere. Following these terms, Spivak wants to reopen the imagination as a dimen-sion in which educational work can be done. The strict separation of imagination and reason is avoided to win an alternative understanding of transcendental processes:

I would like to propose that the training of the imagination that can teach the subject to play – an aesthetic education – can also teach it to discover (theoretically or practically) the premises of the habit that obliges us to transcendentalize religion and nation [...]. We must learn to do violence to the epistemo-epistemological difference and remember that this is what education is, and thus keep up the work of displacing belief onto the terrain of the imagination, attempt to access the epistemic. The displacement of belief onto the terrain of the imagination can be a description of reading in its most robust sense. It is also the irreducible element of an aesthetic education. In the context of the beginning of the twenty-first century, to learn to de-transcendentalize religion and (the birth of a) nation into the imaginative sphere is an invaluable gift. (AAE. 10)

It is specifically with this argument that Spivak tries to overcome the Kantian cognitive theory of transcendence in order to reinstate imagination, and not reason, as the main channel to reach the ethical as well as the aesthetical reflex in human

subjectivity. Rethinking the educational process in this way leaves a clear and concrete task for literature and the humanities to complete. These two concepts, the “double bind” and the “training of the imagination for epistemological performance”, describe a critical approach to analyzing and implementing educational structures.

With this approach in mind, I started my research on the literary work that the independent paper *El Faro* is doing concerning violence in El Salvador and other Central American countries. The book *Crónicas Negras* (Black Chronicles) contains 18 chronicles on subjects related to the phenomenon of extreme violence which is mostly exposed by the conflicting gang groups in El Salvador. The intellectual work present in this paper is of high relevance with regard to the role it can play towards building democratic education⁷. Further analysis on this component can also be considered within the framework Spivak proposes when citing Marx and Gramsci.

The journalists of *El Faro* have written narrative pieces on the different topics that surround the gang members’ life stories in the region of Central America. These are marginal subjects and can be interpreted as subaltern from a philosophical perspective. Following the original definition in Gramsci’s tradition⁸, the subjects portrayed in the text are indeed at the margins of history. Spivak’s development of the concept of the subaltern contains a specific dimension: “The reasonable and rarefied definition of the word ‘subaltern’ that interests me is: to be removed from all lines of social mobility” (AAE. 430). I do not intend to categorize the stories in the text of *Crónicas Negras* as subaltern raising their voice, since “Subalternity is a position without identity. [...] Subalternity is where social lines of mobility, being elsewhere, do not permit the formation of a recognizable basis of action.” (AAE. 431)

There is an immediate link to the state being established here, because social mobility is explicitly addressed. It is on this note that the gang members and the figures in the chronicles of *Crónicas Negras* can be considered to a certain degree as „removed from all lines of social mobility. The complete title of the work is *Crónicas negras. Desde una región que no cuenta*. The use of the verb “contar”, which means “to count”, opens a broad semantic field. It means the region doesn’t count in terms of numbers, because it does not really keep track of the exact killings and crime numbers. It also means that the Central American region does not count on an international level, since the alarming happenings are in no way relevant for political decision making. And, thirdly, it means that the region does not tell the stories of the people portrayed in the chronicles, since another meaning of the verb „contar“ is to narrate. The position of subalternity is being addressed here in at least two aspects:

the aspect of agency and the aspect of representation. In line with Spivak's proposal, the problem of representation in subalternity displays itself in Marx's differentiation between representation (*darstellen*) and representation (*vertreten*) (CTSS. 71). Spivak develops this argument by further citing Marx and his definition of political participation, as in the democratic action of getting one's interests being taken into account on one's own name, or conversely not being able to make one's interests valid under one's own name⁹. This would be the case of the subject being portrayed in the first chronicle of *Crónicas Negras* entitled *Yo violada* (Myself raped). The chronicle tells the story of Magaly, a girl living in a gang administrated area. The central narrative motive is the gang rape she suffers with many narrative threads constructing her subjectivity in relation to this central happening. Each of these elements explain her position of being cut from all lines of social mobility and characterizes her feeling of impotence and acceptance. In the chronicle, the wishes and dreams of Magaly are told as the missing part of the otherwise stereotypical representation of victims of sexual assault:

Es sábado en la tarde, y la cita es en una pastelería del centro commercial metrocentro. Magaly se presenta con unos jeans ajustados coronados por un grueso cincho, una blusa blanca de botones y unos zapatos de medio tacón. Luce bonita, demasiado quizá para la ocasión, como si viniera de una discoteca. Solo los cuadernos que carga bajo el brazo respaldan su discurso de que viene del instituto en el que cursa primer año de bachillerato en la modalidad a distancia. En su colonia no podía estudiar, pero se inscribió en un centro de San Salvador y asiste los sábados. 'Si Dios me lo permite, quiero llegar a la Universidad', me dijo otro día. (CN. 26)

This is indeed a moment that challenges the reader to contradict the established perception on subjects living on the margin of society and suggests a conscious examination of the previous well-established aesthetic parameters in reference to a woman figure like Magaly. The acceptance of a logic of violence as the immediate reigning system is here the leap of faith that the reader has to take in order to reach the epistemic dimension being proposed by the text. The sense of justice towards the particular, the contradictory state policies towards this subject and the impossibility of making her very own interests valid are also exposed in this text: Magaly believes in God, reads the Bible and expects a divine justice towards her perpetrators, whereas the impunity regarding the justice system is taken for granted

(CN. 24). This specific contradiction is to be read in the sense of a double bind, if the mainstream subject construction is intended to be broken. A possibility of epistemic change is being contained here if we consider the following statement:

[...] lo que Magaly consideraba la preocupación mayor: el embarazo. Para poder dimensionar su aflicción, hay que conocer un poco mejor a su madre. ,Yo hace dos años no existía‘, me dijo en una ocasión Magaly. Se refería a que hasta poco antes de cumplir los dieciocho no estaba asentada en ningún lado, por lo que no tenía ni partida de nacimiento ni ningún otro documento. [...] Para la madre no son cuestiones relevantes. (CN. 24)

The potential romanticization that a subject exclusively believes in religion is being broken down here. Magaly's disbelief towards the state and justice has a clear and tangible dimension, that is to say the non-existence of a legal subject: the non-existence of the legal self for the most part of her life. The entanglement of Magaly's subjectivity can be understood in terms of Spivak's proposition of reading with the „double bind“ in mind. The conflicting weaving of the text is indeed calling for a revision of the presumable schooling of the reader's perception.

The question of veracity and representation is being solved here not only with the non-fictional argument of journalism, but rather with the juxtaposition of the particular and its repetitiveness. An argument, that is possible within literary terms, similar as it is argued within the testimonio-genre¹⁰. It is a singular story, unverifiable in its core, but it is by no means particular, since it contains an indisputable value of repetition as the woman in the story recognizes: “comprendía que lo que ella vivió tiene muy poco de extraordinario en un país como El Salvador” (CN. 15). Also, when describing the figure of Magaly's younger sister, a 10-year-old child is exposed to the same risks (CN. 26). The relation between singularity and particularity appears here as a double bind in reference to the issue of representation. Its epistemological potential can be encountered by discussing further the (im)possibility of agency in question (AAE. 30, 36). It is by means of this component of “social mobility” that the construction of alterity discourse has to be considered. The question being addressed here is how agency is being portrayed and how it can be constructed and received as a form of resistance. Both – the question of agency and the question of representation – can be considered within the discussion towards the subject construction in the texts.

The role that violence plays – in terms of murder, blackmail, rape, torture, kidnapping, and drug dealing – is crucial when analyzing the subject construction in the text. Referring to Spivak’s intention to “learn to learn from below” in order to work within the epistemic sphere, the idea that is considered here is to observe the sphere of violence in the portrait of these subjects. The dynamics of agency are determined by violence that creates a further isolation from the state lines of social mobility but still create another kind of agency parallel to these specific lines of social mobility. The work of the philosopher Sayak Valencia¹¹ proves beneficial, because she encounters a similar problem when trying to describe the subject within the matrix of violence in the city of Tijuana, at the border between Mexico and the USA. A concept that seems adequate for the further epistemological analysis of *Crónicas Negras* is her proposing the term of “capitalismo gore”: an approach to the use of extreme violence and its linkage to the development of capitalism. The subjectivity she describes in this context is proposed by the term of “sujeto endriago”, making an analogy in reference to the literary motif of the classic barbaric monster that has an agency of extreme violence and has to be relegated to the margins of society (CG. 90). This subject is being actualized within the scenery of extreme violence that characterizes the region of Tijuana. Valencia then explains this subjectivity as an inherent outcome of capitalism and of the idolatry of masculinity and its dynamics. When a subject that can be located as “cut from all lines of social mobility” tries to reach social mobility of any kind, an alternate strategy appears: violence as agency is the only way within the dynamics of masculinity and capital that a subalternized subject can gain access to any resources (CG. 20). She describes the rendering of class mobility within the state to a similar dynamic of mobility within the margins of the state, or rather outside the state infrastructure. This dynamic is triggered by exclusion and finds its expression mainly in violence and its derivations. Valencia conceptualizes this as “necroprácticas”, as in practices that have an imminent connection with death and violence. Furthermore, she proposes an interdisciplinary approach, linking her analysis to a feminist critique of economics and reevaluating the mechanism of agency within the inscribed margins of society (CG. 20). The crucial point Valencia makes is that as long as subjectivity is being thought of in terms of capital and data (an argument which Spivak also makes at the opening of her work: “Globalization takes place only in capital and data. Everything else is damage control” (AAE. 1). Potential forms of resistance too will find expression in the ruthless and violent ways in which capitalism develops.

The epistemological analysis of *Crónicas Negras* through the theoretical considerations of *An aesthetic education in the era of Globalization* offers a path for tracing social subjects not on a particular but on a singular (because literary) base. *Crónicas Negras* can be read as a collection of singular stories that, in a comparative view, help to understand the problematic of an unjust world as an entanglement of contradictory issues. Considering the subjectivities portrayed in the chronicles under the frame of citizenship can also change the classical analysis on alterity discourse. The question of the Other in terms of strict cultural representation becomes less relevant, and issues of citizenship, in terms of democratic dynamics, can be reconsidered. The epistemic shift happening within the conception of civic subjectivity is fundamentally relevant when sketching policies that will affect marginal subjects. To change this notion of civic subjectivity can indeed then be described as the aesthetic, because it is the schooling of the perception that happens when working closely with texts. At this juncture, it is important to point out that searching for a new definition of “world literature” is not the main task when trying to answer the actual global challenges from a literary perspective. Considering the theoretical approach Spivak is offering, the questioning of the concept of “world literature” should rather be redirected towards grasping the stories of these global issues as an interrelated and conflicting matter. Spivak’s explicit plea at the end of her hefty introduction reads therefore as follows: “That any reader will waste the time to learn to parse the desires (not the needs) of collective example of subalternity is my false hope” (AAE. 34). Her approach on the aesthetic can contribute to understanding, in terms of the literary work mode, how perceptions can function and correspondingly how discourses, in terms of ideologies and beliefs, can arise. The rise of ideologies in terms of how people think and articulate is being addressed here. The development of ruthless capitalism as an ideology can be understood in these terms of schooling the human perception and can serve as a starting point when discussing the role of literature in the global actuality. These are questions of epistemological work concerning all literature across the world and this could be a useful interdisciplinary approach when working within comparative literature. The text analysis being purposed here can be of help when trying to grasp the methodological question that Spivak raises. The results of the analysis exposed here can be interpreted as marking the potential elements and dynamics of an epistemological change.

Endnotes

- 1 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*. London 2013. Henceforth cited as: (AAE. page number).
- 2 Sala Negra de El Faro: *Crónicas negras. Desde una región que no cuenta*. Antiguo Cuscatlán 2013. Henceforth cited as: (CN. page number).
- 3 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. In: *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory. A reader*. Hg von Laura Chrisman, Patrick Williams. New York, Sydney 1993, pp. 66–111 Henceforth cited as: (CTSS. page number).
- 4 Friedrich Schiller: *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*. [1795]. 3rd Ed. München 1962. pp. 7–8.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 43–67.
- 6 Karl Marx: *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* [1852]. In: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: *Werke*. (Vol. 8) Berlin/GDR 1960, pp. 111–207. Here pp. 198–199.
- 7 Carsten Gansel and Werner Nell: *Vom kritischen Denker zum Medienpromi. Aufriss einer Entwicklung wieder einmal von Ihrem Ende her?*. In: *Vom kritischen Denker zur Medienprominenz?: zur Rolle von Intellektuellen in Literatur und Gesellschaft vor und nach 1989*. Ed. by Carsten Gansel and Werner Nell. Bielefeld 2016, pp. 23–24.
- 8 Antonio Gramsci: *Gefängnishefte. Kritische Gesamtausgabe* [1934]. [Translated by Klaus Bochmann and Wolfgang Fritz Haug]. Hamburg 1999 (Vol. 9).
- 9 Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (see endnote 6), pp. 198–199.
- 10 John Beverly: *The Margin at the Center. On Testimonio*. In: *The real thing. Testimonial discourse and Latin America*. Ed. by Georg M. Gugelberger. Durham 1996, pp. 23–41.
- 11 Sayak Valencia: *Capitalismo gore*. Barcelona 2010. Henceforth cited as: (CG. page number).



Identity shifts in translation

The example of Captain van Toch

In the first book of Karel Čapek's 1936 novel, *Válka s mloky* (*The War with the Nents*) Captain van Toch is a key character. However, the reader cannot be completely sure as to how to write his name, as it sometimes occurs in the form van Toch, seemingly of Dutch origin, at other times as Vantoch, which looks like an ordinary Czech surname. Moreover, this character tends to use a wide variety of languages depending mostly on his partners in the conversation, including Malayan, English and Czech. The aim of this paper is to examine the character's language use in the 1936 Czech edition and the Hungarian translation from 1948 with some references to the later editions of the same translation. According to my hypothesis, the shifts in the translation concerning the use of non-narration neutral languages (mostly English) shows a different concept of possible national identities and different presumed expectations from the readers.

Jan van Toch, a captain of long distances, is during most of the first book at sea, sailing from one island to the next to establish new newt settlements and collect pearls. However, most of his actions displayed in the narration occur on land, on the relatively brief intervals of vacation: he is on shore speaking to other characters of diverse national backgrounds, sailing between languages all the time. The character shows a certain amount of self-confidence in navigating on linguistic waters. When he is talking to the batak of Tana Masa he chooses Malay, as he considers it the most appropriate for the occasion, although translation is necessary. The narrator observes that "for some reason the captain thought Malay would be more appropriate."¹

Treating national background confidently permeates this adventure novel part of the text. The sailors are mostly defined by their nationality and national stereotypes predict their attitude towards each other. National identity unquestionably and immediately collocates religious background, drinking habits or physical strength. This seemingly simple approach is emphasized by the use of typical names (e.g. Jens Jensen, Pat Dingle).

However, apart from the sailors' sphere of international shipping, where nationality is referred to by stereotypes and the identification of nationality works in a straightforward way, the picture of the national, closely connected with that of the spoken languages becomes more complex. This seems to be slightly contradictory, as one could argue that distinct borders between nations dissolve more easily in an international surrounding but this text follows a different logic, which can be demonstrated by analysing speech situations connected with the captain who comes from a small Czech town (Jevíčko) and returns there after his miraculous discovery of the newts.

Identity, in this case national identity, seems to emerge through interactions. The dynamic nature of the concept is portrayed in the different speech situations in which the reader comes across Captain van Toch.² When Anderson describes the emergence of nations in Europe, he emphasizes the importance of languages. Based on a quote from Herder, he interprets the relationship between nation and national language as possession.³ This possessed quality of the language and the fixed nature of identity can both be called into question by examples of language mixing and code-switching.

Code switching

Captain van Toch's words belong to three language varieties in the Czech text of 1936: standard Czech, a Moravian dialect and English. However, the language of the utterances according to the narration do not necessarily correspond with the language of the printed words. Whenever Captain van Toch is speaking in English or any other language different from Czech according to the story, his words appear on the pages mostly in standard Czech. In the case of English, a couple of marker sentences indicate that the discussion is being held in English, in the case of Malayan, the narrator testifies about the language use. When the Captain speaks to his fellow Czechs, he turns to dialectal Czech interspersed with English expressions, in order to hide his deficiencies in his mother tongue. This differentiation between varieties of Czech show that the Captain-character speaks only the local variety of Czech, and whenever his words appear in standard Czech, he is speaking in another language according to the story. Standard Czech is missing from the character's linguistic repertoire, indicating that he had spent most of his younger years abroad.

Heller defines code switching as “the use of more than one language in the course of a single communicative episode.”⁴ According to my findings in Čapek’s novel, it can be problematic to identify the language of a single word which is surrounded by words in a different language. When taken out of a larger same-language context, some written words are unanchored from a single language and the reader cannot exclude the possibility of them belonging to e.g. either English or German. While in this case the code-switching is undoubtedly included by the above definition, switches between standard and non-standard variants of a language should also be considered as code-switching, regardless of whether the borderlines of a language can be drawn.

Another question arises when one endeavours to segment a novel to communicative episodes. On the one hand, the entire text forms the basis of the communicative episode in which the reader takes part. At this level questions of understandability are pivotal from the readers’ point of view. On a smaller scale, the characters’ intercourses are also communicative episodes and can be observed from a sociolinguistic point of view within the framework of the narration. In *The War with the Nepts* (both in the Czech and the Hungarian text, although to a different degree) deviations from the narration-neutral language, Czech and Hungarian respectively, can be found mostly in the speech of the characters. I will analyse these instances in order to shed light on how the characters’ identity is constructed through language use.

When analysing multilingual novels from Sweden, Jonsson divided the functions of code-switching into two main categories: local and global. Local functions are either conversational (enable two characters to understand each other) or explanatory (they help the reader understand what is written in a probably unknown language). Global functions comprise the function of power (to empower minorities), identity (to express not-belonging or a lack of what is considered a conventional identity) and hybridity (to show the possibility of potentially new, hybrid identities).⁵

This classification is based on the principles and questions of minority literature. Čapek’s novel is far from avoiding issues of power but essentially isn’t featuring minorities and minority characters. Occasions of code-switching show that local functions cannot be neatly divided into the two upper categories. Whenever Captain van Toch speaks in English to the Kubu-Portuguese agent, it is of course to strike a conversation in which both of them can take part but more importantly to indicate to the reader that the conversation is being held in English. Thus, it is clearly observable, that the conversational and explanatory local functions of code switching

are intertwined in the text and their possible global functions are also difficult to separate from the local functions.

Considerably more instances of code-switching occur when the Captain talks to his fellow Czechs from the second to the fourth chapter in both the Czech and the Hungarian text. Most of these changes can't be categorized as examples of the conversational function and aren't explanations in any sense to the reader. A distinction can be made in his use of the Czech language in the Czech edition. Whenever he is speaking in a language other than Czech according to the logic of the narration, his words appear in standard Czech interspersed with a couple of English expressions, however, when he is speaking to other Czech characters, he uses Moravian dialectal elements and lots of English expressions, showing his being unused to speaking standard Czech.⁶ This distinction is not indicated in the 1948 or later Hungarian editions.

Vylovil z kapsy u kalhot tlustý svazek bankovek. ‚See?‘ Potom se opřel lokty o stůl a naklonil se k oběmu pánům. ‚Páni, já bych měl pro vás big business. Jak se to řekně?‘ ‚Veliký kšéft.‘⁷

He drew a thick wad of banknotes out of his trouser pocket. ‚See?‘ Then he put his elbows back on the table and leant forward to the two men. ‚Gentlemen, I might have some big business for you.‘⁸

These lines show two typical examples of code-switching in the Captain's speech. He often uses discourse markers in English, for which he does not need a translation into Czech. On the other hand, he seems to be more concerned with or realizes more clearly instances of code-switching when using noun phrases in English. These examples give the impression of a speaker who is accustomed to express himself in English rather than in Czech. The pinnacle of these episodes is when Captain van Toch is unable to find the Czech expression for *homeland* and reverts to English: „Já bych chcel aby ten veliké kšéft přišel sem, do my country.“ (Č. 36) „I'd like a big deal like this to come here, to my country.“⁹

A tendency of reacquiring Czech throughout these conversations can be observed, as in the case of ‚big business‘ which he utters in Czech for the second time.¹⁰ However, there is a certain distance that the character retains while speaking to Czech people. In the case of geographical names, the locatives are telltale: when the

captain refers to a faraway, exotic place he knows, he uses the appropriate Czech preposition but does not add the inflection at the end of the name, whereas when his partners repeat these names, they use them in the inflected form. “‘A největší zloději jsou ty bankers v Colombo.’ ‘Býval jste v Colombo?’” (Č. 35) In the second chapter, talking to Mr Golombek and Mr Valenta, Captain van Toch repeatedly uses foreign forms and thus emphasises his international experiences, his being at home in the East Indies and having a complex identity in which moving about confidently in an international or transnational zone is a constituent element.

In the third – and fourth – chapter power relations are altered, as Captain van Toch is going fundraising to Mr Bondy, a financial high-flyer in Prague. He is being expected as a Dutch captain and turns out to be at the first moment a disappointment for Mr Bondy – just the son of the grain merchant from Jevíčko. Later on, however, they establish a much more positive relationship based on their shared roots and childhood memories (and probably the similarity of international success in their later careers). A dual perception of Captain van Toch can be most expressedly seen in the 12th chapter, when Mr Bondy tells his obituary to the shareholders of the PEC. While addressing his audience, he calls the Captain van Toch but inwardly always talks about him as Vantoch and uses much more informal expressions. The differences between the Captain’s position, attitudes and expressions in these two situations testify to the changeable nature of identity according to the situation and the speech partners.

The captain’s death scene, which is conveyed mostly by the surmises of Mr. Bondy, can also be interpreted as the confirmation of this complex identity. He dies on board a ship, looking for new islands for the newts, as much in motion and dislocated from the mainland as ever but this ship is called Šárka, an indication of his (and possibly Mr. Bondy’s) Czech origins.¹¹

Code switching in the Hungarian translation

Turning to the Hungarian translation of the novel – translated by László Szekeres, first published in 1948 – numerous questions arise. How do the English language utterances appear in the Hungarian text? What happens to the distinction van Toch / Vantoch in the Hungarian version? How are the indicators of Czech national identity represented, does the translation betray any consciousness of possible obstacles for the Hungarian readership? And based on the answers to these

questions can any kind of difference in the identity construction of Captain van Toch be traced? In answering these questions, I will rely on the first Hungarian edition published in 1948¹², its revised edition from 1956¹³ and a more up to date edition from 2009¹⁴. The 1956 edition offers a grammatically more thoroughly edited version of the first edition and thus a more comfortably readable text, whereas the 2009 edition provides a new perspective on English-language inserts generally.

When examining the translation of the non-Czech elements of the novel, one could suppose, that there is nothing so straightforward as leaving these expressions in their original form.¹⁵ Most of the time the translator works along with these pre-suppositions. However, there are cases worth investigating, in which some alterations occur. Occasionally English language expressions are omitted or translated into Hungarian. In some cases, an expression is kept in English but changed for a less informal one. The way of incorporating the English expressions in the narration-neutral language (Hungarian in case of the translations) vary, mostly according to linguistic possibilities.

English-language expressions in the original are often rendered in Hungarian in the translation. Typical examples are geographical names, such as the Fidji Islands or the Philippines in the captain's utterances. In a relatively long enumeration of islands only those are retained in English which occur in a fully formed English sentence.¹⁶ This way there is less reference to the captain's international background, to the fact that these islands and conceivably his job as a captain tie him to other languages. An even more striking example occurs when the word captain is used in the Czech text by the captain as well as the narrator. In two cases these references to van Toch are present in the translation in Hungarian. When Captain van Toch states that he is the only captain from Jevíčko, and uses this word in English, he expresses his standing out among his fellow Czechs.

Such subtleties of geographical names as the *v Colombo/ v Colombu* problem are not reflected on in any way in the translation. One could argue that this difference cannot be indicated in Hungarian as the locative is constructed in a different way grammatically. However, other options (e.g. spelling) are still open in case of a Hungarian text. Similarly, to this omitted distinction another example of the Captain's distance kept from other Czech characters is absent from the translation: in the translations the Captain's reference to his own profession in English sometimes occurs in Hungarian in the translation. These solutions provide a basis for a simplified understanding of the character van Toch, as his relationship to his original homeland is portrayed much less problematically.

Similarly, to the translation of the originally Czech parts of the text, some English expressions are changed in order to be more standard in the Hungarian text. Instead of *p'ls* stands *police*, the casual *ja* is either omitted in the translation or rendered as *igen* (meaning yes in Hungarian). These instances demonstrate that a decidedly unifying and standardizing approach can be traced down throughout the Hungarian translation. Based on the translation of the English-language expressions, the character of Captain van Toch is represented as a more unified personality regarding national identity than in the Czech text.

The 2009 edition applies footnotes to translate all non-Hungarian expressions into Hungarian. This approach is hard to account for, as questions of understandability in connection with English arise much less in 2009 than in 1948. Moreover, the Czech text very often offers some kind of clarification or orientation based on the situation and the responses of other speakers, so as not to leave the reader in the dark. These parts are included in the Hungarian text as well.¹⁷ The footnotes and the fact that the English expressions are italicized, set these parts apart from other utterances. Thus, the amalgam of the Captain's speech is represented much less like a natural composite originating from his personal history.

Other textual features are also of importance when examining the character and his relationship with his own nationality. In the original the distinction van Toch/Vantoch follows the pattern of how much the Captain is considered Czech in a given situation. In the translation the variants of the name are sometimes mixed up, but mostly follow the Czech text. As the name Vantoch is usually not recognizable as a Czech surname for the Hungarian readers, its significance in the identity-construction seems to be smaller.

As for Czech-based cultural elements (names of Czech characters, geographical names, especially parts of Prague, the steamer *Šárka*), the consecutive Hungarian editions show a changing attitude. In the first edition most of the proper names appear in a non-Czech variant. Frantíšek becomes Ferkó and the name of a small town appears in its Germanized form. These approximations to a Hungarian point of view (where German-language mediation for Czech culture is an obvious route) are avoided in later editions. However, any reference to various parts of Prague are omitted from all Hungarian editions and substituted with a more general reference to location. The name *Šárka* is changed into *Moldva* (the Hungarian name for the river Vltava) in the 1948 and 1956 editions.

These domesticating tendencies form a text more easily readable for Hungarian audiences without any call for clarifications or footnotes. The novel is of course still

perceivably rooted in Czech culture but this Czech culture is represented by more conventional elements, as in the case of the Šárka-Moldva substitution. The earlier the editions, the more domestication occurs in them.

Conclusion

I consider the above examples of domestication important with regard to the code-switching practices, because they show a different approach to nationality than the one indicated by the character van Toch / Vantoch in the Czech text. While aiming at being understandable and easy to read by the Hungarian-speaking audience, the translation also represents nationality as easily graspable and understandable, something easily evocable through stereotypical references. This approach is not unprecedented in the novel (either the sailors' approach towards the nationality of their fellows or the ironic references to the problem of newt-nationality) but it is juxtaposed to some major problems raised in the novel, such as the human or non-human status of the newts or the fixedness of the border between land and sea. Being unable to draw exact borderlines and using definitions is a key question in the text and the way how Captain van Toch's nationality is constructed mainly through his language-use foreshadows these problems in the first book of the novel. However, in the translation these features appear less explicitly.

This tendency can be traced in the translation of certain sea-related metaphors connected with the Captain's actions when on land. His movements are often described as if he was on board a ship but these metaphors don't always appear in the Hungarian translation. These metaphors indicate that the Captain is not really at home on land, that his career at sea has probably changed aspects of his identity. This dislocated quality appears in the translation to a lesser extent thanks to e.g. translating *fished out* into *took out*.¹⁸

The tendency to lessen the number of foreign-language expressions in the speech of Captain van Toch and to standardize them (similarly to the speech of other characters, mainly sailors) result in a weaker expression of the compositeness of his national identity. This feature of the translation is in accordance with other solutions, such as the rendering of the textual composite of the second book (in which the Hungarian version offers the possibility of a much more continuous reading experience by treating the inserted articles less like footnotes). Challenging a static view of identity to a lesser extent seems also acceptable for the critical response

in Hungary, as these texts interpret the novel only along well-defined concepts of capitalism and Nazism.¹⁹

Endnotes

- 1 Karel Čapek: *The War with the Newts*. Ed. David Wylie. gutenberg.net.au/ebooks06/0601981h.html [01.02.2020]. The quotations from the novel are taken from the English translation, to ensure understandability. However, the Czech text forms the basis of the analysis. When translational questions are at issue, I will refer to the Czech and Hungarian editions accordingly, quoting the English text as well.
- 2 Bucholtz and Hall's dynamic approach to identity seems to be similar to the one represented by the Captain in *The War with the Newts*. See: Suszczynska Malgorzata: *Migration and Identity*. In: *European Encounters: Language, Culture and Identity*. Ed. Annus Irén. Szeged 2015, p. 114, quoting Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall: *Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach*. In: *Discourse Studies* 7 (4–5 2005), p. 585.
- 3 Benedict Anderson: *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London and New York 1989, p. 66.
- 4 Monica Heller: *Codeswitching, Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Berlin 1988, p. 1.
- 5 Carla Jonsson: *Making Silenced Voices Heard: Code-Switching in Multilingual Literary Texts in Sweden*. In: *Language Mixing and Code-Switching. Approaches to Mixed-Language Written Discourse*. Eds. Mark Sebba, Shahrzad Mahootian and Carla Jonsson. New York and London 2014, p. 218.
- 6 In accordance with observations about code-switching in non-fictional communicative situations, there are certain easily definable topics and groups of words, which induce code-switching in the Captain's speech, most prominently anything connected with the sea. However, there are instances of code-switching which show that such groupings are not always relevant and that the use of other languages cannot be safely regarded as anything connected with his profession. Linguistic transgression permeates van Toch's Czech language utterances, showing a complex identity anchored in language.
- 7 Karel Čapek: *Válka s mloky*. Prague 1936, p. 33. Henceforth cited as: (Č. page number).
- 8 Čapek, *The War* (see endnote 1). This English translation of the novel completely ignores the code-switching of the original and omits the explanatory phrases.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 „Páni, já bych měl pro vás big business. Jak se to řekne? Veliký kšeft.“ Later on, this expression is being used in Czech by van Toch (Č. 33).
- 11 However, pronouncing the name Šárka might also evoke sharks, the ultimate danger for newts, from which Captain van Toch had always tried to save them. This latent word in the ship's name may show how the reference to home can at the same time challenge ideas of a firm background.
- 12 Karel Čapek: *Harc a szalamandrákéál*. Translated by László Szekeres. Budapest 1948.
- 13 Karel Čapek: *Harc a szalamandrákéál*. Translated by László Szekeres. Budapest 1956.
- 14 Karel Čapek: *Harc a szalamandrákéál*. Translated by László Szekeres. Budapest 2009.

- 15 A more controversial situation could arise in the case of the English translations of the novel. David Wylie's translation doesn't indicate in any way that there are parts of the text which appeared in English in the Czech version.
- 16 „Jáva. Borneo. Philippines. Fidji Islands. Solomon Islands. Carolines. Samoa. Damned Clipperton Island. A lot of damned islands, chlapče. Proč?“ (Č. 31) „Jáva, Borneó. Fülöp-szigetek. Fidzsi-szigetek. Salamon-szigetek. Karolinák. Szamoa. *Damned Clipperton Island. A lot of damned islands.* Ezt mind láttam, fiúk. De miért kérdik?“ (Čapek, *Harc a szalamandrakkal*. Budapest 2009, p. 22).
- 17 When Hrdlička examines the possibilities of translating multi-language texts, he emphasizes the importance of intelligibility as a criterion for the translator. However, his examples also show how much the translator can benefit from the explanations embedded in the main-language text. See: Milan Hrdlička: *Jak překládat vizuálně prvky v uměleckém textu*. In: Milan Hrdlička: *Překladatelské miniatury*. Praha 2014, pp. 55–56.
- 18 „Vylovil z kapsy u kalhot tlustý svazek bankovek.“ (Č. 33) „Nadrágzsebéből egy vastag köteg bankjegyet vett elő. Proč.“
- 19 Simándy Béla: *Karel Čapek: Harc a szalamandrakkal*. In: *A Könyvtáros*, 5 (1956), p. 393.



Rahel – La Ferosa – The Jewess of Toledo

A literary myth?

L'occident moderne a donné naissance à quelques récits prestigieux qui n'ont pas tardé à rejoindre les scénarios grecs ou hébreux: au XIIe siècle Tristan et Yseult, au XVIe Faust, au XVIIe don Juan.

Philippe Sellier

In 1955, the German-Jewish novelist Lion Feuchtwanger publishes his penultimate long-fiction work, *The Jewess of Toledo*. The text is riddled with citations of older fictional works treating the same topic, making no secret of the literary tradition that evolved of the telling of an unfaithful castilian king and a ravishing, beautiful woman. The legend referenced by Feuchtwanger's novel is as follows: The great king of Castile, Alfonso VIII, had a Jewish paramour called la Ferosa. For seven years he forgot about his duties, let the kingdom fall to its destiny and for worse, he forgot his lawful wife, Eleonore Plantagenet, daughter of the English King Henry II. After those seven years of sin, Castilian noblemen killed the paramour and an angel showed himself to Alfonso to tell him about Gods fury. As a consequence, all of Alfonsos male successors were taken by plagues and accidents. On top of that, the Castilian king lost the battle of Alarcos against the Almohads in 1195. Only after confessing his sins and founding the Abbey of Santa María Real de las Huelgas, God showed mercy and so Alfonso won the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212.

As one can see, this tale has been straightened thoroughly and historical correctness is doubtful, as the parts of the story are made to fit together to support the subtext of the punishing God and the penitent sinner. The narrative has been adapted many times throughout the centuries, e.g. Lope de Vega, Franz Grillparzer and the already mentioned Lion Feuchtwanger. When reading about the Jewess of Toledo, parallels to well-known and also so-called literary myths like Faust and Don Juan catch the eye, as those also have been rearranged and reactualized, although

they do not derive from classical antiquity. Nevertheless, the Jewess of Toledo is not considered a literary myth and has no place in corresponding encyclopedic literature, e.g. the *Dictionnaire des mythes littéraires* of Brunel (1994). Previous research on the subject is scarce and scattered throughout, speaking of Wurzbach (1899), Cirot (1922) and Lambert (1923) for the early studies. There is contemporary scientific research concerning singular works like Olms (2002), working on Lion Feuchtwangers novels *Jud Süß* and *The Jewess of Toledo*. Hilty (2015) working on Huerta and Lope de Vega needs to be mentioned, too. The only monography treating the subject is already 18 years old, speaking of Martín Largo and Gómez Moreno (2000).

Only two works with a comparative approach at least mention La Fermosa: *Themen und Motive in der Literatur: ein Handbuch* by Daemmrich (1995) and of course *Stoffe der Weltliteratur* by Frenzel (2005). The entry in Daemmrichs work is no more than a mere side note on Jewish characters, while it consumes more space in Frenzel's work. It seems like the subject of the Jewess of Toledo is not extensively covered by contemporary scientific research, considering for example intertextual relations. As a first step in this direction, it is appropriate to discuss whether la Fermosa is or is not to be seen as a literary myth and if so, whether it is justifiable to name it on a par with Faust and Don Juan. Therefore, it might be easier to justify full grown entries in literary encyclopedias that include contemporary research. The entry in Frenzel's work is more than outdated, citing mainly 60 years old works and older ones.¹

In 1984, Philippe Sellier published an article in *Littérature* that deals with the subject of the literary myth. He provided a definition of this term naming three characteristics that define the subject and distinguish it from other forms of narratives. First of all, there has to be a certain polyvalence concerning different parts of the narrative: "C'est la richesse exceptionnelle de la surdétermination qui explique la diversité des interprétations au fil des époques et la fascination persistante du scénario."² So, the material must consist of different layers of meaning open to reinterpretation, highlighting and cover-up, depending on what the text aims for. Sellier mentions the possibilities of interpretation exemplifying them on the subject of Don Juan, that allow for Freudian, Nietzschean, metaphysical and narratologic approaches (see p. 129). To be more precise, the literary myth relies heavily on symbolic structures, touching the deepest emotions of mankind, "qui font vibrer des cordes sensibles chez tous les êtres humains, ou chez beaucoup d'entre eux." (S., p. 118) As the sole feature of overdetermination cannot be the only argument, thinking of other types of literature like the poem, Sellier features two other characteristics.

On one hand, the subject needs a defined set of elements, acting together to form a myth in general and a literary myth in particular. This set of characteristics needs to appear in the text to mark it as a literary myth in distinction to simple emblems or serial narration, e.g. Sisyphus pushing the stone or the adventures of Odysseus. In regard to the myth of Don Juan, the iconic characteristics can be the moving statue, the philanderer and the inevitable punishment. Sellier speaks of a “fermeté d’organisation” (S., p. 123), a defined structure of the events happening in the narrative. “En somme, le mythe littéraire implique non seulement un héros, mais une situation complexe, de type dramatique, où le héros se trouve pris.” (S., p. 124) I would like to add to that the circumstance of a multitude of versions in different arrangements as criteria. The core of the narrative, so to speak, needs to stay intact in all variations of the subject.

On the other hand, the encounter with the supernatural is a defining part of the literary myth. To return to the example of Don Juan, it can be seen as an exemplification of the punishing God penalizing the philandry and haughtiness of the main character. Sellier states, “que sur l’horizontalité de toute existence tombe – ou tombe peut-être – un Regard vertical.” (S., p. 124) Generally, it is the strife of whether there is – or is not – some form of deity and especially in the occidental cultural milieu, an afterlife. To underpin his argument, Sellier states that the classical mythical trag-edy as well as the so-called literary myths like Don Juan and Faust come into existence as people start interrogating themselves on the question of free will and their dependency on a deity. “[S]uis-je un être libre, ou suis-je le jouet de forces obscures que j’appelle dieux?” (S., p. 125) This ontological and eschatological question is re-sumed in the 17th century in connection with the controversy of the free will and again at the end of the 19th century, when the dethronement of mankind as the peak of creation gets evident.

So, to resume what has just been reflected, a literary myth is defined by three characteristics: Firstly, the certain level of overdetermination so that the subject is open to reedition and adaptation. Secondly, the subject must consist of a certain secluded set of elements absolutely necessary to mark it as a myth. Thirdly and lastly, the question of the possibility and mankind’s dependence on the supernatural needs to be dealt with.

Now, let us have a closer look on the Jewess of Toledo for instance. The narrative is first mentioned in the *Primera crónica general*, initiated by Alfonso X. el Sabio in 1270 and completed by his successor King Sancho IV in 1289. Shortly after that, the

subject is mentioned again in the *Castigos e documentos del rey don Sancho*, a religious guide on faithful and true living authored by the latter one. There is a certain amount of manuscripts of the *Primera crónica*, and only in later editions, the Jewess of Toledo is mentioned.³

As stated in the introduction of this article, the story of the Jewish paramour of King Alfonso VIII is to be seen in context with the foundation of the Abbey of Santa María Real de las Huelgas in Burgos in 1187 according to the sources. The two passages, one from the *Crónica* and one from the *Castigos* are the sources of the later flourishing literary production:

Este monasterio fizo fazer el rey don [Alffonso] por tres cosas: la primera por [seruicio] de Dios, la segunda por nobl[eza de] so cuerpo et de su alma et de so reg[no et de] los que del uiniessen, la terçera [por q]ue este rey don Alffonso el sobre [dicho] ouo de fazer pensar a Dios en siete [años] que moro en la judería de Toledo [con u]na judía despendiendo y mal so [tiemp]o. Et deste peccado ouo Dios grant [sanna] contra el, et fizole user en uision [de co]mo gelo querie calomiar, la qual [uisio]n uio el en Yliescas una m?nna[na] en amaneciendo a dos annos [despu]es de la batalla de Alarcos; que [yaz]iendolo despierto en so lecho uio [entr]ar por la puerta a desora und [gra]nt omne todo uestido de blanco et [au]i[e] los cabellos blancos et la barua [bla]nca, et traye un capiello de [Vlt]ramar en la cabeça. Et el rey, [quan]do le uio, espantosse del, et deman[dol] quien era, et le (el le/) dixo: «non ayas [mi]edo que mandado so de Dios, [que] me enuia a ti, mas mio non[bre] non sabras, et dizete Dios [assi] que por el peccado que fezis[te] con la judía et dexauas la reyna [tu] muger por ella, quisotelo Dios [cal]omiar assi como calomio Dauit (Dau. que tomo /) la muger de Vrias, et por eso fuste uençudo en la [ba]talla de Alarcos, et perdiste y toda tu gente, ca el peccado del rey calomia Dios en el pue[blo] et quieretelo aun calomiar en los tus fijos uarones, ca todos morran et non fincara [ge]neraçion de ninguno dellos; mas el to nieto, fijo de tu fija et del rey de Leon, aquel hereda[ra] la tu casa.» Et asi fue conplido en el rey don Ferrando, el qual heredo Castiella et Leon segunt que adelante oyredes. Otrossi le dixo el mandadero de Dios: «tu connosçe a Dios el [ye]rro que feziste contra el, el gradeçele de que te dexa con tanto, et faz connosçimiento et [arre]pen[timye]nto en tos obras, et auerte ha merçed.» Quando el rey don Alfonso [ou]o oydo esto, fico (fue /) muy triste en so coraçon, repentiendose mucho de sus peccados, [et de a]lli adelante puso de fazer

el monesterio de Burgos et el ospital, segunt agora oyre[des. Et quisieralos fazer en Cueuas Ruyas], mas don [Dyego] el bueno le conseio que los [fizyesse alli en Burgos fuera, onde todos vyessen la obra quel fazia.]⁴

The passage in the *Castigos* is shorter but nevertheless explicit:

Otro sy para mientes, mio fijo, et toma ende uno castigo delo que contescio al rey don Alfonso de Castilla el que vencio la batalla de Ubeda por siete años que visco mala vida con una judía en Todeledo, diole Dios gran llaga é grand majamiento en la batalla de Alarcos, en que fue vencido, é fuyo é fue mal andante el é todos los de su Reyno, é los que mejor andanza ouieron fueron aquellos que hay morieron. E porque el rey no se consció despues á Dios por pecador é fizo penitencia, nuestro Señor matóle los fijos varones é ouo el reino el rey don Fernando, su nieto, fijo de su fija. E porque se arrepentió deste tan mal peccado, por el qual en enmienda fiso despues el monesterio de las Huelgas de Búrgos, con espital de monjas del Cistel, de lo qual non fizo otro tal ningund rey de los pasados. E Dios dióle despues buena andanza contra los moros en la batalla de Ubeda. Et como quier que y buena andanza ouo, muy mejor la ouiera sy la desauentura dela batalla de Alarcos non le ouiero contescido primero, en la cual desauentura él cayó por su pecado.⁵

Of course, the authenticity of this passage is to be doubted and its verisimilitude is unlikely, as there is documentation of offspring deriving from Alfonso's marriage with Eleonore. There is also documentation on the king's skirmishes with the Almohads.⁶ Nevertheless, we see certain parallels to antique myths like Ulysses and Calypso or Heracles and Omphale. Here, we see a strong man, the "Hercules of Spain", as Cazotte puts it in his preface to *Rachel ou la belle juive*, madly in love with a woman until the ban is lifted and he leaves her. The aspect of bewitchment gets stronger in later works, beginning with Huerta's introduction of the intimate Ruben⁷, who transforms later on into a potent villain, peaking in the work of the already cited Cazotte.

In relation to the different names of the Jewish paramour, Mariscal stated that the paramour was first referred to as a beautiful (fermosa) Jewess. Later on, the adjective became her name, *La Fermosa*.⁸ Lorenzo de Sepúlveda was the one to start the artistic literal career of the Jewess of Toledo in 1551 with his *Romances nuevamente sacados de historias antiguas de la Coronica de España*. In this collection we find a *romance*

with the title *Romance del rey Alfonso y dela Iudi*,⁹ where the Jewess of Toledo is referred to as La Ferosa.¹⁰ Circa 50 years later, in 1609, Lope de Vega refers to her as Raquel in his *Epopoeya trágica*. The name is attributed to her in different forms like Raquel or Rahel ever since.

As you can see in the list added at the end of this article, there have been at least 23 artistic treatments of the material in different literary forms, including novels, poems, chronicles and short plays as well as ballet and moving picture. We find those in at least three different languages, translations of said works not included.

Beginning with the here cited works and the adaptations of the later-born artists, it is now possible to extract the narrative core of the subject. It consists of the inevitable loss of the battle of Alarcos as a consequence of the king's sinful life and the complete self-abandonment in favour of the paramour during the time span of seven years.¹¹ Furthermore, we need to include the appearance of the angel in the church of Illiescas, the killing of the paramour, the loss of all male heirs, the consequent founding of the monastery and the then glory victory at Las Navas de Tolosa. So, the fixed set of characteristics of the subject marking the telling of the Jewess of Toledo is evident.

Notably, the works that dealt with the Jewess of Toledo are not to be seen as singular texts, but as an intertextual system. It is out of the scope of this article to discuss every work shown in the mentioned list, but only to examine a few benchmarking works to trace the narratives' way from medieval Castile to mid-last-century German literature. For more detailed information on the works published until the beginning of the 20th century see the already cited Wurzbach and Cirot. The 17th century is a very productive period concerning the topic with the work of Lope de Vega being an eyecatcher. He published two works that deal the material of the Jewish paramour. In 1609 he mentioned it in *Jerusalén conquistada. Epopeya trágica*¹² in which he relates the story of the third crusade of King Richard I the Lionheart and Philip II of France, wrongly adding Alfonso VIII of Castile to this duo and letting them fight against the infidels. Lope relates the story of the Jewish paramour named Raquel and her misfortune. The chosen name is to be seen as a reference to the biblical character of Rahel, wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Known for her beauty, the biblical Raquel stayed infertile for a long time and is considered one of the mothers of the Jewish people. It is not surprising that Lope took this name for a woman to tempt the heroic King Alfonso. In 1617 Lope published his *Los paces de los reyes y la judía de Toledo*, in which he picks up the story again. In this, the king falls in love seeing Raquel bathing in the Tajo river. Strong processes

of othering are at work here, as the King is warned by one of his fellowmen not to fraternize with the Jewess.¹³ It is noteworthy here, that just before her death, the paramour converts to Christianity. This can be considered a manoeuvre to lift the paramour's standing and after all diminishing the king's sin, whose chivalry and heroism shall be celebrated. The play can be seen as a eulogy on King Alfonso, a penitent sinner doing the only right thing according to the conventions of the Golden Age theatre: After seeing the angel, he resolves his dispute with his lawful wife and returns to the city of Toledo. For more detailed information on the Jewess of Toledo in Lopes' work consult the article of Felipe B. Pedraza (Pedraza Jiménez 1999).¹⁴ For now, Lope de Vega needs to be renowned to be the one giving the material its tragic and dramatic form.

The next step in popularizing the subject is done by Jacques Cazotte in the 18th century with his already mentioned work *Rachel ou la belle juive*.¹⁵ Here, the malicious Rabbi Ruben lets the king watch a magic mirror, who demands to see the most beautiful women in his realm. Of course, he sees Rachel and from now on he is enchanted, as well as Rachel is. To strengthen the spell, Ruben gives both, Rachel and the King, magical amulets. The malicious Rabbi takes over the throne and enslaves the Castilian people. Only with the death of Rachel and the destruction of the amulets the ban is lifted and Ruben is killed. Cazotte stylizes Ruben as a perfect villain: malicious, sly, treacherous and power-crazy. Nevertheless, the mentioned author actualizes the subject through mediation of Huerta's work and foreshadows romantic narrative processes. The encounter with the supernatural is transformed from a godly, penalizing sphere into an underworldly, obscure mysticism.

Skipping the works in German language by Pfeffel¹⁶ and Grillparzer¹⁷ here, we will have a closer look at Feuchtwanger's *Die Jüdin von Toledo*.¹⁸ In one of his last novels, Feuchtwanger tells us the story of a wealthy merchant, Jehuda ibn Esra, who manages to become *escribano mayor*, so to speak treasurer, of Alfonso VIII. The king forms a convenient alliance with the clever merchant and falls in love with Jehuda's daughter. Rahel is portrayed as an educated, cosmopolitan and smart young woman. The king, on the other side, is at first characterized as a stubborn man, clinging strongly to chivalric ideals. During the novel, the king opens up thanks to his love to Rahel, and becomes increasingly interested in non-Christian cultures. This opens up the field for the constant turmoil of the king's feelings on the one side sticking to chivalric ideals of combat and truth, and on the other side to his love to Rahel. Meanwhile Rahel experiences similar feelings, as she loves the king and his chivalry, whereas she is disgusted by the brutality of the Castilian knights. Because of Jehuda's

and Rahel's foresight both can prevent a crusade, whose first victim would be the Jewish community in Toledo. But in the end, the Christian mob kills Rahel and her father. The parallels to the biblical Esther are evident, as she also prevented a genocide on Jewish people, but additionally waged a brutal war against her enemies. In this adaptation of the Jewess of Toledo the already mentioned intertextual relations are plainly evident. Every part of the book is opened by two citations, on the one side parts from the *Crónica General* and on the other side parts of Sepúlveda's poem. Furthermore, the reference to the biblical source is easy to verify: "Don Jehuda dachte bitter an den Stammvater Jakob, der sieben Jahre um Rahel hatte dienen müssen, und nochmals sieben Jahre, und dieser Mensch wollte keine sieben Wochen warten."¹⁹

We also see here cross-references to Lope de Vega, as Feuchtwanger keeps the character of Belardo as the gardener. So, to return to Sellier and his last argument to the literary myth, the reference to the supernatural is, in one form or another, evident in all works dealing with the subject. Whether it is integrated in Christian moral teachings or romantic mysticism, the question of doing the right thing in the eyes of God is in all adaptations concrete. Feuchtwanger's novel may be an exception at first, but closer reading shows multiple layers of moral complications in the shown interfaith love affair.

As this is just a short review of some of the works dealing with the subject, what has been discussed here needs to stay fragmentary. When reading the works of Cazotte, Feuchtwanger, Grillparzer, Lope de Vega and Huerta in comparison to each other, it is to state that the subject has been actualized and adapted every time with contemporary aesthetics in mind. Lope de Vega moulded it into a typical *comedia* of the Golden Age, Huerta gave it a neoclassical shape. Cazotte romanticized it with elements of magic and occultism, while Grillparzer was the first to give the Jewess a more naturalistic aura. Feuchtwanger again had the experiences of the Holocaust and World War II in mind when he wrote his version of the tale. The matter is so to speak open to reedition and adaptation, containing different semantics ranging from moralistic to occult. Nevertheless, the well-described set of characteristics of the tale needs to be preserved to keep it identifiable. This is the case in all works listed below. When looking at the previously cited version from the *Crónica* and the *Castigos*, it is evident that this love affair gains its explosive nature from what is pleasurable in the view of God and what needs to be penalized. It is a matter of religious morality. A facet of the subject strongly and placatively highlighted by some authors as Lope de Vega or Huerta; more subversive and discursive in Feuchtwanger; only

pointing to the devilish and occult in Cazotte. However, the question of the supernatural, good or bad, and with it the literary myth, is still present in all those adaptations.

Adaptations of the Subject of the Jewess of Toledo

- Lorenzo de Sepúlveda: *Romance del rey don Alfonso y dela India*. In: *Romances Nuevamente sacados de historias antiguas dela cronica de España compuestos por Lorenço de Sepulveda*, pp. 144–145. Antwerp 1551.
- Luis Vélez de Guevara: *La hermosura de Raquel*. Primera parte. In: *Flor de las comedias de España de diferentes autores: quinta parte*, 133r.–160v. Barcelona: 1616.
- Luis Vélez de Guevara: *La hermosura de Raquel*. Segunda parte. In: *Flor de las comedias de España de diferentes autores: quinta parte*, 161r.–189v. Barcelona 1616.
- Lope de Vega Carpio: *Las pazes de los Reyes y Judia de Toledo*. In: *El Fenix de España Lope de Vega Carpio ...: septima parte de sus comedias, con loas, entremeses y bayles ... / dirigidas a don Lays Fernandez de Cordua...*, pp. 99–120. Madrid 1617.
- Mira de Amescua: *Comedia famosa. La desgraciada Raquel, i rei Dn. Alphonso el 8º*. Originally submitted to the censorship in April 1635, 1635.
- Luis de Ulloa Pereira: *Alfonso Octavo Principe perfecto, diuertido por Hermosa, ó por Raquel Hebrera: En Rimas Castellanas: al ... duque de Medina de las Torres...* p.l.: s.n., 1643.
- Hortensio Félix Paravicino y Arteaga: *Romance, a la India, que mataron del Rey don Alfonso, en estilo antiguo*. In: *Obras posthymas, divinas, y hvmanas de don Felix de Arteaga*, 43v.–45r. Alcala 1650.
- Iuan Bautista Diamante: *La India de Toledo*. In: *Parte veinte y siete de comedias varias nunca impressas compuestas por las meiores ingenios de España*. Ed. by Luis Vélez de Guevara, pp. 368–436. Madrid 1667.
- Vicente Antonio García de la Huerta: *Raquel*. Madrid 1778.
- Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel: *Alfons und Rabel*. In: *Poetische Versuche*, 4th ed., pp. 204–212. Tübingen 1804.
- Eusebio Asquerino: *La judia de Toledo, ó, Alfonso VIII*. Madrid 1842.
- Joaquin Pardo de la Casta: *Raquel: novela original*. Valencia 1849.
- Hippolyte Lucas: *Rachel, Ou, La Belle Juive: Drame En Trois Actes, En Vers*. Paris 1854.
- Franz Grillparzer: *Die Jüdin von Toledo*. In: *Grillparzers sämtliche Werke*. Ed. by Josef Weilen and Heinrich Laube, pp. 165–270. Stuttgart 1872.
- Mariano Capdepón Maseres: *Raquel; drama lírico en tres actos, música del maestro Don Antonio de Santamaria*. 2nd ed. Madrid: 1891.
- Angel Lasso de la Vega: *Raquel; drama lírico en un acto y en verso*. Madrid 1891.
- Otto Kreisler: *Die Jüdin von Toledo*. 35mm 1:1,33. Josef Rideg Film GmbH Berlin 1920.
- Lion Feuchtwanger: *Spanische Ballade*. Hamburg 1955.
- Lázaro Montero: *Doña Fermosa*. Lugo: 1955.
- Abraham S. Marrache: *La historia de Fermosa: la amante de Alfonso VIII*. (Arca de sefarad). Madrid 2009.

Endnotes

- 1 Elisabeth Frenzel: *Stoffe der Weltliteratur: Ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtlicher Längsschnitte*. 10th ed. Stuttgart 2005, p. 468.
- 2 Philippe Sellier: *Qu'est-ce qu'un mythe littéraire?* In: *Littérature*. 55 (1984), p. 121. Henceforth cited as: (S. page number).
- 3 See Georges Cirot: *Alphonse le Noble et la Juive de Tolède*. In: *Bulletin hispanique*. 24.4 (1922), p. 295.
- 4 Ramón Menéndez Pidal (ed.): *Primera crónica general: estoria de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289*. Madrid 1906, p. 685.
- 5 *Libro de los Castigos. Inc.: Este libro fizó el muy alto señor rey don Sancho...el qual es llamado Castigos que dava a su fijo (h. 1)... Exp.: Nos el rey don Sancho que feçimos este libro e lo acabamos en este logar teniendo percada la villa de Tarifa en el año de Çesar de mill e trezientos e noventa e uno años. Ihesus adiutor sit, amen (h. 83v)*. S.XV, n. d., fol. 65f.
- 6 For a more thorough investigation on this topic see Georges Cirot (1922).
- 7 Vicente Antonio García de la Huerta: *Raquel*. Madrid 1778.
- 8 Beatriz Mariscal: *Historia y leyenda en el teatro de Lope de Vega, Las Paces de los reyes y Judía de Toledo*. books.openedition.org/pup/4706 [01.02.2020].
- 9 Lorenzo de Sepúlveda: "Romance del rey don Alfonso y dela India", *Romances Nuevamente sacados de historias antiguas dela cronica de España compuestos por Lorenzo de Sepulveda*. Antwerp 1551, pp. 144–145.
- 10 *Ibid.*, fol. 145.
- 11 Sometimes it shows up as seven months. But this is not the matter here, the symbolic power of the number seven weighs heavier than weather it was months or years.
- 12 Lope de Vega: *Jerusalem conquistada: epopeya tragica a la Magestad de Felipe Hermenegildo Primero deste nombre, y Tercero del Primero*. Lisbon 1611.
- 13 Lope de Vega: *Las Paces de Los Reyes y Judía de Toledo*. Madrid 1946, Act II, Sc.IV.
- 14 Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez: *La Judía de Toledo: Génesis y cristalización de un mito literario*. In: *Marañón En Toledo: Sobre elogio y nostalgia de Toledo*. Eds. Antonio Fernández de Molina and José Botella Llusia. Cuenca 1999, pp. 19–37.
- 15 Jacques Cazotte: *Le diable amoureux; L'Honneur perdu et recouvré; Rachel ou la belle juive*. Paris 1895.
- 16 Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel: *Alfons und Rabel*. In: *Poetische Versuche*. Vol. 7, Tübingen 1821, pp. 204–212.
- 17 There are direct intertextual connections in between the different works dealing with the subject. As Wurzbach writes it, Franz Grillparzer read Lope de Vegas *Las paces de los reyes* (see Wolfgang von Wurzbach: *Die 'Jüdin von Toledo' in Geschichte und Dichtung*. In: *Jahrbuch der Grillparzer-Gesellschaft* 9, 1899, p. 87).
- 18 Lion Feuchtwanger: *Die Jüdin von Toledo*. 1st ed. Taschenbibliothek der Weltliteratur. Berlin and Weimar 1979.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p.18.



Barocité du béréncien

Sur l'inspiration baroque du langage de Bérénice dans *L'Avalée des avalés* de Réjean Ducharme

Réjean Ducharme (1941–2017) est considéré comme un des plus grands écrivains du Québec. Ce romancier inclassable, hors des normes qu'il brise, au style qui est souvent désigné baroque, a créé autour de lui une auréole du mythe littéraire. Ducharme est entré dans le monde littéraire avec son roman *L'Avalée des avalés* (1966), l'œuvre phare qui a marqué d'une pierre blanche l'histoire de la littérature québécoise et que Michel van Schendel désigne „le premier grand roman québécoisement baroque“.¹ Chaque lecteur de Ducharme s'est déjà posé la question d'où vient sa langue. D'après Anne Éline Cliche², la réponse est déjà contenue dans le nom de l'auteur; selon le principe homophonique, il est *un régent du charme*. Sa langue séduit même là, où elle sert d'appareil de la description des fantasmes de destruction et d'anéantissement. C'est une avalanche qui accumule tout ce qui se trouve sur son chemin adoptant de nombreux éléments d'autres styles en les transformant à son image comme l'ont jadis fait les écrivains baroques. Quant au baroque, au dire de Marcel Raymond: „Si le baroque, stricto sensu, est un style; ou un ordre de styles de même appartenance, on admettra qu'il y a des sujets, des registres de sentiment, des attitudes intérieures qui appellent en quelque sorte un traitement par le baroque.“³ Dans notre brève analyse nous essayerons de retracer les éléments stylistiques inspirés par l'esthétique baroque pour dire comment le langage de l'héroïne de *L'Avalée des avalés*, Bérénice, correspond à cette tendance.

Avant d'entrer dans le vif du sujet, il faut préciser le clivage entre le baroque des historiens, c'est-à-dire des *temps modernes*, et le *baroque des esthéticiens*, c'est-à-dire le baroque „transhistorique“.⁴ *L'Avalée des avalés* est un récit de passage à l'âge adulte et de la révolte qui est à cet âge souvent associée. Bérénice veut être elle-même, elle a peur de l'avalément, autrement dit du fait de „vivre une relation tendue avec les choses censées englober, engloutir l'individu au moment où il les regarde“.⁵ Indisciplinée, Bérénice se range dans la galerie des individus typiquement baroques telle que l'a établie Rosario Villari. Elle partage avec le type du rebelle l'esprit d'arrogance,

des ambitions têtues, l'anticonformisme, le mépris de la société, le manque de confiance et le refus des règles dans le domaine des relations personnelles.⁶ Désobéissante et insoumise, elle aspire à subvertir le monde et l'englober; elle veut l'avaler pour ne pas être avalée par lui. Cette attitude rebelle touche également le domaine langagier où Bérénice crée son idéologie, le bérénicien, qui est avant tout une manifestation volontaire de s'auto-définir et de s'exclure du monde en formulant le sien.

Comme le langage baroque, le bérénicien résiste à la mesure; la fonction des mots est avant tout d'émerveiller par des mots aussi bigarrés que chaotiques, des métaphores inattendues et des inventions langagières innovatrices. Il partage avec lui ses éléments typiques, tels que: „l'ironie, la dérision, les plaisanteries, le trituration des mots, l'invention de nouveaux mots, les jongleries, les effets de débrillé, d' inanité et de facilité, le tissage de phrases absurdes, tout à fait baroques ou démentes, la création de personnages loufoques aux noms fantaisistes.“⁷ Dans le cas du bérénicien, nous faisons face à une irrégularité totale de la langue, irrespectueuse de la norme. Cette langue adopte une démarche jusqu'au-boutiste en niant la fonction de base de la langue même: la fonction communicative. Seule Bérénice peut la parler et la comprendre. Il s'agit donc d'une langue asociale et solipsiste qui lui sert pour marquer les frontières de son imaginaire, tout en conformité avec la citation de Wittgenstein: „Les frontières de mon langage sont les frontières de mon monde.“⁸

La création de ce langage imaginaire est un moyen de protection contre l'avalent, car, à l'avis de Bérénice, ce sont les mauvaises langues humaines qui risquent d'avaler le locuteur.⁹ Le bérénicien est une langue où la sonorité joue un rôle plus important que le sens même que Bérénice semble négliger. Comme l'a dit Ludwig Wittgenstein: „L'homme possède la capacité de construire des langues par le moyen desquelles tout sens peut être exprimé, sans qu'il ait une idée de ce que chaque mot signifie, ni comment il signifie.“ (W. 45 cit. 4.002) C'est le cas de Bérénice, elle se sert des mots dépourvus de sens juste pour exploiter leurs qualités sonores pour produire des discours cacophoniques comme celui-ci: „Istascourm emmativieren menumor soh, atrophiques émoustafoires! Uh! Uh!“¹⁰ Toutefois, le discours de Bérénice ne correspond pas à son âge: enfant, elle ne parle pas un langage enfantin, mais un langage adulte. De l'autre côté, ses essais de s'inventer une langue correspondent à l'ambition d'atteindre la congruence de la langue terrestre avec la langue paradisiaque du baroque que nous pouvons comparer avec son rêve de l'enfance éternelle. C'est par le moyen de la pureté d'expression ou la purification, par la néologie et par la congruence du mot avec l'essence de l'objet.¹¹ Marcel Chuinard en dit:

„Ici, les mots ne traduisent pas le monde; ils s’y introduisent pour le transformer. Les mots sont une violence envers le monde au sens où ils sont susceptibles de déterminer l’aspect des choses et d’orienter les événements.“¹² La valeur référentielle des noms y est autotélique. Bérénice se crée donc son propre système des représentations et forge les règles de son univers ou tout doit obéir à sa volonté. Elle n’accepte aucune représentation de la réalité que la sienne. Elle semble donc vivre un mirage de *La vie est un songe* baroque. Cependant, Bérénice se sert du monde externe en tant que nourriture de sa pensée; elle le capte, déforme et l’adapte. Elle constate: „[...] les choses ne se représentent pas. Il faut prendre les choses, absolument, de quelque façon qu’elles se présentent.“ (D. 274) Ceci confirme les paroles de Wittgenstein: „Le fait, pour être image, doit avoir quelque chose en commun avec le représenté.“ (W. 21 cit. 2.16)

L’important, c’est l’effet qu’une telle langue imaginaire produit – peu que ce soit – au mépris de la signification. Bérénice en dit: „Il faut que les pouvoirs de l’imagination soient grands pour que la seule coïncidence de quelques syllabes provoque un accommodement si vif de tout mon être, et un si grand désir.“ (D. 217) C’est un effet sensuel qu’elle vise dans l’acte locutoire, basé parfois sur le principe de coïncidence, pareillement à la citation de Wittgenstein: „Dans une proposition, une pensée trouve une expression qui peut être perçue par les sens.“ (W. 21 cit. 3.1) Comme à l’époque baroque, ce langage suscite des sensations de l’inattendu qui stupéfient, bouleversent, énervent, étourdissent ou excitent le lecteur. Sur le plan de l’expression, le bérénicien, comme le langage baroque, privilégie un vocabulaire grandiloquent, des entassements de mots, des procédés cumulatifs et itératifs qui veulent impressionner. Maints sont les mélanges des genres avec les ruptures constantes et les associations, souvent inattendues, comme la séquence suivante, écrite dans un style technique avec la chaîne des métaphores comparant le corps à une machine:

Mon docteur est aussi ferré en psychiatrie qu’en endocrinologie. Avec son tournevis à pilules, il joue dans ma tête, dans mon radiateur. Il nettoie les bougies de ma glande thyroïde. Il me dit que la pompe de mon radiateur n’aspire plus, qu’il faudra qu’il la démonte. Il se fiche de moi. Je me fiche de lui. Nous nous faisons rire. Depuis qu’il me rapièce, la vie ne me semble pas plus intéressante, mais elle me semble moins impossible. Nous parlons des moteurs à explosion. (D. 128)

La métaphore doit répondre au besoin de plaire jusqu'à la griserie, de dire en surprenant, de montrer en se déguisant¹³. Elle n'est pas isolée, elle est multiple. Nous parlons des chaînes, des entassements, des pyramides, ou des avalanches de métaphores qui obéissent à une volonté de profusion, de gonflement, de dynamisme expressif. Elles peuvent être progressives: „le système métaphorique se développe alors à partir d'un germe, d'une image-mère dont l'activité génératrice se comporte à la façon d'un organisme vivant, croissant et se déployant de proche en proche.“¹⁴

Souvent, dans le cas du bérénicien, les propositions contiennent une forme, mais elles sont dépourvues du contenu – d'un sens. Françoise Laurent précise: „Le mot ouvre un grand halo qui se vide de représentation concrète; il insuffle une bouffée lyrique sans objet et fait dériver le lecteur vers un au-delà.“¹⁵ C'est un langage dont la première fonction est celle du plaisir et non celle d'information. Il est, au premier abord irrationnel, mais, grâce à toute sa fantaisie, aussi ingénieux. Comme dans la logique du maniérisme¹⁶, il passe pour un calcul lors de la création du labyrinthe; Bérénice veut, comme Minotaure, effrayer et faire déboussoler les autres pour se protéger contre l'avalancement par un encodage de son propre univers. Avec le post-modernisme, ce langage a pour mission de faire participer le lecteur à jeu du décodage des labyrinthes où il est constamment mis en doute. Ce goût de masquer peut-être bien illustré par les noms fantaisistes des personnages. Lorsque son amie Constance Chlore est tuée par une auto, Bérénice la rebaptise en Constance „exsangué“. Ce surnom fait non seulement allusion aux conséquences de l'accident, mais aussi, par cet intermédiaire, Bérénice donne à feu son amie un nom qui est proche de la notion du „saint-sang“, la relique appartenant au rite catholique à laquelle sont consacrées certains édifices religieux.

Un autre exemple est celui de Zio, nom par lequel Bérénice rebaptise son oncle de New York. Ce mot italien et le fait que sa famille habite cette cité babélique, peuvent faire allusion à la diaspora des juifs. Par son côté sonore, il est en italien proche du mot *Sion*, lu en hébreu tsiyon, qui désigne le paradis sur terre, une terre promise ou Jérusalem céleste. De plus, étymologiquement, il est d'origine grecque où il signifie Dieu (θεῖος). De la même manière, Bérénice rebaptise son cousin Mordekhai à Mordre-à-caille. Ducharme s'y moque de la religion parce que la famille de Zio et leur ménage ne représentent qu'un pur contraire du ciel pour Bérénice. Quant aux enfants de Zio, elle les appelle des saint-je ce qui donne une homophonie avec le mot singe. Ceci est à la fois une dérision de la dévotion des croyants qui imitent

aveuglément les dogmes de leur foi et, en même temps, une ridiculisation de la famille traditionnelle ou les enfants obéissent au doigt et à l'œil aux ordres de leurs parents.

La langue de *L'Avalée des avalés* est comme une avalanche; elle avale tout ce qui entre dans son chemin pour aboutir à un collage novateur de mots et de procédés stylistiques. Sur le plan de l'expression, le béréncien, comme le langage baroque, privilégie un vocabulaire grandiloquent, des entassements de mots, des métaphores filées, inattendues et d'autres procédés cumulatifs. Surtout grâce à sa sonorité, la fonction des mots y est avant tout d'émerveiller, tout en conformité avec la loi esthétique de la poésie de Giambattista Marini¹⁷ „titillare le orecchie dei lettori con la bizzaria della novità“ (titiller les oreilles des lecteurs avec la bizarrerie inédite). Le béréncien résiste à toute norme, forgeant la sienne dans le but défini par sa créatrice qui manifeste sa volonté de s'auto-définir et de s'exclure du monde en formulant le sien. Idéolangue par excellence, que seule Bérénice peut parler et comprendre, sa fonction est d'énerver, d'étourdir, d'exciter, d'éblouir, d'amuser.

Chez Ducharme, la langue est devenue le véritable sujet de son œuvre. Cet auteur se donne feu vert de la traiter à son gré comme l'illustrent les titres, les noms ou les abondants jeux langagiers dans ses créations. Les œuvres de Ducharme ne s'inspirent pas de modèles traditionnels; elles sont souvent inclassables autant que leur langue néologique. C'est la manière d'écrire propre à Ducharme qui donne à ses textes un goût de l'inédit et du protéiforme et par laquelle il tord le cou à la littérature traditionnelle.

Notes

- 1 Patrick Bergson: *Les vacheries de Bérénice. L'avalée des avalés* (1966). En: *Nuit blanche, le magazine du livre* 124 (2011), p. 40.
- 2 Anne Élaïne Cliche: *Le désir du roman. Hubert Aquin, Réjean Ducharme*. Montréal 1992, p. 82.
- 3 Marcel Raymond: *Baroque et Renaissance poétique*. Paris 1955, p. 62.
- 4 Bertrand Gibert: *Le baroque littéraire français*. Paris 1997, p. 26.
- 5 Pierre Morel: *Parcours québécois introduction à la littérature du Québec*. Chişinău 2007, p. 96.
- 6 Rosario Villari: *Barokní člověk a jeho svět*. Prag 2004, p. 116.
- 7 André Durand: *Ducharme. Comptoir Littéraire*. www.comptoirlitteraire.com/docs/444-ducharme.pdf [01.02.2020].
- 8 Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Prag 1993 (Edice Oikúmené), p. 129 cit 5.6. En suivant cité directement comme: W. numéro de page.
- 9 Voir Morel, *Parcours québécois* (voir note 5), p. 102–103.
- 10 Réjean Ducharme: *L'avalée des avalés*. Paris 1982, p. 376. En suivant cité directement comme: D. numéro de page.
- 11 Václav Černý, Jarmila Višková et Alexandr Stich: *Až do předsíně nebes: čtrnáct studií o baroku našem i cizím*. Prag 1996, p. 360.
- 12 Marcel Chouinard: *Réjean Ducharme. Un langage violenté*. En: *Liberté* 12 (1970), Volume 1, 109–130, ici p. 119.
- 13 Jean Rousset: *Anthologie de la poésie baroque française*. I. Paris 1961, p. 23.
- 14 Ibid., p. 24.
- 15 Françoise Laurent: *L'œuvre romanesque de Réjean Ducharme*. En: *Collection Approches* 3 (1988), p. 23.
- 16 Gustav René Hocke et Miloslava Neumannová: *Svět jako labyrint. Manýrismus v literatuře*. Prag 2001, p. 300.
- 17 Václav Černý: *Esej o básnickém baroku*. Prag 1937, p. 107.



Exploring the city of thresholds

The literary Naples in a crisis

Talking about “Naples in a crisis” is almost a commonplace.¹ At the end of the 20th century this topos is reaching a new height in the collective imagination of the Italian South as “*altra Europa*”.²

Throughout its more than 2500-year history the Parthenopean city has been a political and cultural centre and one of the most important and progressive seaports of the Mediterranean area. The tragic decline of Naples began with the Risorgimento, the Italian *resurrection*, which shifted the political epicentre of Italy to the North and relegated Naples, once the capital of a kingdom, to a provincial capital. Today, 150 years after Italy’s political unification, Naples with almost one million inhabitants is one of the most densely populated cities in Europe. Suffering from high levels of unemployment and poverty it is at the same time one of the structurally weakest of Europe’s cities. The areas of economic distress are concentrated in the historical centre, in the Spanish Quarter and in the Sanità and Forcella districts, where residents live in dark ground floor apartments, the louche *bassi*. Since at least the end of the 1980s, the Sails of Scampia, the triangular shaped urban housing project in the northern suburbs, have gained sad notoriety – not only in Italy – as a social hotspot and a drug transfer centre.

The problems and negative images associated with the Campanian capital have not lost their relevance since the last great hope for change and a New Neapolitan Renaissance in the early 1990s. Since then, answering the question *Who are we?* has become more urgent than ever. Along with the non-literary discourse of *napoletanità*, it is above all the extremely productive literature during this period that actively processes and promotes different identity discourses.

Starting from the observation that within the contemporary literature of Naples there is an observable tendency to explore forbidden, forgotten or peripheral places, I want to discuss in this paper how the crisis of the identity is manifesting itself in the literary modelling of urban spaces. The narrated space is not only a background setting, though. On the contrary, the literary production of spatial images is a form of cultural activity which not only reproduces spaces in the written word, but also

creates them. The structures of this literary rendering of space and the positioning and movements of its characters function as a tool for probing existential questions. Therefore, the literary output of such routes of inquiry can be seen as a method of cultural self-reflection and as a way of mapping cultural topographies.

Thresholds

The aestheticization of the periphery reveals itself by the fact that several authors are focusing on marginal areas, thresholds and transitory spaces; according to Edward Said, these are paradigmatic spaces of cultural non-belonging. In contrast to the border a threshold defines the relation between inside/outside not as contradictory and excluding, but as complementary categories. The threshold is a notation for the in between, for transition and change, as Walter Benjamin points out in his *Passages*.

One of these thresholds, the seaport of Naples, gets a prominent position in one of the most interesting texts published in recent years. The very first chapter of Roberto Saviano's fictional documentary *Gomorra*³ is dedicated to this nodal point of global economy and illegal trade. Its narrator, who according to the subtitle emerges in the “impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della camorra”, tells in eleven stations about the different camorristic spheres of action: from the fashion industry (Angelina Jolie) to the construction industry (Cemento armato) and illegal waste disposal (Terra dei fuochi). And so, the narrated journey starts at the port, the symbolic point of access to the city and the space, which can be seen as the prototypical part par excellence, due to the countless representations of the port on idyllic tableaux with pines and the fuming Vesuvius in the background. From the very first pages of *Gomorra*, the reader is confronted with how little the reality of the Mediterranean metropolis has to do with this image. As a dockworker, the narrator Roberto helps to land contraband goods, he quotes official investigation files, observes, listens and collects information, presenting them in an impressive mix of fact and fiction.

The genre itself is also on a threshold since it refuses any clear classification. So a member of the Bologna authors collective Wu Ming defines it as a „non-identified narrative object“ and as a prototype of a new form of *littérature engagée*, the New Italian Epic.⁴ Saviano himself classifies it as a non-fiction novel, in which the method is the chronicle, though the result is literature.⁵

In this chapter the narrator ranges through not only the deserted and hostile port area but scenes from all over the world. He evokes distant places and continents, which are connected to the port of Naples, one of the biggest and most important of Mediterranean Sea ports, serving as a stopover point for international trade. The close connection between the port of Naples and the rest of the world is materialized by 1.6 million tons of goods: “Tutto quello che esiste passa di qui. Qui, dal porto di Napoli. Non v'è manufatto, stoffa, pezzo di plastica, giocattolo, martello, scarpa, cacciavite, bullone, videogioco, giacca, pantalone, trapano, orologio che non passi per il porto.” (S. 8)

Different products – shoe and hammer, jacket and videogame – are put together in an unorganized manner; in this way, they anticipate an attribute which later characterizes the space itself. At the port of Naples, physical orders of time and space have another – deviant – meaning.

Il porto di Napoli è il buco nel mappamondo da dove esce quello che si produce in Cina, Estremo Oriente come ancora i cronisti si divertono a definirlo. Estremo. Lontanissimo. Quasi inimmaginabile. Chiudendo gli occhi appaiono kimono, la barba di Marco Polo e un calcio a mezz'aria di Bruce Lee. In realtà quest'Oriente è allacciato al porto di Napoli come nessun altro luogo. Qui l'Oriente non ha nulla di estremo. Il vicinissimo Oriente, il minimo Oriente dovrebbe esser definito. (S. 8)

Nel porto di Napoli [...], il tempo ha dilatazioni uniche. Ciò che fuori riuscirebbe a essere compiuto in un'ora, nel porto di Napoli sembra accadere in poco più d'un minuto. La lentezza proverbiale che nell'immaginario rende lentissimo ogni gesto di un napoletano qui è cassata, smentita, negata. (S. 9)

The represented suspension of obligations of time and space refers to the *other* spaces in a society that are described by Michel Foucault. Those *other spaces* bring together various incompatible sites in one single place. In Foucault's theory, these so-called heterotopias reveal the deviant and excluded practices of a society. Heterotopias can be understood as “counter-sites”, as “a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”⁶ Such heterotopias can be found in every city in the world. The port is not only a heterotopic space in the city, however; the whole city functions as a heterotopia in relation to the global culture. By responding to the challenges of globalization in a

very flexible way, the city simultaneously confirms, questions and exaggerates the neoliberal capitalism of the West.

The body in crisis

The narrator emphasises again and again how confusing and elusive the mechanisms of this free market system are. When attempting to count the number of containers on one of the arriving ships at the port the narrator admits: “Gli occhi non riuscivano a contare, quantificare, il numero di container presenti. Non riuscivo a tenerne il conto.” (S. 11) To cope with this phenomenon and make it accessible to the reader, Saviano consistently comes back to concrete objects and experiences. The huge containers are compared to lumbering mammoths of sheet metal and chains (“pesanti mammut di lamiera e catene”) (S. 11); one of the corners at the pier reminds the narrator of a beehive (“un reticolo di vespai”) (S. 10); and the ships ,scream‘ like logged trees (“Purlo degli alberi quando vengono abbattuti”) (S. 19).

Describing the port using various parts of the human body can be seen as a specific narration strategy that pervades the whole work. Those deviations from a condition defined as a norm can be read off very clearly on the body, which in turn stimulate reflections on therapeutic measures. So it is perhaps not a coincidence that the very first comparison stylizes the port to a physical injury “Il porto di Napoli è una ferita. Larga.” (S. 8) The initially vague diagnosis is subsequently further explained: “Il porto è staccato dalla città. Un’appendice infetta mai degenerata in peri-tonite, sempre conservata nell’addome della costa.” (S. 13)

The semantics of deviation continue in the following pages. The port, traditionally associated with the receptive organ of the female sex, is compared to a tabooed part of the body: the anus.

Prue che si scontrano, file indiane di enormi bastimenti fuori dal golfo che aspettano la loro entrata tra confusione di poppe che beccheggiano, rumoreggiando con languori di ferri, lamiera e bulloni che lentamente entrano nel piccolo foro napoletano. Come un ano di mare che si allarga con grande dolore degli sfinteri. (S. 10)

This part of a potentially male or female body is penetrated violently by an unspecific Other. In the context of heteronormative discourse a penetrating subject is usually

associated with the attributes *male*, *active*, and *dominant*, and the penetrated object is associated with the attributes *female*, *passive*, and *dominated*. But the reflections of the narrator reveal these attributions as inappropriate: “Eppure no. Non è così. Nessuna confusione apparente. Tutte le navi entrano ed escono con regolare ordine o almeno così sembra a osservare dalla terra ferma.” (S. 10)

The incoming phallic ships defer to the rules of the receiving object, which thus obtains traditional male attributions and creates discontinuous and incoherent genders. This disruption of gender norms, which cannot be thought in terms of gender intelligibility,⁷ is reinforced by the comparison of the port with an unspecified brood animal which does not fulfil its biological function of nourishing the young: “Le navi arrivano, si immettono nel golfo avvicinandosi alla darsena come cuccioli a mammelle, solo che loro non devono succhiare, ma al contrario essere munte.” (S. 8)

The port as a threshold is functionalized as a space of cultural alienation and dismissal of familiar images of the self. The port is a place in which traditional practices are broken, and these fractures are related not only to the urban but also the global culture as a whole. The dense semantic nature of the text reveals these dis-junctions to the reader.

Views from the periphery

Apart from focusing on thresholds and marginal places in a city which cannot be described just from its centre, there is another commonality that bridges the very different texts of Neapolitan contemporary literature: the consciousness of the text's protagonists are part of an *altro mondo*, which shifts their connection to the surrounding space in an ambivalent relationship of attraction and rejection. I would like to deal with this phenomena discussing one of the very first literary reactions to 9/11, Andrej Longo's polyphonic novel *Più o meno alle tre*. The protagonists of the 17 loosely connected episodes experience the fall of the Twin Towers on September 11th, 2001 through TV and radio news channels. Partly disinterested, partly curious, they follow the media reports from their home city of Naples, often without knowing if what they are seeing and hearing is true:

Ho pensato che era un documentario. [...] Non era un documentario. Era successo veramente: un attentato in America, a New York, con certi aerei di linea lanciati contro due torri e i morti che erano migliaia.⁸

In most cases the different narrators share the feeling of not being personally touched by the incident 7,000 kilometres away in New York. To the recurring question “Avete saputo il fatto di America?” the figures provide different versions of the same answer: “Ma che ce ne fotte dell’America?” (L. 97)

Their reactions reveal not only the lack of a fixed moral behaviour, but also the fact that centre and periphery are not objective parameters, but rather depend on the point of view and perception of the individual. For Longo’s characters, the central point is the city of Naples, where they are clearly located by the way they talk and act – they drink Limoncello, listen to 99 Posse and watch the telenovela *Vesuvio Love* or films with Totò and Peppino. But the space in which they feel a sense of belonging is limited to their own district or sometimes just a single street. This sense of displacement is intensified when the characters are confronted with urban growth or the forces of globalization. Since most of the characters are in a personal, existential crisis at the moment of the attacks, to them the attacks in New York are a peripheral event, something with less importance than what they are experiencing directly: the diagnosis of a serious illness, the birth of a child, the marriage of a daughter or the beginning of a secret love affair.

The episodic structure of the text puts the reader at the beginning of each chapter back at a time before the attacks. So the global media event is presented over and over again. The repetition deadens the terror of the „fatto delle torri“ (L. 104) and calls the reader’s attention to the characters’ very limited perspective and to their ignorance, their misjudgement or their emotional indifference.

The only emotional reaction to the attacks can be found in the last episode of the collection, which evokes a Neapolitan 9/11 in an absurd dream in which the hijackers speak in Neapolitan dialect and wear the black and white striped jerseys of Juventus Turin – the rival of SSC Napoli. Instead of bombs, they hold *babà* in their hands, a traditional Neapolitan cake soaked in syrup and rum, which is meant to detonate when bitten. When the hostages succeed in overwhelming the assassins and disrupting the *guappi*’s plans for a third attack (they already attacked the fortresses Castel dell’Ovo and Maschio Angioino), the airplane crashes into the sea. The dreaming narrator wakes up confused and bathed in sweat in front of a television reporting the attacks in New York. Only the intertwining of the local and the global makes this event emotionally comprehensible.

The city as a filter of perception

The distinction between the self and the other is a central ordering principle of many culture models. A collective identity needs to construct a cultural other to fortify itself. Associated with that idea is the conclusion that identity always is relational: Our identities are constructed in and through relations to the Other(s). If the idea of the other is only vague, the construction of the collective's Own is also destabilized.

This relationship is reflected in Elena Ferrante's debut novel *L'amore molesto* from 1992. Ferrante's narrative debut can be read as a *mise en abyme* of her later work's motifs,⁹ namely her exploration of the difficulties and emotional burdens of mother-daughter relationships. The cyclical novel starts at another threshold, a beach at Minturno, where the dead body of the sixty-three year old Amalia is found. Her daughter Delia, the narrating self, returns to that beach after reluctantly spending two days in Naples, her hometown, where her time is filled with the familial obligations associated with the funeral and the attempts to reconstruct her mother's last days and the mysterious circumstances of her death. The city that Delia has left years before to live in Rome is unfolded as a world the narrator approaches from the distance. To her it is a world of ordinary people, an archaic world of too many loud voices speaking in an obscene dialect. But principally it is a world that is connected to a past she has tried to forget: "Avevo tagliato di netto con tutti i parenti."¹⁰

Seeking information from neighbours, relatives and the places of her childhood, Delia's search for answers triggers memories of paternal violence against her mother and sexual abuse by the paedophile grandfather of her playmate when she was only five years old.

The places the narrator visits in her quest for answers are always just stopovers in apparently never ending movements. This effect comes from the fact that Delia spends a great part of the story searching for something or somebody. If one tried to trace the movement patterns of her character (walking from Via Foria to Galleria Principe, traveling by bus to the Vomero hill, and by metro to Fuorigrotta), a chaotic, rhizomatic shape would emerge, with a range of abrupt changes of scenery and random movements. The disorientation of the reader within the narrated space is compounded by the fact that the narrator at the beginning of a chapter is no longer where she was at the end of the previous chapter, and yet not where the principal action of the chapter is going to take place. This disorientation in external space is reflected in the emotional internal space. The Metro-Polis, the mother city in a literal

sense, its corporality, its femininity, and its vulgarity repulse Delia so much that she tries to cut every bond she has to Naples and to her own past by changing her appearance, by refusing expected gender roles and, most of all, by abandoning the Neapolitan mother tongue:

Era la lingua di mia madre, che avevo cercato inutilmente di dimenticare insieme a tante altre cose sue. Quando ci vedevamo a casa mia, o venivo io a Napoli per visite rapidissime di mezza giornata, lei si sforzava di usare uno stentato italiano, io scivolavo con fastidio, solo per aiutarla, nel dialetto. Non un dialetto gioioso o nostalgico: un dialetto senza naturalezza, usato con imperizia, pronunciato stentatamente come una lingua straniera mal nota. Nei suoni che articolavo a disagio, c'era l'eco delle liti violente tra Amalia e mio padre, tra mio padre e i parenti di lei, tra lei e i parenti di mio padre. Diventavo insofferente. Presto ritornavo al mio italiano e lei si accomodava nel suo dialetto. Adesso che era morta e che avrei potuto cancellarlo per sempre insieme alla memoria che veicolava, sentirmelo nelle orecchie mi causava ansia. (F. 22)

The reference points of Delia's spatial perceptions are sensory and concrete experiences layered over urban space. Caserta for instance, her mother's long-time friend who made her father jealous, melts in Delia's memory to a "uomo-città" (F. 39) whose most striking physical characteristic is his stuck out, phallic tongue:

Io, a sentirla, vedevo la bocca aperta di quell'uomo, con denti bianchissimi e una lingua lunga e rossa. La lingua saettava oltre le labbra e poi vi rientrava a una velocità che mi ipnotizzava. (F. 39)

How much the language and corporal and spatial perception interact becomes apparent in the very first encounter of the adult Delia and Caserta:

Lui mi inseguì con la voce, che modificò da cortese in un sibilo incalzante e sempre più sguaiato. Fui raggiunta da un fiotto di oscenità in dialetto, un morbido rivolo di suoni che coinvolse in un frullato di seme, saliva, feci, orina, dentro orifici d'ogni genere, me le mie sorelle, mia madre. (F. 20)

Such barely abstract synaesthesia and leitmotivical symbols show to the reader in a metaphorical way what Delia, as an experiencing child, has perceived emotionally

but could not rationally open up. The secret love affair with Caserta, Delia imputed to her mother 40 years before, in reality was a transference of her own traumatic physical experiences to the body of her mother.¹¹ She had attributed to her mother all the obscene words that Caserta's paedophilic father had whispered to herself.

The ambivalent attitude between attraction and rejection towards the mother/city finally culminates in an imagined act of symbiotic fusion between Delia and Amalia. After suspending the physical border between her own and her mother's body, Delia succeeds in finding an independent identity on a stopover at the beach of Minturno, which functions as a ritual *lieu de passage*.

So it is not a strong peripheral identity that menaces the stability and normality of hegemonic discourses, but a weak *central* identity. The overlaying of cultural and sexual subaltern identity highlights the double marginal status from which Delia tries to free herself. As a little girl she experiences the omnipresent male violence and female oppression through her mother's fortune. As a woman she consciously tries to approach the centre: She moves to the capital Rome, works successfully as a cartoonist and unlike her two sisters decides against marriage and motherhood. A friend describes her as "forte, asciutta, veloce, [...] decisa" (F. 42). In addition to that she adopts male behaviour patterns like bearing the coffin at her mother's funeral as well as her father's jealousy towards her mother. As a child she imputes to Amalia a secret love affair and defends the maternal body from potential dangers posed by other men in public transportation.

Conclusion

Numerous authors of contemporary Neapolitan literature are approaching the city through its margins, that is to say its deviations and innovations.

The personal identity of the characters as well as the imagination of a collective self and a collective *other* find expression in the specific representation of space. The interaction of identity and the *other* can be understood through the specific modelling of the literary space, its semantic and functional shifts, and through the emergence of new spaces and the respective absence of traditional spaces.

This correlation reveals itself in form and content: Discursively, the texts subvert conventional narrative techniques and absorb different, often marginal, modes of narration. The concept of the city as a body, which is almost a *leitmotiv* in the history of ideas about urban space, receives a semantic shift: The traditional image of the

city imagined as a female body is replaced with traditionally male semantics or portrayed as weakened by disease and external injuries.

With regard to the content, different thresholds come to the foreground. These thresholds function as a topographic manifestation of cultural non-belonging. By spatially modelling deviations, which are not, not yet or not as accessible realized in other places, those thresholds harbour the potential to question dominant cultural imperatives.

Endnotes

- 1 Nick Dines: *Tuff City. Urban Change and Contested Space in Central Naples*. New York 2012, p. 7.
- 2 Theresa Vögle: *Mediale Inszenierungen des Mezzogiorno. Die ‚Südfrage‘ als Prüfstein der Einheit Italiens und der Idee Europas*. Heidelberg 2012, p. 13.
- 3 Roberto Saviano: *Gomorra. Viaggio nell'impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della camorra*. Milano 2006. Henceforth cited as: (S. page number).
- 4 Wu Ming: *New Italian Epic: Letteratura, sguardo obliquo, ritorno al futuro*. Torino 2009, pp. 41–44.
- 5 Roberto Saviano: *Vi spiego il mio metodo tra giornalismo e non fiction*. In: *La Repubblica*, September 25th 2015, p. 60.
- 6 Michel Foucault: *Of Other Spaces*. In: *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 1, pp. 22–27, here p. 24.
- 7 Cf. Judith Butler: *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York 1990.
- 8 Andrej Longo: *Più o meno alle tre*. Padova 2002, p. 45. Henceforth cited as: (L. page number).
- 9 Mariangela Tartaglione: *Der generative Raum und die ‚Mutterstadt‘ in L'amore molesto von Elena Ferrante*. In: *Zibaldone*, 64 (2017), pp. 123–136, here p. 127.
- 10 Elena Ferrante: *L'amore molesto* [1992]. Rom 2015, p. 4. Henceforth cited as: (F. page number).
- 11 „Gli [al padre, S. G.] dissi che Caserta aveva fatto e detto ad Amalia, col suo consenso, nell'interatto della pasticceria, tutte le cose che in realtà il nonno di Antonio aveva detto e forse fatto a me.“ (F. 163)



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